

## The Plane Deal at JetBlue Airways

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By [Debra Donston](#)

Upstart airline JetBlue Airways Corp. is leveraging the upstart Web services platform—slowly but surely.

JetBlue is considering Web services deployments ranging from a security application to making its extranet a collection of Web services that partners can use and brand themselves. Right now, though, a Web service is driving transactions on JetBlue's company store.

The purchase piece of the company store, ShopBlue, is a Web service, according to Adam Cohen, chief developer at the 4-year-old JetBlue, in New York. The store, at [www.jetblue.com](http://www.jetblue.com), sells everything from water bottles to model airplanes, and credit card transactions are approved via a Web service internally developed using Microsoft Corp.'s .Net platform.

"When a user goes to JetBlue.com to purchase attire or model planes, the credit card approval process is a Web service," said Cohen. "After a user confirms the goods in his shopping cart and enters shipping and credit card information, a call is made to our Web server in New York, and data is passed from the Salt Lake City data center to New York. The New York server calls the credit card processor, the [approval] codes are passed back to the Web site, and the user gets a reply telling him whether or not the card is approved."

The Web service and e-commerce site—secured by a custom encryption paradigm—were developed simultaneously and built on .Net Framework. The site launched last September.

JetBlue is a Microsoft shop, so .Net was a natural evolution, said Cohen. The service was developed using C#, which JetBlue's developers, well-versed in Visual Basic, found easy to learn.

The alternative to this development model would have been Distributed Component Object Model, or COM, a much more complex and less reliable method, said Cohen. "We would have had to build our own socket-level app that would talk back and forth across the Net," he said. "It would have been complicated and hard to do. We wrote the application in the beginning to be used on a local machine. To build a Web service, all we had to do was add Web service tags."

Cohen said he had reservations about performance. "One fear was about performance and the marshaling of data types through XML, having to parse the data types on both sides—Web center and fulfillment house side," he said. "But we haven't had too many problems."

There has been a performance hit with the Web service, but it's been negligible, said Cohen, who added that users typically see their credit cards approved in two-and-a-half seconds.

If performance does become a problem, JetBlue will scale out, an option available with the Web services model and one of the drivers for choosing it.

"Our fail-safe was that if we ran into performance issues, we would scale out and load balance," said Cohen. "It's like dealing with a Web site—it's a Web site that's meant to be called by code."

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