



CASE STUDY

Amadeus

> A JOURNEY TO INDUSTRY SERVICE EXCELLENCE WITH ITIL® 4



1. INTRODUCTION

Amadeus is a world leader in providing business critical solutions to help airlines and airports, hotels and railways, search engines, travel agencies, tour operators and other travel players to run their operations and improve the travel experience.

Chris Dolphin is VP for the company's Airlines Global Customer Care division, responsible for defining the vision and strategic direction to support Amadeus IT Solutions used by Amadeus airline customers.

Since late 2018, Chris has been leading a change initiative to adopt the latest evolution in service management thinking, underpinned by ITIL 4 best practice. He spoke to AXELOS* about the company's successes, the areas of opportunities and how ITIL 4 can guide transformation in culture and customer-centricity.

1.1 WHY AMADEUS?

For over 30 years, Amadeus has supported airlines' mission-critical applications, including those used for managing weight balances, passenger check-in systems, and passenger booking via the airline websites. Amadeus ensures that these services are always operational and continue to evolve in line with our customer business objectives.

Amadeus has achieved its top position in the market by investing in innovation. For example, decommissioning the legacy transaction processing facility (TPF) mainframe system and introducing a new open-source platform that allowed airlines to outsource their IT services to Amadeus. Now, airlines benefit from new simpler and agile systems and applications and can maximize operation efficiency and better manage their cost.

2. IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT IN AMADEUS – A TIME FOR CHANGE

Amadeus's previous process-driven approach to IT Service Management (ITSM) served the company well when handling challenges like infrastructure problems, differentiating between problems and incidents, and defining the difference between fixes and recovery.

"Our service support worked well with business-critical issues that needed solutions quickly; the processes were well-built, and our people all spoke the same framework language using ITIL. However, though it worked like clockwork, customers were still unhappy with the way we managed certain things."

Chris Dolphin, Vice President of Customer Care for Airlines, Amadeus

Chris explained that the processes, although effective for internal service support, did not reflect the customer dimension. Customers complained that fixes took too long and did not always restore normal service. This caused ongoing problems, such as travellers being unable to check-in for flights.

This situation was recently complicated by the growth in volume of Amadeus's airline customers. This growth led to more non-business critical issues handled by the support division. As a result, customer satisfaction levels also suffered slight declines.

*AXELOS Limited, a joint venture company created in 2013 by the Cabinet Office on behalf of Her Majesty's Government (HMG) in the United Kingdom and Capita plc (CPL), was acquired by PeopleCert in June 2021.

2.1 SHORT-TERM WINS AND PLAYING THE LONG GAME

Chris Dolphi's team began to address the customer satisfaction issues in a number of ways:

- › reducing incidents by responding more quickly and with greater visibility
- › building a Level 3 engineering team to fix non-code related issues that do not require changes to an application
- › aligning the organization and agreeing on accountability and responsibility while setting KPIs across the support chain.

Global Customer Care Level 3

A specialized group of engineers whose main objectives are to focus on resolving customer issues that do not require code changes and to provide a deeper explanation on complex issues. Since the introduction of Level 3 we have improved the average time of resolving non-code related issues to less than 10 days when Level 3 have the applications in scope.

"We saw these initiatives as quick ways to reduce the backlog of incidents, which was reduced dramatically, while resolution time also came down significantly."

"The Level 3 engineering team has achieved a turnaround time of six days and a resolution rate of 42-90% from the most to the least complex applications. The team has also started working 'expert to expert' with airlines that need a deeper understanding of the application to derive greater value from the service."

"Also, our alignment initiative has increased accountability across the organization for customer experience and satisfaction."
-- Chris Dolphin

The results from Amadeus's customer satisfaction survey at the end of 2018 had improved enough to warrant a celebration. However, Chris knew the organization needed a broader approach to move customer satisfaction and value to the next level.

