MODERNIZING THE FLIGHT BOOKING EXPERIENCE

A Vision for a Better Future for Travelers and Companies

Let's be honest about something.

As much as we in the industry want it to be consistently easy for travelers to book trips, change them, and recover from travel disruptions – and as much as we want companies to have reliable visibility and effective control of their travel program – even the best corporate booking platforms on the market today often leave travelers and travel managers frustrated.

We strive for that holy grail: all of the same content and functionality found on airline sites or apps; aggregated into one platform that lets travelers compare, book, and change; wrapped inside a system that enforces corporate policy and provides real time visibility.

But there can't be gaps or sacrifices.

Travelers have to be able to see all the same options and extras (preferably more) in corporate channels that they do when shopping direct. And changing flights has to be just as easy. Right now, this isn't the case. And we need to find a way to fix it.

Within the industry, there is still debate about the airlines' "New Distribution Capability" (NDC) initiative to modernize the way TMCs and booking platforms connect to airlines. At AmTrav, we've embraced NDC – in 2019 we were launch partners with both American and Southwest – not because it is perfect, but because the status quo is inadequate and NDC is one of many tools that we can use to make things better.

The phrase "modern airline retailing" gets thrown around a lot and probably means different things to different people. We want to spell out what it means to AmTrav. This is the vision that we are trying to get to. These are the objectives for which we're willing to ditch any legacy process, workflow, or system that holds us back. The fact is, most of the capabilities we seek just aren't possible with older technology. And that's why we're all in on this effort.

OUR VISION

SHOPPING	
Every flight	Travelers see exactly the same flights and connecting options that airlines show on their direct sites and apps – consistency across channels so travelers never see a flight on an airline site that they can't find in their OBT.
Every brand	Except when inhibited by company policy, travelers see on the initial results view fares for every brand and cabin the airline offers on every flight.
Combine anything with anything	For a round-trip or multi-leg itinerary, travelers can combine any flight and any brand with any other flight or brand on subsequent legs. For instance, business class out on an overnight flight, returning on a day flight in economy.
Fast results	Results for domestic flight searches come in less than 8 seconds 90% of the time and less than 10 seconds for international searches, including time for the booking tool to aggregate, de-dupe, enrich, and apply policy.
Bookable offers only	Travelers see realtime results (not cached) so they can be confident offers are really available.
Corporate discounts & bundles included	Flight results include negotiated discounts or "bundles" contracted by the company or agency.
Clear information about terms & conditions	With every offer, travelers can easily see and compare the refund policy, change fee, fees for checked and carry on bags, and whether or not a free seat assignment is permitted. Rules are concise and understandable, in plain English, free of industry jargon.
Entitlement call-outs	Travelers see for each flight what benefits they are entitled to on account of their personal or corporate status (e.g. free extra legroom seat because they're an elite member or free WiFi because that's what's been negotiated by their company)
Upgrade visibility	Interested travelers can see the number of empty seats in higher cabins so they can gauge their shot at an upgrade.
In-flight service	Travelers get detailed information about the seat type and size, cabin configuration, WiFi, power, and inflight entertainment available for each flight.
Rich content	Travelers get accurate images or 360 degree virtual tours of aircraft interiors so that they can see what they're buying before they commit.
Indicators for sold out flights & brands	Flights that are sold out, or brands/cabins within a flight that are sold out, are shown with sold out indicators so travelers who know a certain flight exists don't have to wonder why that flight isn't shown.
Aisle/window availability indicators	Travelers see at a glance which flights have aisle and/or window seats available and they can filter results based on their preferences.
Guarantee period	Travelers get a 5 minute window once an itinerary is selected to complete the purchase, with the price and space guaranteed, as is common when purchasing sports or concert tickets.

BOOKING

Channel of choice	Travelers booking under a corporate travel program can choose to book directly with the airline but the booking will still be accessible and serviceable through the TMC channel and the company will still have visibility for reporting and duty of care.
Book and hold	New bookings can be held without payment being processed for a period of time to allow companies to approve or reject.
Split payments	Travelers can split their ticket cost across multiple credit cards so, with the company's permission, he/she can easily upgrade to an out of policy flight or cabin and pay personally for the difference

