Mobile workforce poised for takeoff to tomorrow

Republic Airways boosts employee recruitment and retention by ensuring work satisfaction with mobility solutions and a hyperconverged infrastructure from the Dell Technologies portfolio.

Business needs

To operate regional flights under three major U.S. carrier brands, Republic Airways flights must consistently offer a safe, clean and reliable flying experience. This mission requires its 6,000 pilots, flight attendants, maintenance technicians and support associates to be skilled, motivated and in love with their jobs, keeping attrition low.

Business results

- Attracts new talent, especially crew members
- Engages employees more broadly and improves retention
- Boosts workforce productivity and efficiency
- Saves IT staff time

Workforce transformation

Whether thrilling potential recruits with simulated flight experiences via virtual reality, enabling mobile employees to access applications and data while on the go or enhancing the work lives of flight crews with a concierge application, Republic Airways is deploying Dell Technologies solutions to transform the workplace to address a growing pilot shortage while also improving workforce satisfaction and retention.

“We can send our mobile LIFT Lab anywhere, cross-country in all kinds of heat, cold, and humidity, and always count on our flight simulation stations to start right up.”

Lauren Gaudion
Director of Communications
Republic Airways
The airline industry has always been competitive, but today competition isn’t just about winning passenger loyalty. It’s about recruiting and retaining flight crews, especially pilots. Pilots from the baby-boom generation are retiring in increasing numbers. In fact, industry analysts forecast that the world will need over 600,000 new commercial airline pilots by 2036.

Republic Airways isn’t waiting for the pilot shortage to impact its operations. Headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, it operates a fleet of about 190 aircraft with 1,000 daily flights to 100 cities in 40 U.S. states, Canada, the Caribbean and Central America. It does not fly under its own brand, however. Instead, its planes and crews represent the brands of its three major partners, all large international carriers.

To address the pilot shortage, Republic Airways established the Leadership In Flight Training (LIFT) Academy. According to Lauren Gaudion, the company’s director of communications, LIFT Academy was created to transform traditional commercial pilot training into a curriculum that’s more affordable, attainable and offers students a direct classroom-to-cockpit opportunity.

“With LIFT Academy, we cut typical tuition costs of commercial flight schools by more than half and expedited learning times, so students can achieve their commercial flight certifications in as little as one year,” says Gaudion. “In effect, we’ve opened the doors to men and women who may have thought that becoming highly paid and respected commercial pilots was beyond their reach.”

“Our workforce will increasingly tap into business intelligence and predictive modeling to be more productive and efficient, using their devices linked to our infrastructure.”

Jim Widmann
Director, IT Infrastructure and Operations
Republic Airways
Addressing tomorrow’s pilot shortage today

LIFT Academy operates at the Indianapolis International Airport, but Gaudion knew they had to seek out candidates by letting them know about it. As a promotional tool, the company deployed a truck-borne LIFT Lab. It’s a mobile flight simulation facility with virtual reality demo stations inside. Branded on the outside, the truck serves as a valuable recruitment tool and is sent to schools throughout the Midwest region as well as air and trade shows.

LIFT Lab visitors experience a five-minute flight simulation via virtual reality technology stations outfitted with high-performance compute power and graphics acceleration needed by the lab’s flight simulation software. This offers them a full flight experience enhanced with high-resolution visualization support. These Dell Technologies provide the magic of flight to an entire segment of society who can now envision themselves in an attainable career.

“We can send our mobile LIFT Lab anywhere, cross-country in all kinds of heat, cold, and humidity, and always count on flight simulation stations to start right up,” Gaudion says. “That’s important because we don’t have the luxury of tech support riding along. And the fact that we can operate the lab with confidence in the performance and reliability of the technology behind it has been a big help in our pilot recruitment efforts.”

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Transforming the workforce with mobile client solutions

Widmann points out that the LIFT Lab is a highly visible part of the company’s broader workforce transformation via their mobility solutions. He estimates that two-thirds of non-crew and mechanic associates use them, while Flight Operations (dispatch, crew scheduling, crew resources, and maintenance control) use desktops IT developers use workstations.

Mobile or not, Republic associates use their devices to access core enterprise applications that reside on converged infrastructure (CI) systems. They are located in redundant, failover data centers. Data is backed up to storage that combines hardware and software for an automated backup and recovery system, saving IT even more time and meeting RTO and RPO objectives.

Enabling business intelligence and predictive modeling

“Going forward, our workforce will increasingly tap into business intelligence and predictive modeling to be more productive and efficient, using their devices linked to our infrastructure,” Widmann says.

“In general, this can help us make better-informed decisions,” he adds. “For example, it can help us get flight and maintenance crews where they must be, especially when weather disrupts schedules. It can also benefit mechanics needing to know part numbers, how many hours of service a part has provided and when it must be replaced. What’s more, these kinds of capabilities can differentiate us competitively.”

Widmann cites an internal mobile application for flight crews as an example of how the company’s digital transformation is improving its working environment. The app provides users with concierge-type information about the cities they’re flying in and out of. “So, while LIFT Academy helps us address the pilot shortage of tomorrow, apps like this show how technology can help us improve workforce satisfaction and retention today.”