2.2 CHANGING CULTURE AND BUILDING CUSTOMER CENTRICITY

The need for culture change and a greater focus on customer centricity in the IT support organization at Amadeus was, according to Chris Dolphin, "one of the biggest mountains to climb".

He said: "We had to recognize that not everything negative that happens with a customer's experience of the technology is an 'incident'. It may equally be a service request or a need for additional training."

"Also, there was a discrepancy around defining problem resolution. Previously, Amadeus decided when a problem was resolved, but this was not always the customer's experience. Although we had some of the industry's best engineers, we did not have a complete understanding of our customers' needs."

As a first step in the culture change process, Amadeus engaged Katrina Macdermid - ITIL Master, Human Centred ITIL Service Design Expert, and ITIL 4 author. The initial activities focused on:

- › creating customer personas of airport staff
- › understanding the concept of value co-creation with airlines
- › ITIL 4 training.

2.2.1 CUSTOMER PERSONAS

By spending a day with airport staff working for Qantas (Australia's largest airline) Amadeus was able to identify and define the breadth of customers using its services (a broader range than previously realized) and observe the company's operations up-close.

2.2.2 CO~CREATION

Taking a human-centred design approach, Amadeus fully discovered its customers' pain points and the solutions they needed. This knowledge informed a 'problem statement' that became the starting point for solving immediate problems and led to other solutions

2.2.3 ITIL 4

The introduction of ITIL 4, the latest evolution in ITIL best practice, has provided Amadeus with the opportunity to train and certify staff and adopt certain approaches to support the culture- and customer-centric changes in the organization.

Amadeus's starting point for obtaining benefit from ITIL 4 has been to adopt the guiding principles:

- › **Focus on value: increasing maturity and focusing on the value brought to customers and to Amadeus.**
- › **Start where you are: looking for what makes sense from existing approaches and avoiding repetitive analysis which prevents or impedes improvements.**
- › **Progress iteratively with feedback: gathering feedback from all parties and sharing outcomes.**
- › **Collaborate and promote visibility: breaking down silos and encouraging commitment, motivation, and input.**
- › **Keep it simple and practical: avoiding complicated solutions that are difficult to implement.**
- › **Optimize and automate: providing consistent, frictionless service to customers.**

For Chris Dolphin and his team, ITIL 4 training and certification kick-started the change programme.

"The priority was about putting customers first and providing value. But I knew we couldn't do this alone; it needed the involvement of our customers and partners. Co-creating the value customers expect cannot be done in isolation."

Chris Dolphin, Vice President of Customer Care for Airlines, Amadeus

2.3 PROGRESSING WITH ITIL 4

To date, Amadeus has trained nine members of the team in ITIL 4 Foundation and is investigating additional training for a broader group.

"In Amadeus today, the team speaks the language of continual improvement. The next step is to identify change agents who can share this mindset with others."

"Ultimately, ITIL 4 is bringing together the business and IT services to change the way we operate, become more customer-centric, and co-create value with our airline clients, day-in and day-out." -- Chris Dolphin

3. INTRODUCING ITIL 4: THE RESULTS

ITIL 4 training, according to Chris Dolphin, has generated a new level of excitement in the team, who are pushing its practices internally and are driving change in the organization.

"Our people know there's something new in the air and we have nine ITIL 4-certified people who will ensure our operations don't fall back into the comfort zone of old ways of working."

Chris Dolphin, Vice President of Customer Care for Airlines, Amadeus

The approaches are creating a greater level of collaboration across the company than previously experienced, with cross-functional working between research and development, product development, data centres, implementation, and account teams.

"In the past, we tended to build processes independently with the intention of finding the perfect solution for airlines. Now, we are co-creating the solutions and are in a much better place to understand what is business-critical for them."

"Our airline customers are seeing value and beginning to recognize and expect a new level of customer experience that they can provide to their customers and use to enhance their brand reputation." -- Chris Dolphin

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