

“ Virgin’s Upper Class passengers demand and deserve a slick and professional Limo service. DB Consulting played a major part in our investment, delivering a very high quality solution based on Microsoft .NET technologies. ”



Shaun de Lacy, Business Systems Manager, Virgin Atlantic Airways



Background

Founded in 1984 by Sir Richard Branson, Virgin Atlantic Airways operates a fleet of 38 modern aircraft flying 30 long-haul routes worldwide. The airline carries over 5 million passengers on business and pleasure each year. Significant emphasis is placed on the Virgin brand which means delivering a very high level of customer service and satisfaction.

Business Issue

Virgin’s award-winning Upper Class uniquely includes complimentary chauffeur travel to and from the airport; meaning four limousine journeys for each return ticket. The majority of Upper Class passengers are senior executives whose travel plans change frequently, and with limousines being drawn from a pool of suppliers, it was proving difficult and labour-intensive to ensure cars were always where they were needed. Rising incidences of limo no-shows or late airport drop-off meant increasing compensation payments and damage to the Virgin Atlantic brand. In addition, Virgin Atlantic was set to launch its new flagship terminal at Heathrow T3, designed to create a streamlined process for Upper Class check-in.

The Challenge

A new system was required to handle and track limo bookings, pass vehicle location and flight information to and from the car providers, and enable self-service functionality for passengers, all of which meant a substantial investment in the service.

Solution

Virgin Atlantic asked DB Consulting to help develop a solution to improve the efficiency of the Limo service. The solution needed to satisfy a number of demanding needs: fit in with the branding and usability of the main Virgin Atlantic website; facilitate customer self-service; deliver functionality to meet the specific needs of Upper Class support staff both at Virgin’s HQ and at the terminal; provide easy-to-use functionality for travel agents and car providers, and fully integrate with travel agents’ and car providers’ own systems to efficiently handle bookings and car provisions; and seamlessly integrate with existing internal booking and customer service systems.

Using an agile approach, an N-Tier solution was developed using Microsoft .NET technologies, and ASP.NET and C# were used to deliver the business functionality. NHibernate was used to provide an Object Relational Mapping (ORM) capability which, when coupled with the use of industry best-practice design patterns, ensured that the overall agile approach was successful. Microsoft BizTalk was deployed to develop the interfaces between systems within a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA), making extensive use of Web Services.

Results

The new service has delivered a 68% reduction in compensation costs and a 25% reduction in the time spent by Customer Services staff on issues with the Limo service.

Passengers are now checked in by their driver using ‘Drive Thru Check-in’ so they can bypass the terminal and go straight through to Virgin’s new Upper Class club lounge.

Virgin Atlantic was awarded a prestigious travel award for the new Upper Class offer.

DB Consulting

DB Consulting works with ambitious, forward-thinking companies aiming to achieve strategic business objectives through the deployment of modern Information Systems.

We design, build and support software for companies operating in a wide range of industries, using technology products from Microsoft, Oracle, IBM and other leading software vendors.

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