

Qualica Enables Effective Online Business for 1time Airline

The Client

1time Airline is South Africa's foremost low-cost carrier. 1time has established itself firmly in the South African travel market through aggressive marketing and an award-winning website that enables passengers to make swift and painless travel arrangements. 1time's market penetration and growth as a business have been underpinned by Qualica's (www.qualica.com) Airline Reservations System (ARS) and Departure Control System (DCS), which together have provided the airline with the platform it needs to attract and retain customers.

The Scenario

According to World Wide Worx's 2006 online retail report, the total online air travel ticketing market is estimated to have grown from R300-million in 2003 to R1.5 billion in 2005, a fivefold increase. Furthermore, World Wide Worx says online ticketing of air travel will dominate consumer e-commerce for the next five to ten years.

When 1time Airline entered the market in 2004 they faced stiff competition from established players. 1time set about growing market share, and growing the travel market itself, by differentiating their product offering from their competitors. The 1time experience is now known by travellers for its end-to-end convenience and quality, from the time of purchasing their ticket to the time they land happily at their destination.

How Qualica has supported 1time Airline

Whether it's 1time Airline's online check-in process, or its departure management, Qualica has simplified travel for business people commuting between South Africa's major business centres.

Checking in

1time's eCheck-in permits customers travelling with only hand luggage to check in for their flight via the website, reserving their preferred seat online. These passengers are only required to arrive at the airport half an hour before their flight to collect their boarding pass, bypassing the queues at the check-in counters. For a business person whose time is money, this time-saving is significant.

Smooth departures

1time Airline recently implemented Qualica's Departure Control System (DCS) at its airport operations around the country. The Qualica DCS has been certified by SITA (www.sita.com), which means that it can be used at any SITA-managed airport located anywhere in the world. The DCS is supplemented by an integrated baggage management system (BMS) that allows the airline to track the movement of luggage through the airport and onto the aircraft. The DCS dovetails with Qualica's ARS to provide airlines with an integrated solution for servicing passengers.

"The IT backbone built by Qualica enabling online booking and several other convenient customer features has been critical to the business."

Michael Kaminski,
1time IT Director

The Business Benefits

The Internet booking engine enables passengers to book their flights using an airline's website, a feature which has become the lifeblood of low-cost airlines. The simple, logical, and businesslike booking process attracts and retains customers, which is critical inside of this highly competitive market. Included in the service offering is a passenger's ability to check themselves onto their flights from the comfort of their homes using eCheck-in.

Self-management wizards simplify travel management processes

Simple, easy-to-understand wizards guide customers through all aspects of managing their bookings. This encourages customers to self-administer their bookings using the Internet. The benefit of this for the operator is lowered call centre loads, and greater customer satisfaction. Greater customer satisfaction levels makes it easier for the airline operator to retain its customers. The marked increase in customer satisfaction was borne out in 2008 with 1time being awarded the preferred supplier award by Uniglobe Travel in the category "most user-friendly website".

Additional functions broaden potential market

Additional functionality includes Web Services that allow third party access into the booking engine and corporate and travel agent management. These features further broaden an airline's market.

The Qualica DCS is SITA certified

The Departure Control System (DCS) is attractive to airlines because it is one of the prerequisites for managing passenger check-in and boarding efficiently and effectively at airports. As the Qualica DCS is SITA certified, it is authorised for use all SITA managed airports around the globe.

Accurate passenger records are maintained at all points in the process

Passenger information is managed by the platform, from the time the customer buys their ticket to the time they board the aircraft. The computerised check-in and boarding process results in precise passenger and baggage manifests being available to the flight deck at the time of departure. Additionally, airlines are able to track the number of no-show passengers, and can utilise this information to optimise future flight schedules.

Airport self-service kiosks

Qualica's DCS will soon be supplemented by the inclusion of self-service kiosks, which are increasingly available at airports. The self-service kiosks further streamline and improves check-in processes, are innovative and leading edge, and offering value to passengers, the airlines and the airports.

The Qualica DCS is the only African-built SITA-certified DCS, which may be deployed at any airport managed by SITA anywhere in the world.

Platform stability ensures business continuity

1time carried 10,000 passengers in the first 20 days after launching in the beginning of 2004 and 100,000 passengers by the end of June 2004. By October 2005, 1 million passengers had been carried and the airline currently flies around 85,000 passengers a month of which approximately 76,500, or 90%, book using the Internet. Qualica's ARS provides stability that maintains superior performance at booking levels of up to five times greater than normal loads thereby guaranteeing business continuity under peak load. Monitoring has shown that up to 20 bookings per second can be completed on a medium-sized installation.

Qualica delivers a world-class solution

Qualica's ARS and DCS negate the competitive advantage that premium carriers have with brand power, entrenched technology, marketing budgets and well established route networks. Qualica's ARS and DCS are world-class products that combine the latest Internet technologies to deliver a high-performance, scalable and flexible solution that will meet not only the operational needs, but also the budget of low-cost airline operators.

Comment from 1time's IT Director

Michael Kaminski had this to say:

"The IT backbone built by Qualica has enabled Internet bookings and several other convenient customer features and has been crucial to our business. As a low-cost airline, driving down costs is a business imperative. The Internet booking engine is an important cog in our business. When 1time launched in 2004 with three return flights a day between Johannesburg and Cape Town, 75 of the bookings were made on our website. As our passenger volumes grew our original IT infrastructure came under pressure. We began to look for a company with the skills needed to build a platform that would deliver the reliability and performance to support our business into the future. 1time's aim is to continue to improve the user-experience, and to provide customers with additional features and value-added services. This will include making more travel products available through the site and building in Customer Relationship Management functionality into the site."

The Radix Air platform offers a cost-effective solution for smaller players in the market, and in many ways, from a technical point of view, negates the competitive advantage existing carriers may have.