

01 ATPCO /
SITA
NDC EXCHANGE





NDC EXCHANGE

The New Distribution Capability (NDC) envisioned in IATA Resolution 787 is almost four years old. Since then, there has been a great deal of activity around refining the XML schema and defining the business requirements for flight shopping, order creation, managing payments and accountable documents.

Despite this substantial activity and the potential benefits of NDC adoption for the industry, the actual number of NDC-facilitated bookings taking place in the industry is growing. Solutions are needed to address some challenges about the supply of technology to travel agents, the business processes to be followed, and—as usual with major technology changes—the sheer inertia involved in replacing a set of established processes with new alternatives.

This is the environment in which ATPCO and SITA have initiated a joint program to remove some of the obstacles to the adoption of NDC across the airline industry. SITA and ATPCO supply essential services to support airlines and their distribution partners.

In broad terms, ATPCO's expertise is in the management and distribution of fare and fare-related data to ensure pricing accuracy. This has recently been extended to provide a wider range of services, including baggage allowance and charges and ancillary services. SITA's ongoing role has been to support the communications backbone for the air transport industry, with both message-handling and data-connectivity services for airlines and their various trading and operations partners.

Today's approach to exchange NDC messages, mainly relying on point-to-point exchanges, is expected to become increasingly complex and difficult to sustain as NDC approaches industry scale adoption. SITA and ATPCO are therefore collaborating to develop a new generation of industry infrastructure to support the emerging NDC distribution needs of airlines. This innovative approach, NDC Exchange, is designed to translate multiple XML message formats so they can be freely exchanged, enabling airline industry interoperability between NDC stakeholders.

Combining these industry-owned organizations' resources creates the potential for an industry NDC utility platform that can provide suitable services to allow airlines, aggregators, and travel sellers to use the powerful new capabilities that NDC offers in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

The NDC utility platform allows one-to-many in its distribution model.

1. Sellers
2. API
3. NDC Exchange
4. Suppliers



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1. SCHEMA EXCHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

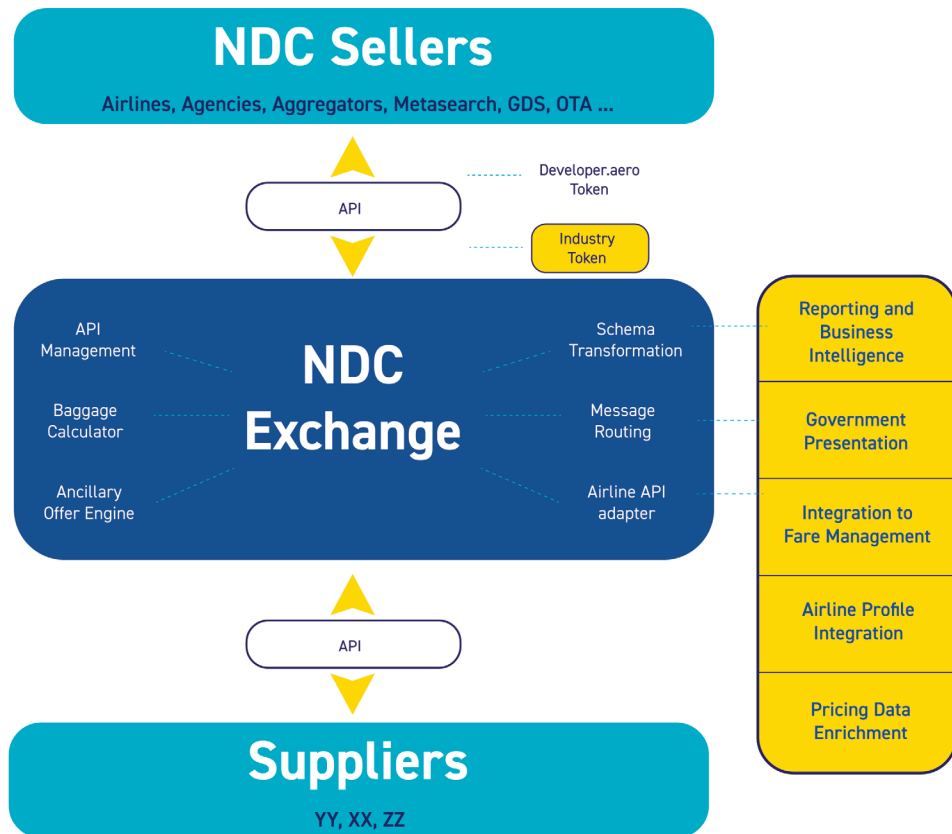
For airlines adopting an NDC-like approach, the coexistence and use of multiple XML schema versions is becoming increasingly problematic. Today, multiple NDC and NDC-like schemas are in use, including OTA, Open AXIS (OA), NDC 1.0.0, and NDC 1.1.3. Additionally, IATA plans to release two new versions of the NDC schema per year going forward.

NDC Exchange will utilize the SITA Messaging environment to ensure high security and integrity and to enable support for forthcoming capabilities, such as the proposed IATA secure token service. NDC Exchange will also draw on the extensive experience of both organizations in providing high-throughput services from a network of data centers across the globe.

2. ACCELERATE NDC INDUSTRY IMPLEMENTATION

Another expected benefit of NDC Exchange will be saving of costs associated with development and maintenance (such as labor, hardware, and IT vendor expenses). NDC Exchange will provide carriers with ready access to all the parties connected to the service, regardless of the schema version. This not only allows for easy access to many distribution points, but also speeds time-to-market since carriers will no longer need to develop new schemas, or more importantly, wait for their technology partners' release schedules.

THE NDC EXCHANGE VISION



Comprehensive data maintenance

NDC Exchange will provide options to feed a centralized repository of an airline's current and historical data that can be leveraged as required to facilitate auditing, market analysis, competitive monitoring, and business intelligence.



3. VALUE-ADDED SERVICES

NDC Exchange will also help to combine traditional and new distribution capabilities, thereby creating additional value options to facilitate transition to NDC.

Example: Industry data format conversion

Converting the XML message to an industry-standard format—such as ATPCO's fare and rule data—will enable airlines to operate NDC seamlessly alongside their existing processes, which are compatible with ATPCO fare and rule data today.



PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy behind this initiative is that there are a set of services that can create value for the industry when made available to all participants in an NDC ecosystem. It would of course be possible for each entity to procure all of its own services, but history shows that the industry may be best served by building common services and sharing the cost and effort across a wide user base.

This approach has been adopted by ATPCO and SITA throughout their history and is an approach that can continue to create value for the industry as it moves to a new generation of processes and technologies.

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