



## “Airserv” delivers efficiencies in airline food supply chain DHL/Northern Foods Case Study



### Introduction and Overview

DHL one of the world's largest logistics companies signed a deal in May 2009 to provide all short haul and domestic catering services for British Airways. This was the first ever logistics supplier/airline deal aimed to provide an entire in-flight service from kitchen to cabin. The overlying objective to be to provide huge benefits by managing the airline catering supply chain more efficiently, ultimately providing a much better quality of service to BA passengers.

Northern Foods, a major client of AdvanceFirst Technologies, signed a 10 year agreement with DHL (effective April 2010) to prepare all the in-flight meals.

Fundamental to the supply chain improvements would need to be an efficient way for Northern Foods to receive orders directly into their internal systems from DHL. The link needed to be seamless and automated, accepting orders directly from DHL's internal systems and providing them immediately to Northern Foods own systems in a format that allowed for immediate processing and actioning of the order.

Being the incumbent supplier to Northern Foods of electronic trading software, support and professional services, AdvanceFirst Technologies were approached to help set up the required link between Northern Foods and DHL and ensure that all the required document mapping, communications and workflow processing requirements were met fully and tested extensively prior to going live.



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### AdvanceFirst's role in the Airserv project

The project involves the transmission of Airserv orders from DHL into Northern Foods internal SAP system. The systems at DHL would have to be able to “see” a dedicated server at Northern Foods which is responsible for the initial processing of the Airserv orders. This is now done by linking the DHL infrastructure at their Colnbrook site with the Northern Foods network. As a backup, there is also a VPN tunnel between a DHL US office and the Northern Foods network.

The Airserv order files are delivered to the dedicated server at Northern Foods using HTTP over a secure network.

AdvanceFirst Technologies and Northern Foods had to make sure the above process functioned smoothly in the following way. Listed below is an overview of the main stages of the process: -

- **The Northern Foods dedicated HTTP server running the ABC software from AdvanceFirst “listens” for the incoming Airserv orders; it logs each order and stores it in a daily file. It then accumulates the orders (unless a high priority order) into batch files.**
- **The Airserv order log details are emailed to DHL as a confirmation of receipt.**
- **The ABC software from AdvanceFirst then converts the order to XML and presents it to the Business Intelligence system.**
- **The routing function within ABC allows these batches of Airserv orders to be prioritised according to agreed criteria.**





- Then ABC, using a specially designed stylesheet converts all the Airserv orders from an XML format to an XML Idoc format for importing into Northern Foods SAP system.
- In certain circumstances Airserv orders from DHL will also need to be in a readable format in which case ABC converts the order file into a readable HTML format.
- The Airserv system is expected to be processing around 11,000 DHL/BA orders per day so extensive testing was undertaken to ensure these volumes proved no problems for the ABC software



## Airserv process highlights

1. Priority file fast track. Any last hours files are recognised and given priority over other data relating to flights which could be days in advance. This allows the organisation more time to react to changes and streamlines their operation.
2. The ABC software uses an intelligent batching process so the files are submitted to the ERP in the fastest and most effective way.
3. The ABC software automatically e-mails confirmation of the daily orders to DHL for reconciliation purposes. The e-mails take the data and turn it into simple human readable form.
4. ABC can also route data to business intelligence systems such as asset tracking and space timing software.
5. The software has failover technology so if the preferred communications channel goes down it can switch to a secondary method.

If your company has a customer or supplier community it would like to trade with electronically, via a secure and auditable route, gaining all the associated benefits such as: **simplified trading processes, reduced costs and an improved, more responsive supply chain**, then you should be talking to **AdvanceFirst Technologies!**

For further details and pricing, please contact **Sales** on: **+44 (0)1932 230024**  
or e-mail us at: [enquiries@advancefirst.com](mailto:enquiries@advancefirst.com). Or visit [www.advancefirst.com](http://www.advancefirst.com)

