

American Airlines–US Airways IT Systems Integration: A Resource Management Lens

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American Airlines and US Airways joined forces in 2013, making them world's largest airline. They had to integrate operations and IT systems, like reservations and flight stuff, to save money and run smoother. They switched everything over bit by bit, practiced a lot, and had a central control room to keep things from going wrong for customers (Cranky Flier, 2015). This helped them get a single operating certificate, too (American Airlines, 2013, American Airlines, 2015).

Objectives, Scope, and Stakeholders

Goals. Operate as one airline by integrating core systems and capturing synergies (American Airlines, 2013).

Activities. Consolidate reservations/loyalty/web; crew/maintenance/scheduling; complete SOC compliance; convert stations; retire legacy brand (American Airlines, 2013; 2015).

Participants. Exec leadership; IT/ops leaders; regulators (FAA/DOJ); unions; vendors/integrators; airport authorities; customers; shareholders.

Resource Management Across the Lifecycle

Initiation/Planning: Capacity-constrained sequencing prioritized SOC readiness and high-risk cutovers, balancing compliance, training, and change windows (American Airlines, 2015; Cranky Flier, 2015).

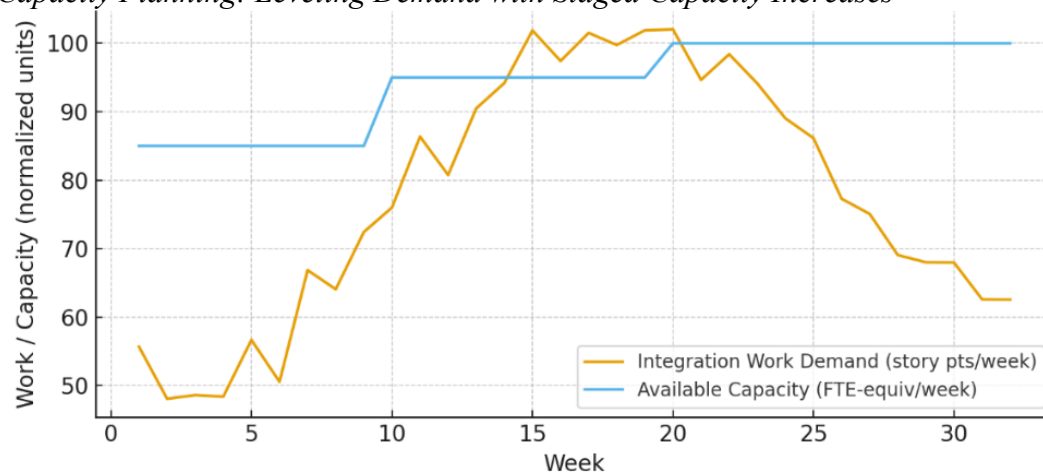
Execution: SOC drove large waves of training/procedures at a pace determined by capacities from simulators/instructors/line-checks; the PSS migration utilized full rehearsals, phased go-lives, and 24/7 cross-functional command centers to minimize time-to-repair (Cranky Flier, 2015).

Monitoring/Control: A central PMO and Finance tracked the portfolio/time and forced capacity modeling to approve scope; any potential bottlenecks with staffing (integration engineers, station teams) and timed releases around peak travel windows (Planview, 2017), expected availability factor impacts (see Figure 1).

Stabilization: Surge “tiger teams” and vendor SMEs forced defect burn-down, resolution of airport-station issues, and bred brand-sunset changes to stabilize operations (Cranky Flier, 2015).

Figure 1

Capacity Planning: Leveling Demand with Staged Capacity Increases



Note. Illustrative only; staged capacity increases smooth peaks and enable on-time releases.

Tools and Techniques

PPM/Capacity Planning: Use Planview for elapsed time entry, visual resource demand/supply, capitalizing accuracy, and staff scenarios to evaluate other trade-offs and realistic scheduling (Planview, 2017).

Program Scheduling: Primavera-like scheduling/resource coordination for multi-airport conversions, station work, and construction dependencies (Planview, 2017).

Cutover Playbooks: Weekend rehearsals, SME command centers, and set rollback criteria to minimize risk now of change (Cranky Flier, 2015).

Challenges and Responses

Staffing capacity constraints, regulatory constraints, and customer risk. Utilized limited number of integration specialists and station teams by centrally managing capacity windows through vendor augmentation; prioritized SOC artifacts and training; and defined a phased cutover within PSS with supplemental staffing and customer and airport communications (American Airlines, 2015; Cranky Flier, 2015; Planview, 2017).

Table 1
Stakeholder Matrix and Resource-Focused Actions

Stakeholder	Primary Interests	Resource-Focused Actions
Regulators (FAA/DOJ)	SOC certification; consumer protection	Early artifact alignment; staff compliance workstreams first; gate schedule on readiness
Labor Unions	Training throughput; work rules	Lock training calendar; coordinate simulator/instructor slots; change briefings & cadence
IT/Operations Leaders	Cutover risk; operational continuity	24/7 command centers; defined rollback criteria; real-time KPIs for go/no-go
Vendors/Partners	System interfaces; station conversions	SLA-backed surge capacity; on-call SMEs for cutovers; joint runbooks
Customers/Airports	Service reliability; messaging	Brand sunset plan; proactive comms; staffed airport support desks

Impact on Success and Financials

Through capacity planning and phased delivery, timely cutover of SOC & reservations occurred with limited operations disruption facilitating synergy capture and protecting revenue

and customer experience (American Airlines, 2015; Cranky Flier, 2015; Planview, 2017). Portfolio visibility enabled re-work reduction, stabilization time, and strengthened the connection between resources spent and how those translated into outcomes (Planview, 2017).

Alternatives & Recommendations

Roadmaps driven by capacity: publish dates only when resource models establish feasibility (Planview, 2017).

Automated dependency mapping: visibility into cross-systems/interfaces/jobs/access at the outset.

Rotating pools of enemies: pre-registered cross-domain SMEs to absorb peak spikes.

Takt-style leveling: reduce onboarding and station conversions; phase everything into off-peak.

Temporary SLO/error budget gates: objective go/no-go per wave to preserve reliability and customer impact (Cranky Flier, 2015).

Recommendations for Future Large-Scale IT Integrations

Enterprise Project and Portfolio Management: Responsible authorities use live capacity and scenario planning to plot milestones that are capacity-gated (Planview, 2017).

Cutovers as mini-programs: Conduct rehearsals, start command centers, build rollback plans (Cranky Flier, 2015).

Regulatory gating: Gate to resourcing; compliance and training takes precedence (American Airlines, 2015).

Outcome Tracking: Defect burn-down, MTTR, disruption and synergy; re-balance capacity (Planview, 2017).

References

American Airlines. (2013, February 14). *American Airlines and US Airways to create a premier global carrier.* <https://news.aa.com/>

(Merger overview, objectives/scope.)

American Airlines. (2015, April 8). *American Airlines receives single operating certificate.* <https://news.aa.com/>

(SOC milestone and regulatory integration.)

Cranky Flier. (2015, May 14). *American and US Airways are doing their reservation system migration differently, and it's paying off.* <https://crankyflier.com/>

(Reservations/PSS cutover approach: rehearsals, phased go-live, command centers.)

Planview. (2017, February 13). *American Airlines: Investment and capacity planning.* <https://blog.planview.com/>

(Portfolio/time tracking, capacity planning, capitalization accuracy.)