

Getting started with NDC

Understanding the basics of New Distribution Capability

The buzz around New Distribution Capability (NDC) continues to grow as its impact on the airline industry strengthens.

But all the technical jargon can make it hard to understand what it is and how it works.

Here's what you need to know.

What is NDC?

NDC is an Application Programming Interface (API) created in 2012 to modernize how airlines distribute and sell flights.

Built by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), it connects airlines directly with travel agents and booking tools to offer travelers a rich, seamless, personalized experience.

"NDC is not just a technology – it's a strategic pathway to an enhanced experience for our customers."

John Bukowski
VP Content Acquisition and Strategic Sourcing

Who's who?

IATA: The airline industry trade association who introduced NDC and continue to develop standards.

Airlines: The commercial carriers using NDC to gain better control over distribution and pricing. And offer travelers more options while staying competitive.

Travel Management Companies (TMCs): The intermediaries implementing NDC to offer more choice and greater breadth of content to better serve their corporate clients.

Tech providers: Third-party companies sometimes used to build the NDC APIs and tools, standardize, normalize, or integrate NDC content such as GDS and online booking tools.

What came before?

For over 40 years, corporate travel has relied on a standard called Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce, and Transport (EDIFACT).

Providers from airlines to TMCs depend on it to process billions of transactions efficiently.

But it has limitations, like static price points that are limited in number. And a restricted ability to customize or communicate details like bundled offers. The industry needed something better.

The potential benefits of NDC

As NDC becomes more established, it'll deliver benefits to all parts of the corporate travel ecosystem.



Travelers: More choice and flexibility with potential personalized offers and bundled products like enhanced seating, Wi-Fi, and upgrade offers, for a more customized experience.



Travel managers: Better access to corporate-tailored offers and opportunities to add value to the traveler experience within managed travel program features.



Airlines: Ability to better differentiate their products and services, create new and unique tailored options, and increase revenues.



TMCs: The ability to create new value bundles for customers and support a more customized experience for travel bookers.

The challenges

The modernization of airline distribution is complicated. In terms of adoption, IATA says only 76 airlines (out of 300+) are currently NDC-certified.¹ The industry goal is to have all airlines NDC ready by 2030.

For the implementation to go smoothly and help accelerate NDC deployment globally, major industry collaboration is required to launch the new technology. It's still an immature technology with many teething issues.

There is also no universal standard which means each airline can develop NDC differently. This has increased the overall cost and time to deliver NDC content for corporate travelers.

The needs of business travelers and organizations are also different to leisure travelers, adding another layer of complexity.

NDC vs. EDIFACT

NDC can be a win win delivering a potentially better experience for airline passengers.



Real-time pricing and inventory updates.



Tailored offers based on traveler profiles, preferences, and policy.



Customized bundles combining services (baggage, seat upgrades, insurance) for added value.

Unlock NDC content through Amex GBT's valuable marketplace

Amex GBT has made huge investments, positioning itself at the forefront of delivering NDC at scale globally, to bring more value to travelers.

1 million NDC tickets processed.²

97% of US clients on Amex GBT Neo and Egencia have access to NDC content.²

16,000+ clients with access to NDC content.²

22 point-of-sale countries with NDC bookings from around the world.²

20+ airlines currently part of Amex GBT's industry-leading program.²

Find out more on our NDC homepage.

Learn more →

¹ IATA external reporting, as of March 2025. ² Amex GBT internal reporting, as of June 2025.