WestJet focuses strategic expansion with Direct Data Solutions

Transitioning from a low-cost carrier to a low price premium service, WestJet needed to understand the trends and needs to be served in order to capture part of that market. Direct Data Solutions (DDS) provided key information for multiple stakeholder groups involved in the strategic decision-making process.

Chris Hedlin, Director of Network and Schedule Planning at WestJet, relates his experience.

The challenge: complex decisions require rich data

In 2016, WestJet celebrated its 20th birthday. We had built our business on the philosophy that "just because you pay less for your flight, doesn’t mean you should get less”. We had been a successful low-cost airline, and we were continuing to expand our services, culminating in the launch of our ultra-low-cost offering, Swoop, in June 2018. But to continue to grow, we needed to expand outside of North America and cross the Atlantic to Europe.

To decide where, when and how, we needed a data source that allowed us to drill down into the details of passenger traffic distribution, like which days of the week and times of day. That gave us booking curves, and a better understanding of where sales are made. We needed to be able to slice that data and get a level of granularity that matched the level of complexity in the air travel world we were branching into. And we needed a solution that would serve more needs than just network planning and scheduling. Our revenue management group, our alliances group and our sales group were key stakeholders in the strategy and also had specific data needs.

IATA and DDS: smarter decisions, great support

When looking for a solution, we found that there are not that many out there. We’d worked with IATA before, and found them very responsive to work with.

Our questions always got good feedback and good support. We felt comfortable with them. In network planning, DDS provides us with a richer source of data. It was like going from a calculator to a computer. We had transitioned to a stronger network planning tool and, to get the best out of an engine, you need to have the best fuel. The sales group also has the information it needs regarding point of sale, to know where to focus its efforts. Revenue management can identify revenue opportunities. Alliances can see who might make good partners. And a few other groups can also tap into the data, which makes DDS a comprehensive solution and leads to smarter decisions.

“We needed data... that matched the level of complexity in the air travel world we were branching into.”
Confident, informed decisions

End April 2019, we began flying our new 787s from Calgary to London Gatwick, Dublin and Paris Charles de Gaulle, offering business and premium cabins aimed at business travelers.

DDS helped us pinpoint the destinations, the day of week and the time. There was much less guesswork ahead of time. It makes us better informed and grows our level of understanding from the high-level, regional view, right down to the individual market level.

WestJet

Together with WestJet’s regional airlines WestJet Encore and WestJet Link, we offer scheduled service to more than 110 destinations in North America, Central America, the Caribbean and Europe and to more than 175 destinations in over 20 countries through our airline partnerships.

At a Glance

Challenges

- Where, when and how to expand services
- Lack of granular data to inform network decisions
- Lack of data for key strategic decision-making stakeholders
- Lots of guesswork

Benefits of Direct Data Solutions

- Destination, day of week and time pinpointed
- Ability to drill down and slice data
- Comprehensive data for all stakeholders
- Smarter, more confident decisions

DDS was a key factor in the decision to choose London Gatwick, Dublin and Paris Charles de Gaulle as our European Dreamliner destinations.”

To learn how Direct Data Solutions can help you visit iata.org/dds