

## BlackBerry and Flowfinity Help Streamline Flight Crew Communications and Reporting

**SWIFT AVIATION GROUP**  
DEFINING EXCELLENCE<sup>SM</sup>

*Swift Charter and Aircraft Management had two goals when it investigated a wireless solution. First, increase communication with their flight crews to streamline and accelerate the administrative reporting, expenses and billing cycle. Second, build on the ability to communicate regularly to deliver exceptional service to its customers.*

*As existing users of BlackBerry®, Swift was already convinced of the value of wireless communications and the BlackBerry platform. In 2004, they investigated how they could cost-effectively develop a more robust system, deploying both BlackBerry 7280 Handhelds™ and BlackBerry 7290 Handhelds™, and the BlackBerry Enterprise Server™, with the Mobile Data Service (MDS) feature.*

*They took advantage of the capabilities of Flowfinity Actions, out-of-the-box software developed by Flowfinity, to connect reporting forms on the device with their backend SQL database. With Phase One complete – the logging and reporting system – they are moving towards Phase Two, reporting expenses. In less than one year, they are already seeing their solution deliver key business results, such as:*

- *Increased communication with flight crews*
- *Better customer service and less follow-up by dispatchers*
- *Faster billing cycles that build competitive advantage*
- *Streamlined administrative processes, reduced paperwork, less duplication of effort and fewer errors*
- *Device accessibility of management reports and up to the minute operations data*

Unlike, many organizations, which have executives who travel occasionally, Swift's flight crews are in transit most of the year. That makes sending important paperwork back and forth a challenge. On every flight, the crew receives routing information and customer requirements for that leg of the journey. When the trip is complete, they fill out records for FFA purposes, as well as complete reports that are used to bill the client and drive revenue to the business.

### Industry

Aviation

### Environment

Microsoft® Exchange 2003

### Applications Deployed

Flowfinity Actions

### Situation

Swift flight crews travel on eight day rotations and were receiving trip details by fax. The paper-based system was slow, created duplication in administrative effort, slowed down the billing cycle and was not an effective way of delivering customer service.

### Organization Profile

Swift Charter and Aircraft Management operate the largest privately owned fleet in the U.S. They offer on-demand, global charter services and business jet ownership, with proven flight crews, flight coordinators, and maintenance personnel. Swift is headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona.

### Solution

80 BlackBerry devices were deployed with Flowfinity Actions software, which automated the paper-based logging, reporting and expenses systems. The BlackBerry Enterprise Server, with MDS, was installed in the Microsoft Exchange environment.

### Results

Increased communications and an automated reporting system now ensure important information about flights and customers is sent and received effortlessly. Paperwork has been streamlined, billing cycles are faster, and there are fewer errors and less duplication of effort.

Swift's existing system was paper-based, and relied on flight crews sending and receiving faxes. Most crews have six to eight day rotations, with multiple flights to different locations. The system had numerous limitations, including proximity to fax machines while in transit, one-week delays in completing paperwork, and the potential for missed details about special customer requests.

"When our flight crews returned, they delivered the paperwork filled out for every day of their trip," says Michael White, Director of IT. "That meant we were waiting almost a week before we could process any records, which created an administrative overload as we tried to catch up. Their expenses would come in last, which has a big impact on how fast we can bill our customers for their trips."

## Wireless Logging and Reporting System

Swift was already a BlackBerry customer, with BlackBerry devices deployed to key team members. They realized the further potential of push-based wireless communications by connecting their Microsoft Exchange environment to the BlackBerry Enterprise Server, with the MDS feature, which supports wireless applications. They upgraded to the BlackBerry 7280™ and BlackBerry 7290™ devices, with the converged functionality of email, Internet, phone, and calendar.

But the most important piece of the puzzle was finding a third party supplier who offered out-of-the-box software to connect the devices to CTA's FOS/NT application running on a Pervasive SQL database. Flowfinity entered the picture with Flowfinity Actions, which requires no programming to automatically push actionable lists such as tasks, jobs, tickets, work orders or approval items to BlackBerry wireless devices.

Phase One of the project involved streamlining communications with flight crews by using Flowfinity Actions to automate the logging and reporting system. Phase Two will include automating the expense system.

Flight crews began receiving dispatch information as pre-filled forms, pushed from Flowfinity Actions to the devices. They had all necessary flight information, as well as customer details, such as catering requirements at their fingertips. When they completed a trip, they used the same form to fill in flight data and close out the journey.

## Streamlining Administrative Processes

"One of the benefits is our dispatchers no longer have to retype trip information, since each set of details is being communicated to the Flight Operation System," says White. "That eliminated a whole layer of administrative effort and reduced errors."

He also says customer service was positively affected since the dispatch team was no longer guessing whether the right trip details had made it to the pilots via fax. "When we were relying on faxes and phones, it was easy to miss details, and we had to follow up often. BlackBerry cuts down on those extra phone calls. Now we can be sure we understand our customers' needs and are giving them exactly the service they expect."

Even though Swift has a wireless system, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) still requires a paper log. After the crew submits the wireless reports, they must also complete the official FAA documentation. Instead of objecting to the duplication of this paperwork, the flight crew report that, because the Flowfinity forms mirrors the paper copy, it is simply a matter of transferring already completed information from one place to another. The process is still expedient.

## The Benefits of Partnerships

White reports that deploying the BlackBerry Enterprise Server with Microsoft Exchange 2003 was a painless process, completed in only a few hours. Only minor training was required to familiarize users with the BlackBerry devices and the new application. "The documentation made it very easy and RIM® offered lots of support, if we needed it," he says.

Swift used the customization tools provided with Flowfinity Actions application to configure the forms to ensure the wireless form mimicked the details of the paper copy. Drop down menus were customized to reflect landing information, fuel consumption, flight numbers, etc.

One decision that streamlined the process was pre-filling forms with information they knew to be constants, such as flight numbers. This saved time for flight crews when they closed out their flights. "Flowfinity helped quite a bit," says White. "They helped us make the right decisions in our design process, giving us ideas on workflow from the device to the back end."

Swift also used Flowfinity Solutions Platform technology to do validations to ensure the forms process is better and the information is delivered correctly because the system needs to be able to interpret it. "The integration interface made a big difference right away," says White. "Flowfinity was very responsive and gave us a wonderful experience."

## Phase Two – Next Steps

Swift is currently working to implement Phase Two of this project – wireless expense tracking. With their existing system, expenses are collected as packets which are delivered to the administrative office at the end of a flight week to be entered manually.

BlackBerry and Flowfinity will allow pilots and crews to enter their own expenses directly into the database via their devices. Administrative staff will only have to verify receipts with the electronic forms. "We should be able to reduce our administrative workload and speed up the billing cycle to our customers," says White. "That makes good business sense for the company."

## The Benefits

Swift has not yet completed an ROI analysis of the impact of BlackBerry and Flowfinity on their business. But even without metrics, White can point to numerous benefits that have resulted from the solution:

- Increased communication with flight crews results in more accurate trip information
- Assured delivery of trip information results in better customer service and less follow-up by dispatchers
- Faster electronic reporting speeds up the billing cycle
- Automating a paper-based system results in streamlined administrative processes, reduced paperwork, less duplication of effort and fewer errors
- Device accessibility of management reports and up to the minute operations data



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