

## Spirit Airlines: Web Site Flies with Juniper Networks DX

**Business:**

- Largest privately held airline in the United States

**Problem:**

- Needed to architect data center to support increasing use of online reservation system, as well as promotion-driven traffic spikes

**Key Benefits:**

- Increased server capacity and online reservations 30%
- Reduced bandwidth use, enabled launch of new services
- Accelerated download times and improved customer satisfaction

In 2001, Spirit Airlines began considering ways to drive more bookings through its Web site, in order to improve customer service, reduce costs, and increase efficiency. Then, in August 2002, Spirit began promoting free travel for Sept. 11, 2002 – the anniversary of the World Trade Center and Pentagon terrorist attacks. The Web site became overloaded, driving a tremendous increase in calls – more than 100,000 – to the reservation center. All 13,400 seats available September 11 were filled in one day, but something clearly needed to be done to handle future spikes in online demand.

“An airline reservation is a more complicated process and takes up more resources than most people realize,” said David Anderson, Spirit Airlines’ senior vice president and chief information officer. “Our resources were getting stretched anyway, and then we had the promotion for 9/11 in 2002 to thank our customers for being so loyal.

“The level of response brought our server system to its knees. We needed multiple front-end servers and load-balancing capability. That’s what eventually brought us to Juniper Networks.”

Juniper Networks’ DX™ 2200 application acceleration platform is a multi-function network appliance designed to accelerate and secure web site performance as well as improve server capacity and bandwidth usage. The DX 2200 performs compression, Layer 4-7 load balancing, Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) connection management, response buffering, secure sockets layer (SSL) processing, and other functions.

At Spirit Airlines, the DX platform has helped to increase Web-site reservations and sales volume by 30 percent, while keeping the cost of the supporting systems the same. Meanwhile, customers are winning, because Spirit Airlines’ Web site is faster and more responsive, and cost savings are one factor that can help keep fares in check. Also, the company can use the newly freed bandwidth for additional features and functionality, giving customers more choices and potentially increasing their own revenue.

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**David Anderson**  
Senior Vice President and CIO  
Spirit Airlines

“We looked at other possible solutions, and Juniper Networks was the clear winner with regard to features, function, and price,” said Anderson. Spirit Airlines began seeing financial benefits soon after deploying the DX 2200 platform. “We have 30 percent higher sales volume, with even quicker response to customers,” Anderson said. “We’re getting nearly 50 percent of our bookings through the Web site, as opposed to 25 percent before, and the growth potential is significant.”

So far, the customers like the improvements, too. “We’ve gotten lots of comments,” Anderson said, “particularly in the last few months. We’ve been hearing things such as ‘easy,’ ‘quick,’ ‘user-friendly,’ ‘functionally rich.’ That really makes us feel good. We used hear that the Web site was too slow.”

From the airline’s standpoint, the new system is not only faster; it’s also less costly than handling a reservation or other inquiry, such as a change or check of flight status, by phone. In fact,

Spirit Airlines intends to add features and functionality to make its Web site even more valuable to customers, and more of a potential revenue generator. Spirit would like to see the number of transactions over the Web site reach 70 percent of the total.

“Doing this over the Web is by far the least expensive way,” he said. “Making a reservation this way is 20 percent – or less – of the cost of making it by any other method.”

### About Spirit Airlines

In 2003, Spirit had the second highest load factor of any U.S. airline. In five years the airline had doubled its revenues, to a reported \$450 million. During this period of extraordinary growth, Spirit made significant investments in its systems, technology, product, and brand, all focused on improving customer service and satisfaction.



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