

## Powering Travel Distribution

**Client:** Leading Travel Company  
**Location:** USA

### Client Description

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The client is a respected travel provider of customised vacation products in the US for more than 25 years. It is known for its travel specialists who have earned a reputation for top-quality service and scrupulous attention to detail, along with first-hand knowledge of its vacation destinations.

The client aggregates air, hotel, cruise, car rentals and other travel components in bulk and provides complete vacation packages to travelers primarily, through travel agents and wholesale tour operators. The major destinations catered to by this client are Hawaii, the Caribbean Islands, Mexico and Europe.

The client also provides vacation arrangements through exclusive agreements with Amtrak and Hyatt Hotels. It sells vacations through travel agencies, other distribution channels and affinity groups. It leverages its expertise in its target destination markets as well as its relationship with travel suppliers to provide a unique value proposition to travel agents, the end consumer and foreign tour wholesalers.

### Business Need

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The client had 133 reservation agents located in the Western & Eastern coasts of USA. Reservation agents used a network-based reservation system and a number of third-party products to fulfill an order. Due to inherent technical limitations, the client was unable to scale its operations to service a larger segment and also unable to deliver their services to their customers and travel agents via the Internet. In addition, they had a number of manual operations. The most critical amongst these were loading updated hotel inventories into their database that was done once every week. As a result, there was no real-time visibility of current hotel inventories.

Another critical aspect of the business was air reservations. The air module in the reservation system checks flight availability and makes airline reservations. The module, which had been developed over a period of time, had some limitations such as:

- Only round trip bookings could be created

- The fares were defined locally
- The flight availability was available for only scheduled itineraries

The system had also inherent limitations for changing names. Synchronization of the local reservation and the CRS was always chaotic and tedious.

All of these were impeding their growth and preventing them from meeting their customer expectations. The client had to embark on revamping its IT infrastructure and scale it to meet its growing business needs. BSI was engaged by the client to provide them with requisite solutions to address their current issues. Cost was of prime importance as the client had made substantial IT investments that needed to leverage these going forward.

### Solution Offered

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Blue Star Infotech (BSI) conducted a study of the current business model and suite of applications that were used at all stages: from order booking to fulfillment. In addition, it also embarked on a visioning phase so as to align its recommendations around current and future business needs.

Based on this, BSI recommended a 4-step approach to realize the vision. The first step was in recommending the appropriate IT platform that would adequately meet all their current and future needs and at the same, leverage their existing investments in infrastructure, hardware, software and people.

The second step involved transitioning its current core applications to a relational database using a non-invasive methodology. This involved rerouting all data-related calls via wrappers around the business logic. No changes were made to the business rules for achieving this. The transitioned system enabled a short-term solution to address the immediate scalability issues and allowed them to handle additional loads.

The second step involved creating a web architecture using Microsoft's DNA framework, extracting business components from the above system and creating the required web pages to enable agents and customers to access their reservation system via Internet.

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By reusing the core components, BSI ensured that minimum time was spent in developing requirements and acceptance.

The third step involved designing and developing a multi-threaded booking engine, an XML-based gateway to their hotel suppliers and a better air reservation module. This enabled the client to provide for real-time access to hotel bookings and also in providing a more complete web offering to its customers.

The XML-gateway processed messages compliant with Open Travel Alliance (OTA) specifications. The air reservation module was developed using the SABRE SDS API.

The application has been partitioned into two, the CRS connectivity framework and the actual application. The connectivity framework is a library developed over the API that provides the connectivity and execution of the CRS commands. The framework isolates the application from the CRS connectivity and data management.

### TOOLS / TECHNOLOGY

- Windows Advanced Server, IIS Server, MS SQL Server 2000
- ASP. Net, C#, VC++, HTML, ATL, COM, XML/XSL
- Sabre CRS, Macromedia Flash, Dreamweaver

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### Benefits to the Client

- Overall increase in the number of inquiries and bookings via web
- Increase in booking volumes per travel agent
- Better control of all components in a vacation package, as itinerary alterations/changes were made available to their customers directly through the web
- Reduction in overall operational expenditure
- Quicker launch of new packages
- Additional hotel providers could be added with relative ease into the system
- Enhanced capability for handling air reservations and managing changes in them