

AA HEAT Program: The airline technology designed to keep your next flight running on-time

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SUMMARY

American Airlines has introduced a new software program called the Hub Efficiency Analytics Tool (HEAT) aimed at significantly reducing flight cancellations by proactively managing disruptions caused by weather, maintenance, and crew requirements. This innovative tool allows the airline to optimize flight schedules and provide passengers with alternative options during anticipated delays.

- HEAT analyzes weather forecasts and their potential impact on flights to prevent cancellations.*
- The software enables American Airlines to manage crew and flight logistics more effectively during disruptions.*
- Passengers may receive alternative flight options through the airline's app if bad weather is expected.*
- American Airlines can now choose which flights to delay rather than relying solely on air traffic control decisions.*
- The goal is to ensure passengers reach their destinations on the same day, even during adverse conditions.*
- Customers are encouraged to use the airline's app or social media for quicker assistance during flight issues.*

NEW SOFTWARE DESIGNED TO KEEP YOUR FLIGHT FROM BEING CANCELED LONG BEFORE PROBLEMS ARISE. DOUG DUNBAR GIVES YOU AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK AT HOW AMERICAN AIRLINES IS MAKING THIS HAPPEN. Reporter: YOUR FLIGHT IS CANCELED, NO MORE FRUSTRATING WORDS TO HEAR IF YOU'RE THE ONE TRAVELING. TWO WEEKS AGO UNITED AIRLINES WAS THE LATEST TO SEE MULTIPLE DAYS OF BAD WEATHER AND STAFFING ISSUES CAUSE CHAOS FOR THOUSANDS OF PASSENGERS. JUST BEFORE THE FOURTH OF JULY HOLIDAY. IN FACT, UNITED TALLIED 40,000 DELAYS AND NEARLY 8,000 CANCELLATIONS. AND WHILE MOST MAJOR AIRLINES HAVE DEALT WITH THESE KINDS OF MAJOR DISRUPTIONS IN RECENT YEARS, FORT WORTH-BASED AMERICAN AIRLINES RECENTLY ROLLED OUT A NEW INTERNAL PROGRAM THAT'S AIMED AT CUTTING WAY DOWN ON CANCELLATIONS AND ON THEIR BEST DAYS ELIMINATING THEM. FROM ARRIVAL TO DEPARTURE, LOADING FUEL TO OFFLOADING BAGS, MANAGING THOUSANDS OF FLIGHTS EVERY DAY IS NOT EASY. ADD IN BAD WEATHER OR BAD TECHNOLOGY AND THAT DELICATE BALANCE OF GETTING YOU WHERE YOU'RE GOING CAN BECOME A HOUSE OF CARDS.

THEY SAID THE SOONEST THEY COULD GET ME OUT WAS SATURDAY EVENING. Reporter: REMEMBER THIS FROM BACK IN DECEMBER? A MAJOR SYSTEMS MELTDOWN AT SOUTHWEST AIRLINES LED TO OVER 16,000 CANCELED FLIGHTS AND 2 MILLION PASSENGERS STRANDED.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM -- IT WAS BAD FOR THE INDUSTRY, YOU KNOW. AND I HATE IT FOR WHAT HAPPENED AT SOUTHWEST BECAUSE IT AFFECTS ALL OF US. WE HAVE A CREW COORDINATOR, AN AIRCRAFT ROUTER. Reporter: THE COO AT AMERICAN AIRLINES. THE GUY WHO ROLLED OUT A NEW PIECE OF SOFTWARE AT AMERICAN LAST YEAR, DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY TO KEEP YOUR FLIGHT OUT OF THE CANCELLATION COLUMN LONG BEFORE PROBLEMS LIKE BAD WEATHER EVEN ARRIVE.

AND WHAT WE WANT TO DO IS TRY AND TAKE MORE CONTROL OF HOW WE MANAGE DURING A MAJOR DISRUPTION. AND SO THIS TOOL ACTUALLY NOW ALLOWS US TO SOLVE NOT JUST FOR THE WEATHER BUT WHEN WE SOLVE FOR WEATHER IMPACT WE CAN ALSO SOLVE FOR OUR MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS OR CREW REQUIREMENTS OR CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS, ALL OF THESE THINGS TOGETHER TO COME WITH A SYSTEM SOLUTION VERSUS AN INDIVIDUAL SOLUTION. Reporter: DURING ANY GIVEN SHIFT HERE INSIDE THE AMERICAN CENTER, THERE'S OVER 400 PEOPLE WORKING THIS SIDE AND THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM. BUT WHEN YOU GET TO AN ANTICIPATED BAD WEATHER DAY, LIKE THE DAY WE'RE VISITING NOW, ALL THE INFORMATION IN THIS ROOM WILL EVENTUALLY FILTER UP TO HERE, A PLACE THEY CALL THE BRIDGE.

