



Application Story

Southwest Airlines

Southwest Deploys WiredRed's e/pop for Fast and Efficient Reservation Center Communications

Southwest Airlines is renowned for its quality customer service, safety and operations as well as its commitment to providing economical flight travel. The fourth largest major airline in the U.S., Southwest flies more than 64 million passengers to 58 cities every year.

Southwest is also a company that prides itself on innovative human resources initiatives. It's a company that believes that its own continued success is very connected to the success and personal growth of its more than 35,000

employees. As a result, Southwest provides its employees with the latest technology and support so that they can perform their duties to the best of their ability. The Company's reservation centers are a good example of its' adoption of the latest technology designed to better communication amongst agents and as a result, help the reservation centers to run more smoothly which translates into better customer service for Southwest's passengers.

Southwest has nine reservation centers located throughout the U.S. Agents in Dallas, Phoenix, Oklahoma City, Little Rock, San Antonio, Houston, Albuquerque, Salt Lake City and Chicago, help Southwest travelers plan their vacations and make reservations for thousands of people every day. Since the agents spend most of their workday on the phone, it seemed a natural means by which to notify the agents that they had an urgent message waiting. The phone switch enabled supervisors to "camp calls" for any extension. When the agents heard a beep while on the phone it meant they had a message waiting. When Southwest decided to upgrade phone switches and systems last spring, it lost this messaging capability and began to search for a comparable replacement.

IT staff decided to look for software alternatives to bring better messaging to the reservation centers and found that Enterprise Instant Messaging (EIM) could fit their requirements. EIM provides the ability to securely communicate in real time despite time or geographic disparity. Companies, schools and organizations worldwide use EIM to increase the efficiency of

Problem:

- New phone system eliminated messaging capabilities
- Finding an EIM product that integrates with established Novell directory

Solution:

- e/pop Professional, secure instant messaging, presence and real time communications for business

Business & IT Benefits:

- Better communication between reservation agents and management
- General communications distributed more efficiently
- Intrusive P.A. bulletins sent less frequently

communications and to help organizations and their employees, partners and customers work smarter through real time interaction.

Once the corporate world saw the advantages of communicating in real time, and found suitable products designed for the business enterprise infrastructure, adoption began at a rapid pace. Leading technology analyst groups, such as International Data Corporation (IDC) and Gartner Group support the notion that the adoption rate will continue to accelerate rapidly. IDC projects that the worldwide messaging applications market, including unified and instant messaging applications will increase from \$1.1 billion in 2001 to \$4.2 billion by 2006. It also predicts that the demand for secure instant messaging applications alone will reach \$781 million by 2006.

In addition, a recent Gartner, Inc. report predicts that employees at 90 percent of large companies will be using IM in the workplace by the end of 2003.

Finding The Right EIM Solution

Southwest's System Design Engineer, Terry Fesenmeyer was tasked with finding a suitable replacement for messaging in the reservation center. He found three EIM products that were compatible with the company's Novell network operating system environment. After a two-month comparative testing phase Fesenmeyer chose WiredRed's e/pop Alert as the new messaging system for Southwest's nine reservation centers and the reservation help center, also located in Dallas. e/pop Alert is a one-way instant alert system that enables designated senders to securely broadcast urgent messages to each user.

"We wanted to leverage what we already had in our NDS directory without recreating it," explained Fesenmeyer. "Many of the EIM products we researched didn't support our NDS environment. Out of the three that did, e/pop was the fastest. It integrated well with NDS and populated the presence system the fastest. Center supervisors can easily manage their individual groups and send message alerts to the groups out of NDS instantly."

Fesenmeyer was also able to provide center supervisors with the ability to manage directories in their respective centers locally using DS Razor, a Novell-compatible product that enables local directory management. The flexibility of e/pop also enabled IT staff to customize the NDS directory interface to e/pop to better suit the needs of the reservation center supervisors.

The presence system in e/pop, which was integrated with the NDS directory, enables Southwest reservation center supervisors to better manage their employees. When each employee signs onto the system they show up as objects which are online and available. Supervisors use e/pop Alert to manage staffing levels, notify employees of important center events and meetings and to inform them of software application availability or network outages.

Bottom Line – Better Internal Communications

Internal communications in Southwest's reservation centers have vastly improved since deploying e/pop, which is currently used in six of the company's nine reservation centers. The former phone switch-based messaging system provided no reporting capabilities nor did it provide the real-time persistent presence found in e/pop. Using e/pop, more messages are sent, general information is disbursed more efficiently, and it has decreased the amount of intrusive

messages sent via the Public Address (PA) system. Center supervisors can now send messages to specific groups or center-wide depending on the situation and can more easily manage staffing levels, increasing the efficiency of center operations and maintaining the high standard of customer service we've all come to expect from Southwest.

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