

## Northwest Airlines Reaches Thousands of Customers on a Moment's Notice – Without Taxing Agent Resources

*With Varolii Communications, this major airline delivers time sensitive information while improving customer service.*



**If a flight gets cancelled, passengers naturally want to know right away – preferably before they depart for the airport.** When a winter storm or other emergency causes multiple flight cancellations, airlines traditionally pull hundreds of sales agents off potential revenue producing inbound calls to personally contact each affected passenger. To improve upon this labor-intensive process, Northwest Airlines (NWA) partnered with Varolii to enable them to deliver revised itineraries to more than 10,000 customers an hour through personalized, multi-channel messaging. NWA now delivers important news to customers on a moment's notice, while allowing the airline's agents to stay focused on revenue-generating sales calls.

### Managing the Unpredictable

When multiple flights are unexpectedly cancelled, the airline typically reschedules customers by the tens of thousands. To help expedite the rebooking process, NWA modified its Worldspan reservation system to rapidly place passengers on alternative flights. But for delivering new itineraries to its customers, the airline still had to telephone each one individually.

As each agent typically reaches eight to twelve customers an hour, the process was slow. Further, inbound callers had to wait longer for service. This affected not only customer satisfaction, but also revenue generation, since inbound calls produce the bulk of ticket sales.

“Northwest Airlines works to contact customers as quickly as possible when an event changes their travel plans,” says Steve Brown, managing director of customer experience technology for Northwest. “Speed is of the essence, and customers want specifics on what to expect.”

### Highly Personalized, Interactive Communications

To increase the speed and efficiency of its passenger notification process, Varolii interacts with enterprise data applications to deliver personalized messages to customers by phone, email, fax, pager or PDA, and relays their responses back to NWA's customer database.

NWA saw Varolii as an ideal solution for contacting passengers when their flights change. The hosted system could readily integrate with the airline's sophisticated Worldspan system and rebooking algorithm, delivering new itineraries to passengers within six to 15 minutes of each schedule change.



#### CLIENT

Northwest Airlines

#### CHALLENGE

Deliver time-sensitive information without tying up agent resources.

#### SOLUTION

Interactive customer communications that notify thousands of customers of flight status with options to self-serve within minutes.

#### RESULTS

- Improved customer service
- Increased speed in contacting customers
- Allows agents to focus on more revenue generating inbound calls
- Complete integration to Worldspan reservation system

#### Contact Us:

800.206.2979  
[info@Varolii.com](mailto:info@Varolii.com)

“Our customers reacted very positively to the service ...With Varolii in play we are in a better position to balance our dual objectives of revenue generation and great customer service.”

- Steve Brown

Northwest Airlines, Managing Director of Customer Experience Technology

The communications feature a natural, high-quality recorded voice, with text-to-speech technology used only to read the passenger’s name, and the airline could apply their detailed business rules to the messages.

For instance, Northwest specified that if the passenger in question had earned “elite” status, they should have the added options of connecting back to a live agent or forwarding the notification to others toll-free. Varolii implemented the rebooking notification application for Northwest in less than seven weeks.

### More Time for Customers, More Time for Sales

Northwest realized significant business benefits, including:

#### INCREASED SPEED

Varolii contacts tens of thousands of customers per hour, reaching passengers faster, often before they leave for the airport – which significantly improves customer satisfaction.

#### PRODUCTIVITY

It would have taken Northwest agents approximately 12,500 hours to deliver 250,000 notifications. Agents now use this time instead to generate revenue and deliver other customer services. The airline also avoids the disruption of switching agents from inbound to outbound calls.

#### COST-EFFECTIVE

Implementing Varolii has been more cost-efficient than the time-intensive manual process Northwest used previously.

Example: In September 2001, Varolii proved critical to NWA. “After the September 11 tragedy, it was more important than ever to quickly communicate with our customers,” recalls Brown. “Varolii enabled us to immediately send notifications to all those customers whose travel plans had been impacted – without compromising service to other customers or critical parts of our business.”

### ABOUT VAROLII

Varolii® provides on-demand communication software and services that enable organizations to more effectively reach and interact with their customers and employees, getting the best result from every interaction.

[www.Varolii.com](http://www.Varolii.com)

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