WE HAVE PEOPLE LOOKING AT WHAT AIRCRAFT ARE FLYING FROM A TO B, WHAT COULD BE WRONG WITH THE AIRCRAFT. WE'RE LOOKING AT DO WE HOLD, DON'T WE HOLD. Reporter: THE SOFTWARE TOOL THAT OPERATIONS DIRECTOR FRANK COPPOLA AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE USING NOW IS CALLED THE HUB EFFICIENCY ANALYTICS TOOL, HEAT FOR SHORT. IT'S ESSENTIALLY CUTTING EDGE SOFTWARE THAT CAN ANALYZE THE FORECAST, THE LIKELY IMPACT ON EVERY FLIGHT IN THE SYSTEM, INCLUDING YOURS, AND THEN OFFER UP A SOLUTION TO AVOID AS MANY CANCELLATIONS AS POSSIBLE.

THE HEAT SOLUTION TAKES SOME OF THAT GUESS WORK OUT OF IT BY MOVING CREWS AND FLIGHTS TO WHERE THE CREWS CAN HANDLE DELAYS AND WHERE WE CAN MOVE FLIGHTS FROM A HEAVY BANK TO A SMALLER DEPARTURE BANK OR A SMALLER ARRIVAL BANK AND KIND OF FLATTEN EVERYTHING OUT SO AT LEAST WE HAVE A CONSTANT FLOW OF AIRCRAFT. Reporter: IF YOU'VE FLOWN AMERICAN OVER THE LAST YEAR AND NOTICED THE APP NOW OFFERS YOU AN ALTERNATIVE FLIGHT OPTION IF BAD WEATHER IS EXPECTED DURING YOUR SCHEDULED ARRIVAL OR DEPARTURE, THAT IS ALL PART OF THE HEAT PROGRAM.

BUT WHAT THIS ALLOWS US TO DO IS CHANGE THE SCHEDULE, NOTIFY CUSTOMERS, AND SO THEY CAN LOOK AT REROUTE OPTIONS THAT WE WOULD OFFER THROUGH OUR TECHNOLOGY TO THEIR MOBILE APP TO SAY, HERE'S ANOTHER OPTION. CHARLOTTE'S IMPACTED BY WEATHER, WE HAVE ANOTHER WAY TO GET TO YOUR DESTINATION. Reporter: YOUR HEAT PROGRAM IS AS GOOD AS IT CAN BE BASED ON A FORECAST MODEL, RIGHT? WHICH ISN'T ALWAYS ACCURATE, WE KNOW THAT, RIGHT? IT'S FUNNY YOU ASKED THAT.

WE'RE GOING TO HAVE THE ABILITY TO MAP OUT DELAYS. IN THE PAST, AIR TRAFFIC WOULD SAY WE'RE GOING TO DELAY YOUR FLIGHTS 85 MINUTES ACROSS THE BOARD. AND THEY CHOSE WHO OUR FLIGHTS WERE. WITH THIS HEAT SOLUTION THAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, WE GET TO CHOOSE WHAT FLIGHTS WE WANT TO DELAY. Reporter: SO AMERICAN'S IN CHARGE OF ITS OWN DESTINY WITH THAT. EXACTLY RIGHT. Reporter: NEW TECHNOLOGY NAVIGATING ONE OF THE OLDEST PROBLEMS FOR PASSENGERS. WHEN THE WEATHER'S OVER, EXCUSES ARE OVER, AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO FOCUS ON AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE ABLE TO DELIVER.

Reporter: HE TOLD ME DELAYS, THEY'RE INEVITABLE, ESPECIALLY WITH BAD WEATHER, BUT THE GOAL FOR AMERICAN IS TO GET YOU WHERE YOU'RE GOING ON THE VERY SAME DAY. AND HE ALSO SHARED A COUPLE OF TAKEAWAYS THAT YOU YOU HAVE A SITUATION WITH A FLIGHT. USE THE APP. IF YOU'RE NOT USED TO IT, THAT IS TIED INTO THE HEAT PROGRAM. AND YOU CAN OFTEN GET THINGS SQUARED AWAY QUICKEST ON YOUR PHONE OR DEVICE. IF NOT, HERE'S A SECOND IDEA, MESSAGE THEM ON TWITTER.

EVEN HE ADMITTED TO ME THAT THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM OFTEN RESPONDS WAY FASTER AND MORE EFFICIENTLY THAN YOU SITTING THERE WAITING IN A LONG LINE AT THE AIRPORT OR EVEN TRYING TO CALL THEM. I'M DOUG DUNBAR, CBS NEWS TEXAS.