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GDS/CRS BOOKING NORMS FOR TRAVEL AGENTS

Travel service providers (Agents) along with representative associations and GDSs are partners of airlines in travel industry. Together we are jointly responsible for delivering the best possible service in the most efficient and effective manner to the passenger, within the framework of local laws, IATA guidelines and recommendations, and laid down rules and regulations. Revenue optimisation, cost control, and reservations and ticketing discipline are essential to this objective.

Travel service providers are required to follow IATA and airline for making bookings through GDS/ CRS for optimum utilisation of airline inventory, contain communication costs, and use the GDS connectivity efficiently while servicing their customers (travelers) effectively. Since its existence Air India has continued issuing good booking practices advisory in regular communication to its agents worldwide.

Misuse of system results in a high cost to airlines in terms of wasted seats and denial of inventory to other agents and passengers. Air India has instituted GDS/CRS audit for identifying problem areas since July 2009, and takes appropriate corrective action.
Air India has since instituted Fare Audit, and is to roll-out Revenue Integrity audit for all bookings with advent of the new unified system for merged national carriers, Air India and Indian.

Continued misuse of airline inventory through bad practices for reservations, fare pricing and ticketing will invite penal action, not limited to recovery of GDS booking fee, fare difference and seat costs and associated penalties alone.

We appreciate the efforts of Travel industry associations in highlighting the issues to its member base, and continued education of the travelers.

We are committed to our travel agent partners and passengers. Accordingly, some broad guidelines for using CRS is outlined for easy reference.

Some DO's

1. Action your GDS agency system queues promptly for all action codes.

2. Cancel segments with "UN, NO, UC and HX" reply codes from your queues promptly, since these have already been cancelled by the airline.

If unactioned some of these may result in billing to the airline, which in turn will raise suitable ADM to your agency or your sponsored sub-agent with GDS connectivity.

3. Make bookings only for required segments for a passenger.

Verify with passenger that he does not hold parallel bookings through other travel agents or airline office. Any cancellation of booked segment must be effected at the earliest, and at the very least 24 hours prior departure.

4. Use the same GDS for booking, change of booked segments, addition of passenger contact or meal preference information, fare elements and e- ticketing.

5. If at all passive segments are required to be created in any GDS for non- ticketing element, then use appropriate action code e.g. "YK" in Sabre. Cancel the passive segments after ticketing.

6. All updates including cancellations must be effected through the same GDS.

Any updates should be entered from your agency using the same GDS from which PNR was originally created. Please advise passenger to avoid update of PNR created by your agency, by contacting airline call center. Passengers can log-in at www.airindia.in for flight departure timings and PNR status.

There is no need to call Air India to verify bookings or cancellations, as action by your agency in your GDS PNR works effectively, with Air India upgraded to highest level of connectivity with the GDSs.

7. Use highest level of connectivity for display and sale of airline schedule and seat availability.

Please refrain from using Neutral availability which uses low level connectivity. Neutral availability usually works from cache memory with potentially outdated schedule and seat availability status of a flight. Sale may result in its eventual rejection by the airline (permitted to do so for several hours from sale even after ticket issuance by your office). Such a sale rejection will adversely affect passenger service, and your agency and airline reputation.

8. Please wait for a response from Air India system before creating next element, or modifying an element in the same PNR. Even though airline servers respond in milliseconds, communication channels may be responding at a different speed. Repeated sale and/or cancellation entries create problem of duplication of segments and rejection of PNR in the airline system with no knowledge status of the passenger, who will then be inconvenienced at the airport. Correct booking practice is key to servicing your client.

9. Agents should wait for AI to send Split PNR number before taking any action on the PNR which has been split.

10. PNY must always contain name as reflected on the passport.

11.   Air India does not allow any name change in the PNR after ticketing whatsoever.

Any name change requires a re-issuance of ticket with the new or updated PNR. If at all a name change is effected in the GDS, you should ensure that the changed name reflects in AI system before ticketing passengers as AI system does not accept and action Name changes automatically.

12.   For group bookings, kindly contact the nearest Air India office for requesting GRP space. As per local procedures, GRP PNR will be created and advised for reference. Ticketing if done through the GDS must use the same GRP PNR name.

13. Please ensure Passenger contact in originating/embarkation and all transit stations must be provided at creation time for airline to assist You, the travel service provider, in serving the passenger correctly. Formats for conveying the same have been advised previously. SMS and Email push by airline of change in status of flights or PNR requires mobile and email contact of passenger in correct format for your client/traveler. This field is to become mandatory in the new unified system of Air India shortly.

