

## Air Canada seals the deal with ITA Software for internal passenger reservations system

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**News from Travel Technology Update:** Air Canada and ITA Software put the finishing touches on a contract under which ITA will build a new reservations management system for the carrier, replacing its old RES III system.

Lise Fournel, the airline's senior vice president of e-commerce and chief information officer, said the new system will take a modular approach and include all reservations, inventory control, seat availability, check-in and airport operations systems.

The transition to the new reservations system is slated for next year. Airport modules will probably be rolled out in 2008.

ITA already has some modules in place, she said, such as domestic and international faring, but the airport systems will be entirely new.

"We wanted to change, and we needed a partner that was ready to work with us," she said. "We needed some people who were highly creative. They have creativity."

The deal was signed as Air Canada wrapped up a program "to simplify all our processes and our offerings to our customers" in preparation for the development of the new system, Fournel said.

That project entailed reducing the number of fares, automating vouchers and MCOs and streamlining procedures for handling groups. In all 1,500 items came under the simplification process, Fournel said.

Air Canada wanted a completely new system that could accommodate its new approach to selling air travel.

"We're talking about products with attributes, not just transactions," Fournel said. The carrier's Tango fares, which offer both upsell and downsell opportunities, and its multi-city passes are examples, but the carrier wants to do much more.

Air Canada also envisions a sort of "e-bank" system, in which each passenger would have a personal account and "interact with us in a fully automated mode," Fournel said. For example, if a customer canceled a flight, the credit would automatically go back into his e-bank.

The system will enable the carrier to capture more customer information and, in turn, provide a more personal experience. "The same information will be available at all points of contact," Fournel said, so if the customer has a current or past problem, any airline agent will have the details at hand.

Air Canada had weighed participating in the new reservations system that Amadeus is developing for the Star Alliance, based on its Altia platform.

But the carrier was concerned that the Star system would not address its particular needs and nontraditional style of merchandising. "It would have required so much home-grown development," Fournel said.

Air Canada has been meeting with its Star partners and with Amadeus to ensure that the two systems have "connectivity right up front," she said.