SWISS Disruption Management Case Study

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The Issue

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According to a T2RL study from 2016, the estimated cost to airlines is as much as $60 billion worldwide, almost 8% of revenues. A satisfactory solution to flight disruptions would therefore have many positive impacts. Apart from the raw numbers of cost and lost income, disruptions damage customer satisfaction and loyalty, particularly when passengers are left without help like food or accommodation, or left in the dark as to when they will get to their destinations. This is even more detrimental to an airline's image when premium-class and frequent travellers are affected. These passengers are both the bread-and-butter and the frosting on the cake when it comes to sustainable profitability in the airline industry.

With such issues being exacerbated by rising passenger numbers – to 7.3 billion by 2034 – and higher load factors, stronger passenger rights' regimes and tighter budgets across the board, European operator SWISS, which has to rebook almost 150,000 passengers every year due to cancellations and delays, decided it was time to act.
SWISS faced particular challenges. With special cost factors in Switzerland, the airline saw a specific business need to enhance satisfaction among passengers negatively impacted by disruptions while keeping customer care costs in check. It also wanted to be the first European carrier with a centralised, optimised and automated tool to deal with the direct and knock-on effects of disruptions.

SWISS was on the lookout for a solution that would not only offer a decision-support tool to deal with all aspects of disruption management but also one in which it would maintain influence over the product features., Amadeus was quick to show that it was up to the difficult, collaborative task of getting such a solution to market quickly. After exemplary participation in the SWISS feasibility study, it became clear that Amadeus possessed both the operations expertise and the agility to link its R&D specialists with the end-users who press the button on disruption recovery, and finalise and launch the solution at speed and in full compliance with SWISS's specific needs.

"What Swiss was looking for was a solution that could be implemented fast. The methodology that we adopted together was the Agile methodology where you bring together the Swiss business experts and the Amadeus research and development experts. This ensured that we could develop a product to the needs of Swiss in the time frame required."

Isabel Cangemi
Senior Account Manager for Swiss at Amadeus

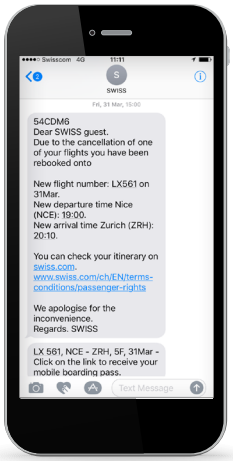
The Solution

That aggressive time frame demanded bringing the solution to market within just 12 months, so the teams brought together in this Agile methodology worked together not in a waterfall but in a scrum manner, meaning that they met every several weeks in condensed sessions to work out, develop and then test the tool. After doing so, the team then tested, de-bugged and redeployed the tool, re-testing it and re-developing until it met the needs of the airline and its flying public.

The solution was built to ensure a long list of "REs:" re-forecast, reschedule, reroute, rebook, re-accommodate, re-accept (on the Departure Control System, DCS), and report to passengers – all in an effort to respond, recover and regain control of the situation quickly, all within the best time-frame possible.

With its link to Altéa, and through other capabilities, the solution also prevents the spread of the disruption as best as possible, and is able to share information across the airline's organization and IT platforms to ensure the best possible recommendations for alleviating pain points and driving quick resolutions. By bringing in data from across the industry, leveraging partnerships and opening up silos, the solution gives access to the widest possible foundation for quick and accurate decision-making for managing the scale and scope of disruptions.

SWISS was deeply involved in close and fruitful collaboration with Amadeus at every point in the process, making sure the solution keeps true to its needs in each of these areas. The Agile team architecture and methodology ensured that it met its essential aim, i.e. that instead of responding at various hubs in various ways to the direct and knock-on effects of global disruptions, SWISS can now deal with them efficiently and transparently at a centralised hub using automated tools optimised to recommend best-practices solutions as a basis for decision-making that will cut time, cost and hassle across the SWISS system.



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The Outcome

The metrics are still being tabulated since the launch of Amadeus Passenger Recovery for SWISS on March 6, 2017, but if the reduction in time-consuming, work-intensive reactions for lines of passengers needing manual rerouting and rebooking is anything to go by, the cost saving in labor terms alone will be substantial. Add to this the quicker onward trip for many passengers affected and the resulting cost savings for the accommodation and catering of waiting customers will also have a tangible, positive effect on the bottom line. When a 100-passenger flight was cancelled, it took 3 to 4 hours to deal with the situation. Now it takes no more than 2 to 3 minutes for Swiss to rebook passengers, have them notified and "travel-ready" on alternate flights.

The benefits go way beyond the short-term numbers, of course. When passengers see at once that SWISS has their best interests at heart, that the airline has an efficient rapid response team in place and is sharing vital data points with them in a transparent way, they will not feel left in the dark or to their own devices, literally and figuratively, but as serious partners in their need to get to their destinations expeditiously.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that more travellers might feel like taking more trips more often if the air travel experience improved. What better argument could there be for showing such potential passengers that when the going gets tough, the tough at SWISS really do get going?

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"I'm a great fan of this Swiss solution. It is a tailored solution integrated with Altéa, thus offering consistency throughout the entire system of disruption management. The same logic, the same rules so that the passenger issues can be addressed systematically and therefore more easily, at lower costs, with better results and at greater speed. Swiss was the first carrier to deploy its own customised, centralised and automated solution with a link to Altéa and all our interline partners. We are proud to be the first airline worldwide to leverage our disruption management with Amadeus Passenger Recovery."

Jan-Christian Schraven
Head of Operation Control
at Swiss

Find out more
For further information, visit amadeus.com/airlines
or speak to your Amadeus Account Manager today.