TIP SHEET

High Speed Connectivity in the Sky

Meeting Passenger Expectations Starts with Choosing the Right Provider

Choosing a connectivity provider is an important decision – one with both an immediate and lasting impact. Inflight connectivity affects airlines and their ability to support the needs of today's connected passengers. According to SITA, 97 percent of airline passengers currently carry at least one internet-connected personal device[1], so clearly the need exists now.

However, connectivity choices have a longer-term impact as well. Cisco reports that the number of devices connected to IP networks will be more than three times the global population by 2021.[2] Airlines must have the bandwidth to support that growth if they hope to stay competitive.

How can an airline choose a provider that meets its immediate needs but also enables future connectivity growth?

1 CONFIRM YOUR COVERAGE

Many high-throughput satellite (HTS) operators make claims about their ability to provide global connectivity. To truly understand a provider's coverage, find out how many satellites the provider has globally. It's important to understand how resilient their network will be given there are hundreds of other planes and applications pulling from the same capacity source. Relying on a single satellite in any given region is risky – choose a provider that delivers layers of capacity stemming from numerous satellites to give you added assurance that you are covered.

2 CONSIDER YOUR ROUTES

Talk to your potential provider about how they cover highly trafficked routes. Many airlines follow similar flight paths, so it's important to know what is being done to manage demand and layer capacity. Do they rely entirely on HTS spot beams? Is there a way to offload the traffic to other in-orbit resources? Ask these questions to understand the options your potential provider has to ensure you are protected against network congestion and that your passengers will have seamless and consistent connectivity.

[1] The Future is Personal in Air Travel, SITA, February 24, 2015
[2] The Zettabyte Era: Trends and Analysis, Cisco, June 7, 2017

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3 UNDERSTAND THE ENTIRE NETWORK DESIGN

Connectivity improvements should be felt immediately, and they should not require a costly implementation of new hardware. Make sure your prospective provider has an open architecture that gives you technology options today and well into the future, so you can reap benefits right away.

4 ENSURE YOUR PROTECTION

When choosing a provider, make sure you understand the security of the entire connectivity architecture, not just the satellites. Ask for third-party audits and verification of the network security posture to ensure the provider is prepared to mitigate the varying types of cybersecurity attacks that are pervasive in today's environment.

5 DETERMINE SERVICE SPEEDS

Passengers expect inflight connectivity to be equal to what they experience at home or at work. For business travelers, the ability to easily connect to the corporate VPN and work uninterruptedly is becoming a deciding factor when choosing an airline. Be sure to confirm internet speeds with your prospective provider, and consider both throughput speeds and return rates before making a decision, as this is an area where the ranges can differ significantly between providers.

Choosing an inflight connectivity provider is an important decision that has lasting implications for an airline. It is not to be taken lightly, but knowing the right questions to ask informs smart decision-making and connectivity choices that enable future growth and success.

Contact your sales representative to learn how Intelsat's solutions can allow service providers to efficiently access and incorporate high-throughput satellite technology into new and existing networks.

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