How engineering firm, Bechtel Corporation, challenged travel partners to launch a *first-of-its-kind* NDC pilot program

FCM

The buyer

Bechtel Corporation

The TMC

FCM

The tech

SAP Concur

The airline

United

This is a story of innovation through collaboration...

...and making the complex achievable. It all started when David Weaver, Bechtel Corporation's travel manager, took his travelers' feedback to heart – why couldn't their corporate booking experience better reflect a consumer one? After reflecting on this dilemma, he decided to investigate if New Distribution Capability (NDC) could help fill the gaps in experience.

David reached out to his TMC (at the time) to inquire about what was possible. Unfortunately, that TMC didn't rise to meet David's expectations, which propelled him toward a detailed technical review and RFI process with other TMCs. "It narrowed things down to who was serious enough to go on this path," David said. "We needed parties with the same goals." Travelfusion was selected as the content aggregator, SAP Concur as the OBT, and United Airlines as the key supplier. After a lengthy review process David selected FCM as his new TMC, and new life was breathed into the project.

> **We've done some great things, and there is still more work ahead, but we do want to share what we've accomplished, all through the cooperation of partners.**
>
> DAVID WEAVER
> TRAVEL MANAGER, BECHTEL CORPORATION

Setting goals for the NDC pilot program

NDC is a very hot topic, and for good reason. It has a lot of potential when it comes to improving the traveler experience, but the difficulties with accessing these fares via traditional distribution channels are also well known. This required the team to take a pilot approach to integrating NDC into Bechtel's travel program. David wanted to start by offering two bundles through United to a controlled group of travelers and bookers: airfare + a checked bag, and airfare + Wi-Fi. David was focused not on speed to market but fit to purpose when he chose these two bundles. This involved working through the invoicing process – how does United send the ancillaries through to FCM so Bechtel's finance department can invoice?

The first project phase involved three months of planning, design, and configuration. This included weekly calls to craft a pilot design for online NDC servicing. David and the team decided to start with online-only bookings because servicing NDC fares that way is a bit less complicated.

FCM

David also reached out to participants in Bechtel's travel program who, in his words, had a "high tolerance for variability." Everyone he asked to participate said yes. The traveler experience was crucial to David – no one would know more about changes to the travel process than the travelers, since their experience up until this point had been the same.

I had 100% participation. People said, 'sign me up, I want to be a part of this.' This was validation that we were doing the right thing.

DAVID WEAVER
TRAVEL MANAGER,
BECHTEL CORPORATION

What we wanted was transparency, and we shared this frustration with David. So we worked hard to find a solution for not only him, but for all buyers in our ecosystem.

ANTHONY TOTH
MANAGING DIRECTOR – DIGITAL
SALES, UNITED AIRLINES

It takes a lot of guts and a lot of foresight to realize that the days of working with a single point of sale are gone [...] We need pioneers, and we were delighted to work with a partner like David.

TOM WILKINSON
DIRECTOR OF DISTRIBUTION
& NDC, SAP CONCUR

We've been live with NDC for years with other airlines, so we embraced this opportunity to innovate and get this to the next level.

FLORIAN MUELLER
AIR PRACTICE LEAD,
FCM CONSULTING

The challenges to address

Every pilot isn't without its roadblocks, but the team is committed to iterating on this program to eventually overcome any obstacles.

The team knew that duty of care is a must-have component of any travel program. There was an attempt to change the duty of care process in the pilot from what Bechtel had been traditionally doing in the EDIFACT environment. At this time, they have set up a "roundabout" process to deliver DOC information to Concur. David admits that this works for now but needs to get better.

