Case Study

CCC helps ATPCO build an enterprise content services platform vision

ATPCO plays a vital role in the worldwide airline industry by driving and documenting the standards behind automated pricing for airfares and fees and for other passenger services such as baggage and amenities.

These standards provide a mechanism to ensure consistent pricing for each individual airline from the approximately 100,000 travel agencies that book flights for travelers with the 400+ airlines across the globe.

The standards comprise more than 200 documents and 5,000 data elements, all of which ATPCO must organize in a way that makes them easy to use for airlines and travel services, as well as for the organization’s standards experts, who author and update the standards.

“Other potential partners we spoke with took a solutions-based approach and presented their existing product set, or they told us they would be willing to build anything we wanted. But we needed advice on what to build, and we wanted a partner who could consult on all the components that go into a content services platform—from both the audience perspective and the author/editor perspective. That’s exactly what CCC offered,” said David Smith, Certified Standards Professional, ATPCO.

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The challenge

In 2019, David Smith, a certified standards professional and ATPCO veteran, became the organization’s first Head of Standards & Governance. One of Smith’s primary responsibilities was to modernize ATPCO standards in order to drive greater agility and usability of the standards, and to preserve the knowledge of ATPCO’s standards experts.

“Since our launch more than 50 years ago, we have been recognized for the quality of our standards in the airline industry,” Smith says. “We want to further elevate our reach by making it easier to consume the standards—particularly for new people coming into the industry who oversee pricing policies for airlines and travel services. This is also important to us internally as we bring new standards experts on board. We want them to be able to jump right in when they are reviewing the standards.”

As Smith took on the challenge, it became clear that he needed to assess the four dimensions of people, process, content and technology, in order to develop the plan. He also realized that the way the standards content was structured and stored would be essential to his success.

Three core objectives

1. **Inventory assets**
   
   As recommended by the Society for Standards Professionals (SES), Smith planned to inventory ATPCO’s assets. This inventory activity included categorizing assets across all four dimensions. From there, Smith took an industry-agnostic approach to determine what ATPCO needed to develop a modern standards program backed by a content services platform.

2. **Chart a course to move the standards to a content services platform**

   Smith felt it would be helpful to collaborate with a partner who could offer expertise in developing the plan, as well as provide industry-leading practices for standards development. “We value the perspective of someone from outside the airline industry who can guide us in creating a blueprint for designing the content services platform we required,” Smith explains. “Before simply implementing a solution, we needed a path for how to get there. This was key for both our standards team as well our senior leadership team, who needed to be completely on board about the value to the industry.”

3. **Find a partner who offers a consultative approach**

   Smith found the right partner for ATPCO at an SES conference. He met a team from Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. (CCC) who offered a comprehensive consultative approach to develop all facets of a content services platform by considering the people, process, and content, in addition to technology.
The solution

Leveraging a technology-agnostic management consulting approach along with insights from previous engagements involving the management of standards content, CCC conducted a two-day workshop with a cross-functional ATPCO team. CCC applied its proven Vision Mapping framework to the challenges, allowing ATPCO to develop its high-level program requirements, identify areas ready for process automation and streamlining, and generate a long-term vision to leverage the appropriate enabling technologies. All of these were produced within the context of ATPCO’s unique position in the airline industry, the organization’s digital readiness, and their future vision of standards and the standards organization.

With CCC’s help, ATPCO can now apply the requirements and a roadmap to the content services platform it will eventually implement. CCC also provided recommendations on the project implementation schedule, managing outsourced development vs. in-house development, resource requirements, and a holistic strategy that covers content, people, processes, and the content services platform.

By working with CCC to develop a blueprint for the content services platform, ATPCO also picked up ideas to create a more agile standards development process—where the organization focuses on producing “minimum revisable units” of content. This approach will enable ATPCO to commit to delivering standards to the industry faster.

“As a quick win, we’re now chunking our data, so we no longer have to scrutinize entire documents,” Smith points out. “And we’re managing pieces of data in a smarter way by removing jargon and avoiding formats that are a barrier to learning. We’re also making it easier for our experts to do what they are good at—writing the highest-value pricing and retailing automation standards for the airlines and our travel agency customers.”
By collaborating with CCC, ATPCO was able to develop a blueprint built upon industry standards that details the tools required to execute the plans in a much faster timeframe.

“This will enable us to efficiently manage complex workflows and avoid the risk of going down the wrong path,” Smith says. “The final plan is also technology-agnostic and usable for any number of content technologies we may choose to deploy.”

CCC also advised on industry-leading process and content-management practices within the standards and publishing industries. ATPCO now has a clear picture of how to structure its planned content services platform and how to leverage authoring tools.

“Another benefit we received by going through the Vision Mapping process with CCC is that they confirmed our standards are fit-for-purpose,” Smith adds. “We also validated our content is solid, and that the path we are taking to digitization is a good one.”

By collaborating with CCC, ATPCO has made it easier to communicate to all stakeholders—airlines, travel agencies, internal management and standards teams—what the organization is planning to do and how it will achieve those milestones.

“The progress we have made is underscored by an industry magazine that recently referenced us as an airline industry standards platform,” Smith emphasizes. “That shows how our reputation and reach in the industry is being enhanced as our standards become part of the common language.”

We do not have the expertise in-house for devising the processes, nor do we have the required resource bandwidth for producing the vision, roadmap and requirements of a content services platform. Finding a partner like CCC was critical to our success.”