



## Spirit Airlines Flying High by Grounding Costs

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DAVID M. ANDERSON

Senior Vice President and CIO  
Spirit Airlines

### Key Benefits

- Cost-savings of over \$4.5 million per year
- Number of supported agents tripled without increasing IT staff
- Improved response times increase customer satisfaction
- Supports sustained growth and high-speed seasonal expansion

### Applications Deployed

- TASAR Reservation System
- Custom SARS Departure Control System
- Microsoft® Office Suite, Outlook, and Internet Explorer

Contrary to current trends in the troubled airline industry, Spirit Airlines has increased revenues every year since becoming a scheduled carrier in 1990, including a 12 percent increase in 2003. Headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Spirit is now the largest privately held airline in the U.S. With a fleet of modern aircraft for scheduled and carrier service, Spirit brings low fares and quality service to 16 cities across the eastern U.S. and Mexico.

### THE CHALLENGE: ANYWHERE ACCESS IN A RAPID GROWTH CORRIDOR

“A reservations system is the ‘heart and lungs’ of an airline,” said David M. Anderson, Spirit Airlines Senior Vice President and CIO. As a result, airlines rarely change reservations systems because it is expensive and cumbersome. Spirit’s old reservations system, called SARS (Spirit Airlines Reservations System), was written long ago by the airline’s founder, Ned Homfeld. “We really had no choice but to work toward the change,” Anderson observed. “We sit on a mountain of data. The old reservation system was not conducive to data mining, like tracking price trends or doing cost analysis, or keeping up with our growth.”

Spirit partnered with Results Reservations Technology to develop a new reservations system, called TASAR (Technologically Advanced Spirit Airlines Reservations), but needed a cost-effective way to deploy it to over 800 reservations and gate agents across 16 airport sites. The system had to be accessible around the clock with up-to-the-minute information, flexible enough to accommodate staffing changes resulting from both ongoing business growth and seasonal growth spurts, and easily, instantly, and continuously available from anywhere, using a variety of different access devices.

### IMPLEMENTING A CITRIX SOLUTION FOR APPLICATION DEPLOYMENT

Spirit chose Citrix® MetaFrame® Presentation Server running on Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003 as its access infrastructure solution. Now the TASAR reservations system and a legacy departure controls system are deployed via Citrix technology, enabling Spirit to efficiently manage operations and reservations for



more than 3,500 flight segments each day. “The system handles all the flight schedules, pricing and inventory information,” said Dan Piec, Spirit’s Director of MIS Operations. “It also interacts with Spirit’s Web site and other agencies for sales and bookings.” Applications are soon to be centralized in two server farm locations that airline agents can access using any of a myriad of client devices including Dell, HP, and clone PCs, as well as Neoware and Boundless network computers.

#### AS EXPANSION SOARS, COSTS HOLD STEADY

The TASAR application, on board the Citrix access infrastructure, supports Spirit’s rapid, ongoing expansion as well as the typical high-speed ramp-up needed to support the surge of holiday travelers. “When we enter our busiest season, the number of agents increases,” noted Piec. “With Citrix software, it’s easy to add new users and servers whenever necessary. The clustering and load management features let us ensure that users connect in the fastest way possible.” In addition, Spirit can perform upgrades to a server, while the reservation system, which must be operational at all times, continues to perform.

The Citrix solution helps hold steady IT costs, even when the number of users doubles or triples. “With Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server, we were able to triple the number of supported agents and quickly go live with a new solution and more hardware — without impacting the number of IT staff,” said Piec.

#### GROUNDING COSTS STEER REVENUE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SKY HIGH

With Spirit’s IT operations running at peak efficiency, cost-savings are transferred to other areas of the business to achieve further

competitive value. Not only does the new system help Spirit speed response times to customer reservations, it also supports more effective monitoring of historical performance for predictive analysis and capacity planning. “With over five million passengers traveling with Spirit Airlines this year, it’s imperative that our agents have immediate access to the information they need to serve our customers most efficiently,” noted Anderson. “With Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server, we’re improving customer response time, streamlining operations, and putting downward pressure on our IT costs, which is right in line with our low-cost and reliable service commitments to travelers.”

In addition to other cost efficiencies, Spirit saves a substantial amount of money by hosting and centrally managing its own reservations system. According to Anderson, contracting with large reservations systems like Sabre, Galileo, or Worldspan would have cost Spirit about \$5 million annually. “In contrast, the TASAR implementation costs us a projected \$500,000 a year,” said Anderson. “This \$4.5 million savings represents a 90 percent cost reduction for the company, as compared to outsourcing the service.”

#### PAPERLESS OPERATIONS MAKE EVERY MINUTE COUNT

Spirit’s corporate strategy is to position itself as a paperless airline. “The Citrix access strategy is central to our paperless operations goal,” commented Piec. “We are reaching that destination rapidly because the Citrix solution is efficient, fast, and cost-effective.”

The solution is also extremely effective in making information instantly and securely available wherever it is needed — and that’s

#### Networking Environment

- Citrix® MetaFrame® Presentation Server running on five HP servers
- Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003
- Frame Relay WAN
- 500 Dell, HP, and clone PCs
- 150 Neoware and Boundless network computers

critical in the airline business, where every minute counts. Citrix software also efficiently manages bandwidth, so communications costs are kept low. For example, no additional investments in bandwidth were required for remote sites accessing Spirit’s new and better applications. “With a traditional client/server over WAN implementation, our communications costs would have easily doubled,” Piec noted.

#### FUTURE PLANS

Spirit is working with its technology partners to jointly market the TASAR reservation system to other airlines — with Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server as the recommended access infrastructure platform. The airline is also investigating wireless initiatives using Citrix software, to enable agents to access core applications even when, for example, they are forced to change to gates that do not have Spirit computer terminals available.

**About Citrix MetaFrame Access Suite:** Extending the world’s most widely deployed presentation server, the Citrix MetaFrame Access Suite is access infrastructure for the on-demand enterprise. The suite centralizes access to applications and information and enables IT staffs to deliver, manage, monitor and measure enterprise resources on demand.