When working with Travelfusion, it doesn't create a passenger name record (PNR) in your GDS, which means it can't be managed and serviced like a regular GDS booking, and it can't be reported on as easily. When it came to reporting in the pilot phase, it was a matter of looking at the value "lost" but also looking at the value "gained" from using this kind of data.
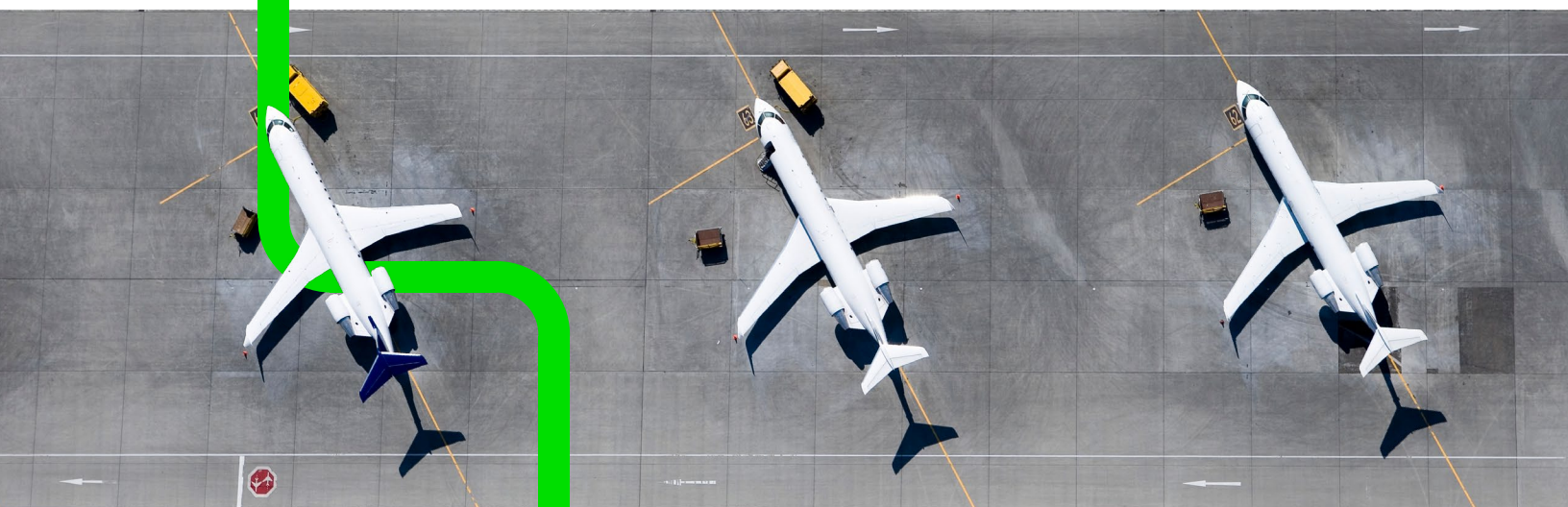
Milestones reached in phase one

Purchasing bundles via Travelfusion	Continuous pricing	Traveler entitlement recognition
Duty of care process	Invoice itemization	

For their work on the pilot program, David awarded Florian (FCM), Anthony (United), and Tom (SAP Concur) each a Bechtel Coin that says "vision, value, and commitments," and recognized them as three partners that embody these values.

All aboard for phase two

According to Florian, the next steps are focused on testing with Concur and Sabre, to explore truly scalable global solutions, which can encompass additional airlines and markets. But the key challenge is servicing and the technology stack – the training of the agents, and the ability to retrieve tickets with FCM's PCCs. The other hurdle is that every airline has a different standard for how they deliver and manage NDC bookings, so what worked for United may not work for other carriers. While the final answers haven't been found yet, Florian is optimistic about the progress the team has made.

David is focused on getting invoicing right – Bechtel has two different travel programs, one for government travelers and one for non-government travelers. It's important that the invoicing meets both commercial and government expense requirements. David was happy to report that all of these things are being managed and investigated by the team.

The achievements made in this pilot program are a testament to the power of productive partnerships and can serve as a beacon for other travel managers who want to challenge what's possible when it comes to servicing and the traveler experience.