Solution: **IBM Hybrid Cloud**   Industry: **Travel & Transportation**

WestJet

Delivers actionable insight into flights, luggage and customer service with self-service analytics

To run an airline effectively, staff need to keep a lot of plates spinning at once—from ensuring that flights depart on time, to helping guests reach their destinations safely with all their luggage intact. WestJet is empowering staff to gain insight with IBM Analytics, helping them make smarter decisions to keep everything running smoothly.

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Business challenge

WestJet's existing analytics platform was powerful, but creating new reports and dashboards required deep technical knowhow. The airline wanted to help its users take analytics into their own hands.

Transformation

New analytics capabilities empower users to drag and drop data from WestJet's data warehouse and their own spreadsheets, generating visual dashboards that reveal operational trends in near-real time.

Results

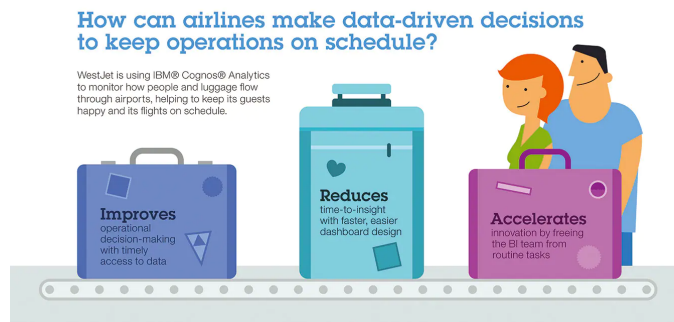| Improves	Reduces	Accelerates
decision-making by providing timely data on flights, guests and	time-to-insight by empowering users to build new	innovation by freeing the BI team from routine report-writing

IBM

Business challenge story

Ready for takeoff

How can airlines make data-driven decisions to keep operations on schedule?

WestJet is using IBM® Cognos® Analytics to monitor how people and luggage flow through airports, helping to keep its guests happy and its flights on schedule.

Improves operational decision-making with timely access to data

Reduces time-to-insight with faster, easier dashboard design

Accelerates innovation by freeing the BI team from routine tasks

A commercial airline is a complex machine with many moving parts. Everyone from the pilots and flight planners to the customer service teams needs to do the right thing at the right time to ensure that guests get to their destinations on time, with their luggage and personal items intact—and hopefully with a smile on their face.

For WestJet, a carrier that prides itself on putting its guests first, it's critical to keep this machine well-oiled and operating smoothly. One of the key ways it achieves its excellent on-time arrival rates (82.5 percent for all flights in 2016) is through its sophisticated use of operational data.

Anthony Molle, Business Intelligence and Analytics Manager at WestJet, explains: "Data is absolutely critical in helping people from all areas of our business make the right decisions every day. So, we don't just report on internal matters like sales and finances, we put a lot of effort into operational reporting too. We look at things like on-time performance—when does a plane come in? Did it leave on time this morning? Did any of our guests get delayed? That's especially important for the first flight of the day, because it impacts timings for every other flight on the schedule.

"We wanted to put more power into the hands of our people, helping them access the information they need to do the best possible job. We had built a lot of great reports and dashboards in our IBM® Cognos® Business Intelligence platform, but if we didn't offer the exact thing a user needed, they often had to pull the data into spreadsheets and draw charts for themselves. We wanted to give them the ability to build analyses and visualize data for themselves."

> "Why look at something like Tableau, if we already have that functionality in the new version of Cognos Analytics?"

— **Anthony Molle, Business Intelligence and Analytics Manager, WestJet**

Transformation story

Gaining altitude

Anthony Molle explains: "In the last few years, our users have seen some very slick-looking visualization tools online, and they were starting to ask us whether we could do something similar in Cognos. When we presented Cognos Analytics to the business, it offered exactly what they wanted. Why look at something like Tableau, if we already have that functionality in the new version of Cognos Analytics?

"The interactive dashboards and the ability to bring in external data from spreadsheets and other sources were a big plus for us. So as soon as we could, we decided to skip ahead with our upgrade plans and move to Cognos Analytics as quickly as possible."

