



ePartners Success Story

ePartners delivers increased flexibility for Air Charter Connections



Air Charter Connections is a UK-based aviation group that serves clients across the globe. Services include all aspects of aircraft charter: leasing, flight management, consulting, aircraft sales and re-marketing.

Air Charter Connections provides comprehensive solutions at the highest standards. It provides scheduled fleet support, emergency response and executive and group travel, through a network of global resources.

Air Charter Connections acts as a broker of specialized aviation services and has two primary service offerings: Inter-airline leasing (also referred to as wet leasing or ACMI) and Full charter leasing.

Inter-airline leasing

Air Charter Connections specializes in locating and securing access to an aircraft for an airline that needs it in a hurry. There are a number of scenarios that can lead to this type of demand. Maybe an airline finds one of its planes has gone out of service unexpectedly and they need a short-term gap filler. Or it could be they need it for a longer period, maybe to cover a plane going in for routine maintenance, or perhaps to cope with extra demand during peak travel periods.

Another scenario where Inter-airline leasing would be a beneficial option is overcoming new aircraft delivery slips. Air Charter Connections could quickly locate and secure an aircraft for use in the interim. While it has become increasingly common for airlines to loosely partner to fill this short-term gap, it is not the preferable solution for most airlines. It is frequently the case that the temporary aircraft is sourced from other airlines. This means the airline community is, potentially, both supplier and customer to Air Charter Connections.

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Full charter leasing

This model also requires Air Charter Connections to locate and secure an aircraft, but it would be for a client who wants to charter the aircraft for a staff incentive award or as a package with airfare included. Air Charter Connections would supply the plane and ensure all the associated flight details and requirements were taken care of.

“Full charter is where it all started for Air Charter Connections”, says Adam Pinner, Operations and Finance Director for Air Charter Connections. “Full charter is a more tightly defined proposition, more straightforward and it’s a fairly logical step to then move into Inter-airline leasing. However, making that move into Inter-airline leasing changes everything. You have to be a 24 hour operation with global reach. That’s the nature of the industry we now operate in.”

In addition to expanding into the Inter-airline leasing sector, Air Charter Connections has begun to align itself closely with other service providers in the airline industry in order to offer freight and cargo services.

The ePartners Business Solution

The key to understanding why Air Charter Connections needs a sophisticated IT system is in its growth into new business areas. Starting out as a full charter leasing company meant Air Charter Connections could clearly and simply define and differentiate customers and suppliers. But, as Adam Pinner has already outlined, the move to Inter-airline leasing changed all of that. Customers can also be suppliers, for example. Demand can come from anywhere in the world, at any time of day or night. To perform effectively in such an environment requires systems and procedures that are both robust and flexible.

Adam Pinner explains: “We had a system in place already but it was very rigid. It was geared toward having a list of suppliers at one end of our operations and a list of customers at the other. Now, that’s all well and good for something like the full charter work, where it’s quite clear there’s a distinction between the type of company supplying the plane and those

looking to charter it. But once you get into Inter-airline leasing that kind of fixed approach won’t work. Quite simply, we needed more flexibility.”

We knew we didn’t want a bespoke system as there is always the danger that you’ll get locked into painful support contracts,” Adam Pinner contends. “Or worse, your supplier ceases trading, leaving you high and dry.”

Choosing Microsoft technology was very important to Air Charter Connections, so we choose ePartners to supply and implement the Microsoft Dynamics CRM solution. The key to understanding why Microsoft Dynamics CRM was chosen, and why it is such an excellent fit for Air Charter Connections is found in one word... flexibility.

“We wanted the option to be able to add some bespoke elements to the system and tailor it to meet certain precise requirements. We were also drawn to the familiar look and feel that you get with Microsoft Dynamics CRM. Anyone used to working with Outlook is going to feel at home with it. Another key element is that it integrates so well with other applications, which makes working with accounts and finance so much easier,” says Adam Pinner.

Ensuring there would be ongoing support – avoiding the left high and dry scenario – was important, obviously. But so too was finding a partner that Air Charter Connections felt confident in using.

Adam Pinner explains the decision to work with ePartners. “ePartners came to us via a recommendation from Microsoft, which obviously counts for something. They certainly had the right credentials too. But just as important was that ePartners understood our business model; like us, ePartners has people working remotely, so understanding how important that was to us was not an issue. In any situation working alongside an implementation partner requires time and effort to ensure the relationship works. You can’t regard the partner as outsiders and expect things to work – it really is a partnership and both parties have to put effort in. We work well with ePartners and are very pleased with the way things are going.”

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Benefits

Thanks to the Microsoft Dynamics CRM system now in use, Air Charter Connections can easily import data on airlines and their aircraft fleet, and can keep this information up-to-date automatically. That's something that simply could not have been done before. It was done manually, researching, sifting and keying in data. A time-consuming process, heavily reliant on individual employees' accuracy rates – far from ideal for such a vital operation.

Other key benefits Air Charter Connections has seen include the ability to track all emails and communications with suppliers, customers and partners.

Adam Pinner outlines some of the other benefits derived from the ePartners solution. "Having a real-time database of aircraft availability is vital to our operations and is something we now have and can rely on confidently. This has allowed us to run advanced searches for those customers with specialist needs, and the speed with which we can now send our information is significantly better than we could have ever hoped for previously."

Air Charter Connections has grown rapidly as a business and is on course to continue growing. Rapid growth means you have to be able to turn work around faster with more confidence and also be able to take on a variety of work. Coping with this growth, and the changes that come with growth, would not have been possible without the Microsoft Dynamics CRM system implemented by ePartners.

ePartners heritage

ePartners has successfully deployed over 8,000 implementations in more than 45 countries and 50 industries. The company invests millions of dollars and tens of thousands of hours each year to develop these solutions that have previously been unavailable.

Through this experience, of delivering business applications that transform the way businesses operate, ePartners is the ideal partner for businesses seeking to transform their operations.

Sam Dharmasiri, Managing Director of ePartners UK, describes how ePartners' own experiences made it the ideal partner for Air Charter Connections. "We are a truly global operation, in fact we are one of the world's largest and most experienced Microsoft Dynamics partners. Our consultants are routinely onsite with our clients and have constant access to our global IT systems. So when Air Charter Connections outlined their requirements to us, we knew instinctively what would work for them. We have the experience needed to be able to integrate applications and provide innovative solutions for our customers and strive to exceed their expectations and to help their businesses achieve their full potential."



After more than a decade of arming its customers with a competitive advantage, ePartners has established itself as the largest global Microsoft Business Solutions consultancy in the world. From aligning their clients' business and IT strategies; to improving business processes; and deploying and supporting solutions that accelerate business results, no other Microsoft Business Solutions partner offers more comprehensive information technology solutions and services than ePartners. Last year alone more than 300 leading companies spanning 45 industries, turned to ePartners for strategic business solutions and consulting services. Visit epartnersolutions.com to view additional case studies

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