



New Airline Storefront

Q&A

Comparison shopping made easy

A conversation with Kathy Morgan, Vice President
of Offer Sourcing at Sabre

Air shopping has become increasingly complex, with many airlines using branded fares and air extras to differentiate their offering and increase traveler value. As a result, travel buyers need a solution that enables like-for-like comparison across offers to help drive more informed decisions. Sabre's new airline storefront provides this modern retailing experience. In this interview, Kathy Morgan shares her views on how the new airline storefront will deliver value across the travel industry and enable personalized retailing.

Q What are some of the specific business challenges that airlines, agencies and corporations face today around the shopping experience in the indirect channel?

A Before unbundling, when a traveler purchased an airline product it was all-inclusive. They were purchasing the right to fly, reserve a seat, bring a bag and have a meal. Then low-cost carriers emerged with a very different value proposition, offering ultra-low fares without any amenities and the ability for travelers to pay for additional products and services in an a la carte manner. Many full-service carriers have since evolved their product offering to compete in this space, resulting in a very different air shopping experience for travelers.

Fast forward to today, that's the challenge for travelers – it's easy to understand the cost, but harder to understand what the experience will be. Will I be at the back of the plane? Will I have legroom? Will I be allowed to put a bag in the overhead bin? This puts a lot of pressure on agencies and corporations to ensure the right product is being purchased for their travelers.

Airlines have invested in differentiating their brand, perhaps by upgrading their fleet, equipping planes with inflight entertainment, or increasing the quality of their food and beverage service. Unfortunately, in many of today's booking tools all airline products look the same. They are reduced to a series of letters and numbers in inventory buckets, limiting an airline's ability to clearly articulate their value proposition.

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Q What is Sabre's new airline storefront?

A The new airline storefront is a framework for delivering easily comparable offers. It seeks to deliver a modern-day retailing experience by providing “shelves” on which travel sellers can display their content side-by-side. This eliminates the confusion caused by different fare naming conventions from one airline to another. That way, the agent, and ultimately the end traveler, has easy access to far more information than the fare price to decide which flight best suits their needs—just like they would on other online retailer sites.

Q How will the new storefront drive value across the travel ecosystem?

A From an airline perspective, the storefront provides a framework to display and articulate their products the way they want them to be sold, allowing differentiation in the indirect channel. There's a lot of dialogue in the market around airlines wanting to enable personalized offers and intelligent retailing, and the new airline storefront supports this need.

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Q How is Sabre's new airline storefront approach different from the ATPCO Next Generation Storefront™ standards?

A Sabre's approach has broader application than ATPCO's Next Generation Storefront™ standards. The ATPCO data standards are primarily anchored on the seat characteristics, where seat attributes like seat pitch, seat location and legroom determine “shelf placement”. Sabre's new airline storefront uses the seat characteristics, along with a variety of other product attributes like baggage allowance, refundability and in-flight amenities to determine shelf placement. By taking the storefront concept further, we are giving agencies and corporations the flexibility to shop based on the ATPCO data standards or the Sabre new airline storefront capabilities depending on their business needs.

From a travel agency perspective, it enables travel consultants to efficiently communicate not only price, but total offer value, to the traveler. Historically, agents had to do complicated research to find information

on different features and attributes. Giving a visual representation in Sabre on what is included or excluded in each offer enables agents to be a true travel expert for their customers. Additionally, our APIs will give agencies the flexibility to create their own storefront.

For corporations, it's about ensuring they are providing their employees with the travel experience they deserve, as well as duty of care capabilities. New airline storefront helps prevent leakage in corporate travel programs (associated to the purchase of products post booking, like pre reserved seats and bags) directly with the airline by ensuring the right product is purchased up front, in the managed channel.

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Q A key value proposition of the new storefront is enabling personalized retailing. How will new airline storefront capabilities contribute to Sabre's vision?

A The new airline storefront articulates the value of each offer and takes into account the full breadth of content, not just the fare. That even extends to non-core services. For example, some top-tier airlines provide black limo transfer services when you book a certain fare class. This service is key to those airlines' value propositions and, if clearly communicated, leads to increased upsell and conversion opportunities.

Behind the scenes, Sabre is using product normalization to power the new airline storefront. The storefront provides the 'wrapper' to cleanly display offers on the shelf, regardless of the source, and evaluate the merit of that offer. Sabre makes the complex simple by eliminating the noise associated with various content sources and content fragmentation.

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Q What future innovation can we expect to see in the new airline storefront?

A New airline storefront is just the tip of the spear in how we're innovating in the way we sell, promote and display offers. It's starting with air, but it could expand beyond that in the future. We're exploring the notion of customized shelves to enable levels of buyer customization, while still allowing airlines to articulate their product in the way they want to. We already have the option in Sabre Red 360 for buyers to choose to see up to five shelves to help meet the needs of the traveler.

The way the storefront looks a year from now could be radically different. We want to get this product out to the market and learn more about what drives greater

traveler conversion and satisfaction. This is the new frontier; I believe you'll see Sabre continue to drive innovation in this area and be a thought leader in personalized retailing for the travel industry.

Q How will the new storefront integrate with other Sabre solutions to enable personalized retailing across channels?

A Sabre is a services-led company, which means the product is developed and orchestrated at a services level and then consumed by multiple points of sale. Creating at the services level ensures consistency of the product structure. This means the data output from Sabre's Bargain Finder Max (BFM) shopping is already structured with the tags needed to place it on the appropriate shelf based on the criteria defined.

We are excited to release this new version of BFM APIs to a pilot customer group in Q4 2020 and with a broad market release in Q1 2021. Then we will quickly work to integrate the new BFM services into our own points of sale, Sabre Red 360 and, later, GetThere. As a result, travel buyers and sellers will start seeing offer consistency regardless of the channel.



Kathy Morgan,
Vice President of
Offer Sourcing

Kathy has worked in the travel industry for 30 years and has held a variety of leadership positions at Sabre in support of the travel agency and travel provider communities. In her current role as vice president of offer sourcing, Kathy is responsible for defining and driving Sabre's product strategy and roadmap for next generation retailing and distribution solutions and leads a team responsible for building solutions to enable these capabilities.