CHANGING AND CANCELING

Quick quotes for cancel value	Travelers who have an unused ticket can easily and quickly look up the remaining value of that ticket and see what portion of the fare paid (if any) is eligible for refund and what portion is eligible for a travel credit. In the case of a travel credit, the expiration date and terms are indicated, too.
Full support for partially used tickets	Partially used tickets are fully manageable – remaining credit balances can be queried and applied just like fully unused tickets.
Self servicing for everything	Travelers can make every kind of change themselves, in an automated way, including redeeming unused or partially used ticket credits, making date or routing changes to unflown or partially flown itineraries, adding or removing trip legs, and changing from a higher fare to a lower fare where a new travel credit will be issued for the difference. All "edge cases" are solved for so travelers don't have to contact an agent.
Change "shopping"	Travelers can "shop" for a ticket change so, for whatever change or addition they are trying to make, they can compare multiple flight options with pricing and rich descriptive content about the plane and offer, just like shopping for a new ticket.
Brand/cabin upgrades	Travelers can upgrade to a different brand or cabin during a ticket change and use a different form of payment than the one used for the original purchase (so they can pay personally if the upgrade is out of policy).
Channel agnostic servicing	Travelers can change TMC bookings on the airline site or app, and vice versa, in a way that doesn't preclude either channel from making additional changes down the road.
Technology agnostic servicing	As the industry transitions to more modern platforms, travelers are not penalized for holding ticket credits from legacy technology bookings. Modern platforms should accept all valid, unexpired credits so travelers and companies don't have to concern themselves with the technology that is or was used behind the scenes.
Same day change/standby	Within the corporate channel, travelers have access to same day change and standby options that are offered through direct channels so they don't have to check two places when making a same day change and companies don't lose visibility into those changes and costs.

CHANGING AND CANCELING

Simplified travel credits	Companies receive the value of any unused flight, seat, bag, or other ancillary that is eligible for exchange but not refundable as a simple, understandable dollar-based travel credit that can be applied toward any flight, seat, bag, or other ancillary.
Combinable travel credits	Travelers can combine multiple, unexpired travel credits toward a purchase.
Flexible application of travel credits	Travelers or companies can change what travel credits are or are not being applied to a booking during the hold period and approval process without having to cancel and start over.

SEATS & EXTRAS

Full parity with airline direct sites	Travelers can compare and book all of the same offers for ancillary products that they would see on an airline direct site, including seats, bags, WiFi, priority boarding, etc.
Rich seat map displays	Travelers see rich seat maps (ideally with 360 degree virtual tours) that clearly illustrate seat types, locations, position relative to bathrooms and galleys, and direction and angles (for lie flat seats).
Seat maps of entire plane	Travelers see the entire plane at once when viewing a seat map – it's not limited to a single cabin. For higher cabins than the one booked, travelers see a cost to upgrade with each seat.
Factor in entitlements	Travelers see clearly when their loyalty status or company program grants them benefits like free or reduced seats or extras and those entitlements are factored into pricing.
Separate payment	Travelers can use different forms of payment for the purchase of any ancillary so they can personally purchase any that might not be allowed by company policy.
Seamless codeshares	Travelers can see and book all seating and ancillary options even when the operating carrier is not the marketing carrier
Changes & cancels	To the extent permitted by the airline, travelers can change or cancel their seats or ancillaries for travel credits which are redeemable within the channel.

IRREGULAR OPERATIONS (IROP) HANDLING

Automated waiver handling	During flight or weather disruptions, travelers can use the normal ticket change/refund paths and expect any applicable waivers to be automatically applied / factored in.
Seamless capture of changes made directly	Like with any rebooking, when travelers rebook directly with the airline or on the airline's app during an IROP situation, the changes are visible in corporate channels and the traveler can make subsequent changes through those channels.

DATA CAPTURE

Leg level data	Company reports include detailed cost breakdowns by trip leg with the fare, tax, cabin and brand for each trip leg captured.
Tax breakdown	Company reports have taxes and fees broken down by taxing authority along with the type of tax. For instance, if a company needs a report on VAT tax paid in Canada, that is available.
Maintain data integrity during changes	Company reports do not lose accuracy just because tickets have been changed. During changes, a detailed breakdown of amounts returned for unused segments and a detailed breakdown of amounts paid for new segments are captured.

ALERTS, NOTIFICATIONS, AND CHECK-IN

Flight delays	Travelers are alerted in real time about flight status changes -- i.e. a delay, gate change, diversion, reroute, cancellation, or equipment change – and appropriate updates are made to reports and duty of care.
Check-in	Travelers can check in for flights through their OBT or TMC app.
Cancel check-in	Travelers whose plans change post check-in can cancel their check-in through their OBT or TMC app so they can still proceed to make changes.

LOYALTY POINT OPTIONS

In app enrollment	Travelers can enroll in an airline loyalty program while within the OBT purchase path, without having to go off to a separate site.
Manage upgrade requests	Travelers can request status upgrades and monitor status of those requests within their corporate booking tool.
Redeem loyalty points for upgrades	Travelers who are loyalty members can redeem points for upgrades without having to separately go to the airline site post-ticketing.
Redeem corporate soft dollar points	Companies who participate in airline soft-dollar programs can redeem those points for discounts, upgrades, free tickets, or other types of waivers and favors directly in the online booking tool.

ABOUT AMTRAV

We're an award-winning, modern technology and service platform designed to make business travel personal and productive. Companies of all sizes use AmTrav to book trips, find savings, set travel policies, manage payments and expenses, and keep their travelers safe. Travelers and companies love AmTrav's powerful platform that provides a seamless travel management experience supported by our experts who are always ready to help 24x7. More than 1000 businesses trust AmTrav to go places, meet people, and go further.

For more information about AmTrav and NDC, visit amtrav.com/ndc