



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY



CUSTOMER PROFILE

INDUSTRY Air travel

EMPLOYEES 5,000 in cities throughout North America

LOCATIONS Headquartered in Denver, Colo.

WEB SITE www.frontierairlines.com

SOLUTION SNAPSHOT

CHALLENGE Gathering paper records can result in costly flight delays; Meeting FAA requirements with limited resources and no centralized document management solution

SOLUTION Captaris Alchemy with the Scan Module and Captaris RightFax

INTEGRATION Canon document scanners; Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook

RESULTS Immediate Web access to maintenance records helps keep the flights on schedule; Approved by FAA as the official, compliant archive repository; Reduced paperwork and increased productivity has supported fast growth

Frontier Airlines Uses Captaris® Document Management Solution to Keep the Planes Flying On Time

Denver-based Airline Relies on Captaris Alchemy® for Immediate Access to Maintenance Records and for FAA Compliance

Frontier Airlines provides service to US cities coast-to-coast, as well as several locations in Mexico and Canada with an average of more than 280 daily system-wide departures and arrivals. It is the second largest jet carrier at the Denver International Airport and as of early 2007, it operates a fleet of 57 aircraft, including 49 Airbus A319s and eight Airbus A318s.

The Challenge

Airlines lose thousands of dollars for every minute a departure is delayed. To remain profitable and effectively serve customers, they strive to eliminate interruptions. This explains why Frontier Airlines targeted paper-based document management for replacement by more efficient electronic document image management.

Like many airlines, Frontier archives paper copies of maintenance records and flight logs for two important reasons: First to comply with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations and second for continued reference by airline personnel such as mechanics. Many documents must be retained for as long as the airplanes are in operation, with some potentially more than 20 years. Frontier stored the paperwork in dozens of filing cabinets housed in its general offices 10 miles from the Denver International Airport. Accessing documents used to be a nightmare, according to Frontier employees. Case in point: Airplanes are checked on every stop over, where mechanics need access to flight logs and inspection records before they can service the planes or install replacement parts. In the past, mechanics called the records department to request files. Then, they faced all the normal problems associated with paper filing. Records personnel walked to the file room to search through folders. Then, they carried the files to copiers and next to fax machines to send to the mechanics working at the airplane on the tarmac. Document legibility is an absolute must in this operation; but, sometimes, faxed copies were difficult to read. Back in the records department, paper stacked up to be re-filed and copies could too easily be misplaced.

Records personnel worked quickly but, on average, it took a half-hour to deliver the documents to the mechanics and that caused serious problems for Frontier. Planes are limited to a total of 40 minutes for turnaround from the time they pull up, to be checked, cleaned, loaded with passengers

“We have doubled the size of Frontier’s fleet without a significant increase in records management staff or storage space for paperwork.”

and cleared for flight. If there is a broken part on an aircraft and it takes a half-hour for the mechanic to get the records, it can easily cause a flight delay with a chain effect causing more delays the rest of the day. At a rate of thousands of dollars per minute, these delays were too costly and they negatively impacted benchmarks for customer service. If a plane is delayed for more than 14 minutes, it is counted as an official late departure.

Other Frontier employees also dealt with challenges related to paper-based document management. For instance, Frontier maintains hundreds of corporate contracts to support daily operations, but it lacked a point of contact or central resource to access the documents. As the newly appointed Contracts Manager, David Relaford described the urgent need for a more reliable system. “Paper files were not secure and they were not easy to retrieve or process.”

The Solution

In early 2004, Frontier worked with Jouve Aviation Solutions to configure and implement an aircraft records imaging solution based on Alchemy. “When we installed Alchemy, the location of needed documents instantly moved from the Records Department to each user’s workstation,” said Carl Schlaphoff, IT administrator with Frontier. Flight logs, maintenance records, contracts and other documents are now scanned with two Canon document scanners and the Alchemy Scan Module, then indexed and archived as digital images within Alchemy. Frontier also uses Captaris RightFax® as a corporate electronic fax solution to capture incoming documents as digital images. Some files never become paper since they arrive via RightFax as digital images and may be easily forwarded by email or stored in Alchemy. Thus far, records personnel estimate close to half a million records have been scanned into the Alchemy repository. Employees access files using Alchemy Search licenses on the local area network or through Alchemy Web, which publishes databases to the Internet.

Since digital files in Alchemy look like the original hard-copy documents, users are comfortable with the familiar viewing format. “That was a problem with other applications we considered; their viewing screens were organized differently from how people actually work with documents,” said Sonia Lueckenotte, records manager for Frontier. “Even though Alchemy is quite sophisticated, its classic 3-pane viewer shows users instantly what they are used to seeing. As a result, people are pleased to view the familiar forms exactly as they were printed.”

OCR technology within Alchemy Scan automates the indexing of images and enables rapid retrieval for reference, audit or data mining. Lueckenotte plans to enhance reporting capabilities with additional indexing fields to more easily fulfill FAA reporting requirements. “The FAA is not quick to approve new technology,” she said. “We demonstrated there was no way records could be lost after we destroyed the original hardcopies, and in less than two years we received FAA approval to use the Alchemy system as our official repository.” The proven reliability of the system has enabled Frontier to focus its archive database resources on Alchemy. For disaster recovery, the repository is backed up daily to disk and to tape at regular intervals.

Alchemy also serves as the central document management archive for contracts. Contracts Manager Relaford created a task management process using Microsoft Outlook and Word and a task folder to notify administrators of documents available through Alchemy Web for electronic signature. Their approvals are maintained in the Alchemy repository where they are indexed, securely archived and made available for quick retrieval in the future.

The Results

Efficient electronic document management is supporting Frontier’s timely service and fast growth. For instance, Frontier mechanics can immediately access digital, high-resolution images of the flight records at 50 tarmac-based workstations right where the airplanes land. “They get access where and when they need it,” Lueckenotte said. “Using Alchemy Web is a real blessing—it’s so accessible by so many people and doesn’t require an escalation of maintenance.” With records readily available, flight delays are much less likely than before Alchemy. In 2006, Frontier received an industry award as a top on-time airline in its class.

In addition, Frontier is growing—from 30 aircraft in 2004 to 60 aircraft by the end of 2007—and it recently achieved status as a major airline with more than \$1 billion in annual revenue. “We have doubled the size of Frontier’s fleet without a significant increase in records management staff or storage space for paperwork,” Lueckenotte said. Noting FAA approval of the system and expanding use for other needs, Schlaphoff added: “The Alchemy repository is now a critical application in the company. Several other departments are looking at Alchemy and there is potentially quite a bit more storage space we can eliminate.” The half million documents already stored within Alchemy replaces about 50 full filing cabinets. To date, 30 cabinets have been removed. “We haven’t conducted formal studies, but I’d say we achieved return on investment in Alchemy within the first year when they started carting cabinets out of the filing room,” he said. Also, Lueckenotte confirmed the records personnel are more productive since they can access files and run queries without leaving their desks.

About Captaris, Inc.

Captaris, Inc. is a leading provider of software products that automate business processes, manage documents electronically and provide efficient information delivery. Our product suite of Captaris RightFax, Captaris Workflow™ and Captaris Alchemy is distributed through a global network of leading technology partners. We have customers in financial services, healthcare, government and many other industries, and our products are installed in all of the Fortune 100 and many Global 2000 companies. Headquartered in Bellevue, Washington, Captaris was founded in 1982 and is publicly traded on the NASDAQ National Market under the symbol CAPA. For more information, visit www.Captaris.com.

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