

Technology



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Royal Jordanian Airlines



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Royal Jordanian Airlines has come a long way in a short time to introduce the relevant information technology systems for its entry into the oneworld Alliance in early April.

It is the use of IT to support this move that brought Royal Jordanian's efforts to the attention of the *Airline Strategy Award* judges. This is a necessary strategic effort on the carrier's part to join the global alliance community. And although it is adopting the latest technology providers have on offer, the story is not one of technology innovation but rather one of business innovation.

"IT has enabled Royal Jordanian to transform its business," says Samer Majali, Royal Jordanian chief executive. He is one of the few airline chiefs to have previously held the role of chief information officer. In the beginning the carrier looked at building some of the IT in-house, but opted instead for a predominantly outsourced strategy to meet the 15-month deadline.

"The industry doesn't wait for you, the customer doesn't wait for you," explains Majali, adding that the airline's IT department also had to be restructured to align it with Royal Jordanian's new objectives.

The carrier was challenged to introduce four oneworld IT projects – departure control, electronic ticketing, passenger revenue accounting and frequent flyer – within 15 months. And it rose to the challenge, implementing all four oneworld projects, as well as 10 more airline IT projects, within 14 months. The extra projects include revenue management, common use self-service kiosks, common user check-in terminals and baggage reconciliation.

The Amman-based airline has also revamped its website, and is working on making the site available in Arabic, French, German and Spanish, as well as English.

Royal Jordanian's achievements have not gone unnoticed by its oneworld sponsor British Airways, or by the alliance itself. During a ceremony to mark Royal Jordanian's

entry to oneworld, BA chief executive Willie Walsh described the carrier's IT turnaround as "unparalleled in the industry".

This was backed up by oneworld managing partner John McCulloch, who said: "Royal Jordanian went through the changes quicker and more efficiently than we would ever have expected." As one of the judges commented, Royal Jordanian has "made itself relevant".

To comply with oneworld's IT requirements, Royal Jordanian had to replace its old departure control systems with one able to offer electronic ticketing. Ahmad Abu Ragheb, Royal Jordanian's chief information officer, says the carrier faced a "major challenge" in implementing a separate DCS solution for each station, owing to differing infrastructure at various airports. However, he adds that 30 of 50 stations were completed in less than six months.

Alliance membership should help further boost Royal Jordanian's financial turnaround. The carrier has posted consistent net profits over the past three years, and passenger numbers in 2006 rose by 13% to reach two million. Royal Jordanian's long-awaited privatisation is finally moving ahead, with the Jordanian government set to sell off all but a 26% stake this year.

Kerry Ezard



"IT has enabled us to transform our business"

Samer Majali, chief executive, Royal Jordanian