As one of the first adopters of the new version of the software, WestJet worked closely with the IBM team to minimize the risk of problems.

"The installation was easy, even when we were on the very first release of the software," says Anthony Molle. "The only problems we had were where we wished it had a few features that weren't ready yet. But the cool thing was that eight weeks later, that functionality was in place. The current release that we're on now is really perfect. It's just click, drag, point, make the adjustments you need for your production and non-production environments, and you're up and running."

He adds: "IBM has been gold for me. From day one, when I sat down with some of the IBM folks to talk about the upgrade, they said that they wanted to help us do it, and they did. They followed through on every single thing they ever promised or said they would do."

One of the most important features of IBM Cognos Analytics for WestJet is its drag-and-drop capability for integrating data from different sources.

"Our BI team has developed a lot of analytics tools that users can make use of, but they can also compose things for themselves just by dragging different data modules or spreadsheets into a dashboard and joining them together," says Anthony Molle. "The end user sitting at their desk doesn't have to rely on the BI team or IT to design and build whatever information they were looking to get."

WestJet also appreciates the increased security of encouraging users to perform their analytics in a properly secured environment.

"You have parts of the business like finance, where it's very important that certain datasets don't go beyond their own four walls," says Anthony Molle. "It's very difficult to ensure that kind of security with spreadsheets, but once the data is in Cognos you can easily control who is allowed to see it. That's a really key advantage for many of our users."

"Cognos Analytics is supporting WestJet's culture of continuous self-improvement. The more useful insight we can give our people, the better the results for our employees, our company, and most importantly, our guests."

— **Anthony Molle, Business Intelligence and Analytics Manager, WestJet**

Results story

Happy landings

Anthony Molle comments: "People see WestJet as a happy company, and it really is. That's because people in the office, flight attendants, pilots and everyone at WestJet really do spend their time thinking about how we can make life better for the guest. So, there's always a desire to see how we can improve, whether that's in finding ways to minimize delays and cancellations, or in reducing the risk of losing luggage.

"Our analytics platform gives us the tools we need to find those opportunities for improvement and make the right decisions to turn them into reality. We've been doing this for a long time, but Cognos Analytics has helped us make a really important leap forward. So now, for example, a station manager at an airport can click on a report, see what's going on with a plane that has just come in, find out what's happening with the luggage, keep track of any problems, and be ready to help any guests who can't find their bags."

The vision is to make these kinds of capabilities even more pervasive. WestJet has just agreed new licensing terms that will allow it to give an unlimited number of users access to the system. Over the next few months, it plans to double the number of users and introduce more mobile devices to help teams check data and make decisions on the fly, wherever they happen to be in the airport.

"A lot of companies want to be able to say to their users: 'here's the tool, click the button and you'll run the report'," notes Anthony Molle. "We want to go way beyond that. Just like with Excel: anyone can use it on a basic level, but some people really pick it up and teach themselves how to do amazing things. Our aim with Cognos Analytics is exactly the same—we want everyone to use it, and we want to empower them to really run with it and build things for themselves.

"It's much more feasible to do that with Cognos Analytics because it's so much easier to use, and we've designed our own training courses for beginners, intermediate users and the super-users who really want to take a deep dive."

He concludes: "By helping our users serve themselves with the data they need to do their jobs, Cognos Analytics is supporting WestJet's culture of continuous self-improvement. The more useful insight we can give our people, the better the results for our employees, our company, and most importantly, our guests."

WestJet

Since its first flight in 1996, WestJet has sought to enrich the lives of everyone in its world by providing safe, friendly and affordable air travel. The company puts its guests and its employees first, which has helped it become one of Canada's most admired and respected corporate cultures. Today, WestJet flies to over 100 destinations, and continues to stay true to its principles, striving for the highest standards of service and success.

Solution components

- Cognos Analytics
- Cognos Business Intelligence
- T&T: Operations Planning and Optimization

Take the next step

IBM Analytics offers one of the world's deepest and broadest analytics platform, domain and industry solutions that deliver new value to businesses, governments and individuals. For more information about how IBM Analytics

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