



Customer Testimonial



Mohamed Bhanji

For the past five years, VIA Rail Canada, the national passenger rail service has been voted by travel agents as their top choice in the Agents Choice Awards' rail services category. In June 2012, we spoke with Mohamed Bhanji, Director Marketing Technology. According to Mohamed, the IATA TIESS service has enabled VIA Rail to fully automate the e-billing and e-settlement processes and thereby make it easy for travel agents to do business with them.

IATA: VIA Rail has had a long trusted relationship with IATA before using TIESS. Can you briefly tell us about it?

M.B.: Our relationship started in the early 1990's when we used IATA to help distribute our product and settle with travel agents. In 2003, IATA offered a new settlement solution called ITSS and VIA became the launch customer. When IATA brought ITSS in-house to evolve into TIESS three years ago, we migrated. It was a positive move for us as IATA is a trusted and neutral partner with travel agents, suppliers and the travel business at large.

IATA: What were the benefits of using TIESS for VIA Rail's internal organization?

M.B.: There are several benefits that come to mind. VIA has its own agency portal for making bookings. We recognized early on, that we needed a web-based, secure settlement platform that was easy for us to use, and more importantly, easy for agents to use. With 19,000 IATAN accredited agents in the USA and 2,000 IATA accredited agencies in Canada, these were key criteria that had to be met. Our internal financial department also appreciates TIESS because it has been customized to our needs. Every transaction is seamless. Reporting is aligned with internal needs and formats. Converting to TIESS enabled VIA to maintain \$30M in business generated from the agency community in North America.

IATA: Was it difficult for VIA to migrate to TIESS? Did you immediately notice positive changes?

M.B.: The transition was very smooth without a hitch and it didn't take us long to understand that TIESS would help us access a bigger market. With ITSS we only had access to IATA accredited travel agencies within Canada and the US. TIESS opened VIA Rail to a much wider community of worldwide accredited and non-accredited agents. Thanks to the service, we are now expanding our reach to Europe based travel agents. Over the fall of 2012, we will start a pilot with selected agents in the UK. If that goes well, expansion will progress to the Eurozone countries in 2013.

IATA: You explained us why TIESS is beneficial for your company. Did you also notice advantages for the trading partners you are working with?

M.B.: Of course! The biggest advantage for them is a 100% electronic billing and settlement system. We have over a 1,000 travel agents in Canada and in the USA that registered on the VIA Rail platform. Aside from basic settlement processes, they can track what fares have been sold, commissions owed to them, the numbers of passengers' booked, historical data... They can highlight disputed transactions and resolve them in a clear and easy to follow fashion. Furthermore, our partners know that TIESS automatically transfers funds from VIA Rail's bank directly to their bank accounts. Best of all, TIESS is offered to them free of charge.

IATA: Did TIESS respond to all your specific business needs?

M.B.: Indeed. To give you a specific example, TIESS was customized to capture commissions paid during the year and enable VIA Rail to send year-end tax slips, as per government requirement for Crown Corporation.

IATA: Who would you recommend TIESS to?

N.B.: Basically I would recommend TIESS to any non-airline company that wants to do business with the agency community and that needs an end to end paperless system. The TIESS system is robust, scalable and works very well for us. I believe we can also measure its success from the fact we have rarely had complaints from agencies.

Over the past twenty years, we have found IATA to be a trusted and neutral partner having solid relationships with travel agents, suppliers and the travel business at large. Aside from TIESS, VIA also uses IATA Airport IS. Whenever we have a need, we've been comfortable turning to IATA for solutions. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the entire TIESS team for their ongoing support over the years.

IATA: Thank you.