14. Use the BRIDGE and BRANCH facility to ticket PNRS booked by sub-agents.

Creation of new PNRs with Passive action codes results in double fees to airlines which will be passed on to ticketing agents in the form of ADMs on analysis and audit of GDS provided Billing Information Data Tape.

15. Do cancel all Open-dated and Passive segments after e-ticket is issued.

16. Use correct AIRIMP inputs to avoid the PNR being rejected by AI system.

An example would be series of Dashes or Dots in any remark element is cause for system rejection of PNR at creation or update. e.g. OSI AI PLS CONFIRM   THX. The dots will cause a rejection of the PNR.

17. Agent is required to sell the class open for sale, and not create unnecessary waitlist, which is counter-productive in all respects. GDS fees for each confirmed booking, waitlist and subsequent cancellation are paid by airlines on behalf of the agent, who then gets billed through an ADM through airline audit process for the same. One should sell available space at the current prevailing price, rather than create a waitlist on unavailable booking class. Simply quote the fare corresponding to the available RBD (without discussing RBD structure, or their merits and demerits).

18. Please use AI (098) E-Tickets for AIR INDIA and its numerous Codeshare partners, and for 85 Interline E-ticket partners.

19.	AI accepts only automated ticket nos. in SSR TKNE/A format for BSP tickets. Should there be a case where ticket number (SSR TKNE) has not reached AI PNR, agent can fax the copy of the ticket to our call centre/reservation office for AI RES agent to verify all details before adding ticket number in ticket field (TK:T/).

20.	OSI information element does not update ticketing time-limit.

21.	SSR: DOCA/DOCO/DOCS are required to be complete in PNR creation itself, or well in advance of departure for security clearances for destination/transit countries. These are mandatory for travelers and must be complied with. Violations by airlines/travel service providers are punishable. Penalties and losses caused due travel agency action will be passed onto the travel service provider making the reservations.

Agency staff is required to exercise self-discipline in use of GDS for reservations and issuance of e-tickets. The staff and agency is liable for misuse, error and oversight, with particular care to be exercised in E-ticket and Itinerary Receipt issuance.

Some DON'Ts

1. Do NOT Book in the Incorrect Class/RBD. Fare difference ADM is being raised in such abuse.

2. Do NOT Book or Waitlist on Multiple flight/Classes, or on Parallel sectors. Airlines pay heavy booking fees for each passenger segment, which through audit of GDS billing is identified for further recovery action from the travel service provider.

4. Do NOT create Duplicate bookings (confirmed or waitlist) with Active or Passive Action Codes in the same GDS, or in different GDSs. These are billable back as duplicate segments thru ADMs.

5. Do NOT create OPEN segments (unless required for Ticketing).

6. Do NOT create GRPS with Passive action codes, except for Ticketing.

7. The Group strength in GDS PNR should not be more than GRP strength in PNR.

8. Issue accurate Itinerary receipts and e-tickets checking each PNR for accuracy and precision for all elements including passenger contact with mobile and email information.

Unnecessary remarks must be deleted and PNR should be trimmed.

RESPONSIBILITY OF AGENCIES

1. To train all staff on GDS to use the system effectively, and use correct inputs.

   Incorrect entries are rejected and no response is sent by AI system. Tavel agency staff often repeats same inputs several times, thus creating duplicate records/PNRs, or build-up of system queues, clogging or slowing down the agent connection to airline through the GDS. Correct input in the first place would have avoided the resultant dis-service and associated seat inventory and communication costs.

2. Training must not be done in LIVE mode. Please use training mode made available by the GDS/CRS. Speculative bookings, TEST PNRs are unacceptable as they cause sever losses to airline due blockage of inventory. This is a disservice to other travel agents and genuine bonafide passengers requiring confirmation for travel.

3. AGENCIES MUST ACTION THE QUEUES REGULARLY. Unactioned queue costs airlines, passengers and agents their business.

4. GDS are required to monitor the Booked and Cancelled transactions of travel agents. If the ratio of cancellations to bookings exceeds limits, the GDS would be required to take action based on advice of the airline, including blocking access by agent/sub-agent to their system.

5. IATA recommends correct booking procedure and ticketing procedure for all agents in the interest of the customer. Multiple bookings/cancellations, churning, speculative booking, illegal segment sale through long entry, sale and ticketing through more than one GDS and similar wrongful practices outlined in the GDS Booking policy document issued by AI on 29July'09, with associated update of ADM policy of same date, is merely indicative, and not exhaustive, on the subject of the costs and damages suffered by airlines due incorrect reservations practices.

We wish all our partners exciting times ahead and return of fortune for our industry!

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