

Customer Success Story

American Airlines Cargo

Makes Customer Satisfaction a Priority

American Airlines (AA) Cargo, a division of American Airlines, provides daily scheduled cargo lift to major cities in the United States, Europe, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia. AA Cargo's extensive interline network also provides the ability to connect cargo to any airport in the world served by an International Air Transport Association (IATA) carrier.

With three distinct flight specific products, AA Cargo gives customers the flexibility to choose a product that specifically meets their needs. Recent product enhancements have allowed AA Cargo the ability to meet customers' expectations through increased weight limits and reduced transfer restrictions.

AA Cargo also continues to innovate by focusing on the entire customer experience. The introduction of enhanced navigation tools on their website, station level customer service teams, improved visibility for tracking and rates, and proactive communication tools are just some of the highlights.

Customers using AA Cargo's airport-to-airport services include many of the world's largest freight forwarders, as well as local forwarders in major markets and small to mid-sized businesses with cargo shipping needs.

Historical Viewpoint

When AA Cargo launched its web site, it provided an online resource for customers to access information about its services, with tools for shipment tracking and notification. From the beginning, the objective has been to provide a productivity boost to both customers and employees by streamlining the end-to-end shipping process, thereby lowering costs. To accomplish this, AA Cargo began identifying opportunities to bring more aspects of the customer interaction online.

According to Joe Reedy, Vice President of Cargo Sales and Marketing for AA, "Our initial goal was to provide key functionality that would give our customers solutions for tracking and booking that would increase convenience and lower transactional costs."

Based on feedback received across multiple touch points – AA Cargo recognized that the ability to make cargo bookings online was important to its customers. As an organization that consistently puts its customers first, AA Cargo's desire to deliver a world-class customer experience meant providing customers with the widest choices available for making electronic bookings.

To achieve this, AA Cargo created a customized air cargo management system that could streamline operational productivity, make it easier for clients to do business with them online, and provide real-time access to information through a user friendly interface.

Creating a Private Label Solution

AA Cargo began using the Descartes Global Logistics Network (GLN) to connect with trading partners and reliably exchange information. AA Cargo was a pilot user of the Descartes GF -X Exchange; used by the world's largest airfreight forwarders to access carrier information, make electronic bookings and track shipments online. The Descartes GF -X Exchange is now one of the largest electronic information and reservation systems in the airfreight industry.

"As a long-time Descartes customer, making the decision to work with the logistics services provider to address its online booking needs was an easy one for AA Cargo," said Sarah Wagner, Managing Director of eBusiness Strategy for AA Cargo. "Soon after making the decision, we mobilized a team of sales personnel and internal staff members to work with Descartes to create and launch the private-label solution. There was no time to waste."

"We asked the Descartes GF -X team to provide the online booking functionality our clients needed at the lowest possible cost," Wagner explained. "Descartes had the resources and domain expertise to deliver a customized online cargo booking system to address our customers' needs," she continued. "What appealed to us most about Descartes was that they had a proven prototype for larger forwarders, and a demonstrated ability to seamlessly connect multiple parties."

Descartes worked closely with AA Cargo to develop the backbone for its online cargo reservation system. "We went live with our private-label solution and it continues to deliver results today. Our customers appreciate that they can book different types of cargo products and destinations to address both their immediate and future cargo shipment needs," Wagner said.

Customer-Centric Solutions Deliver Results

"Descartes has enabled us to evolve to match the needs of both the industry and our customers," says Wagner. "We are one of the few carriers to provide our customers with a choice of four channels to use for electronic cargo bookings. As a result, we continue to receive feedback from our customers that we not only listen to what they have to say, but actively work to address their needs."

Customers that use the private-label solution to make cargo bookings go through the www.aacargo.com web site and query their shipment needs. The system responds with details on available cargo capacity. When a cargo reservation is made online through the AA Cargo web site, a freight allocation is booked, an electronic confirmation is delivered to the customer and an air waybill is immediately issued. The system can be used to pre-book space 30 or 60 days in advance; set up regular cargo shipments for the duration of a six-month contract; or book capacity on an ad hoc basis.

Descartes also ensured that the private label solution integrated with AA Cargo's tracking and notification application. Reedy explains, "Today we offer the most robust tracking solution available in the market, and are very proud of the depth of information it provides to our customers. The tracking function is still one of the most used features we provide, with more than 10,000 views each day. In addition, our customers can make a cargo booking from anywhere and have immediate access to the airwaybill."

Today, approximately 45% of AA Cargo freight bookings are made electronically. Since the initial launch of this private-label booking solution for AA Cargo, Descartes has made further enhancements with support and influence from the carrier.

"At AA Cargo, we view our e-business commitment as an integral part of an evolution," said Reedy. "It's all about listening to customers and delivering the kind of service which results in customer satisfaction. That's the definition of world-class customer experience."

Summary

Challenge:

To streamline the end-to-end shipping process for its customers and lower transactional costs.

Solution:

Descartes worked with the AA Cargo team to develop the backbone for a private-label, online cargo reservation system, addressing both immediate and future needs.

Benefits:

- Increased customer self-sufficiency
- Enhanced customer experience
- Strengthened customer loyalty
- Access to AA Cargo's global cargo network via four unique electronic booking solutions