
CASE STUDY

SMART
COMMUNICATIONS

Globus Saves Costs, Improves Service with Smart Communications™

GLOBUS
family of brands

Summary

The Globus family of brands is one of the world's largest providers of escorted travel. By implementing Thunderhead customer communications, Globus achieved:

- 32% more efficient printing process from new document approval processes
- 25 % reduction in paper costs by taking advantage of Thunderhead's online document capability
- More consistency and quality in output passenger booklets
- Ability to add tour content quickly without having to bring in additional support staff
- Improved responsiveness to passengers and travel agents through increased use of digital content

About Globus

For more than 85 years, the Globus family of brands has been providing a variety of vacations that address the needs of today's diverse traveler with unparalleled vacation experiences, full of discovery and insight. Whether it's a fully escorted tour, independent vacation package, or river cruise vacation, with Globus, Cosmos, Monograms and Avalon Waterways, Globus is committed to delivering unmatched value, insider knowledge, and world-class customer service with every journey.

The Background

Over the past decade, Globus has seen dramatic changes in the escorted travel market, highlighted by a diversification in products and channel. Globus believes that the key to growth is influencing the end customer, and finding more dynamic, immediate and impactful ways to communicate with customers is a top priority.

A communication cornerstone of Globus is its Passenger Document. Each of these data-rich booklets outline all of the planning, organisation and information gathered for a specific trip, departure date and customer. Because these booklets include everything a customer needs to participate in a tour – information on flights, airports, transfers, and travel restrictions, together with maps, travel vouchers and a host of other components – customers consider them a lifeline while on their trips. So much so that Globus produces upwards of 270,000 of these booklets every year.

Globus manages all booklet content on a continuous basis, making frequent and often significant updates to reflect itinerary or passenger changes – and then compiles the appropriate items into a finished booklet for each individual passenger for each tour. The documents are carefully scrutinised by Globus to ensure their quality before they go to customers and the quality of these documents is a key company differentiator.

“The cost savings for us by using the Thunderhead Solution are substantial, but perhaps what's best about it is what we can do moving forward: communicating with agents and customers more often, making more information available online, and meeting the needs of savvy, autonomous travelers. With Thunderhead we can do that.”

Kristian Bahr, Communications Systems Analyst, Globus family of brands

The Challenge

After 16 years of continuous use and modification, the legacy system used to manage the content and create the booklets became difficult and costly to manage. The legacy system managed over 11,000 text-format content files, with no spell-checking and limited formatting capabilities. In addition to the risks posed by an aging, inflexible platform, significant challenges included:

- **Labour-intensive processes.** Before any booklet could be produced, each related content file had to be accessed, checked, revised as appropriate and reviewed for quality, costly bottlenecks and time-consuming processes.
- **Quality and rework.** Because Globus staff had no way to inspect the finished documents before printing, booklets were printed an average of 1.67 times per passenger, resulting in an estimated waste of 850,000 two-sided page prints per year.
- **No content reuse.** No content was shared across booklet components maintained by the system, so the numerous, on-going changes resulted in substantial effort to update redundant content occurrences.
- **Channel distribution shortfalls.** The legacy system could produce the booklets in print format only.

These shortcomings had a negative impact on customer satisfaction. Globus couldn't meet increasing customer demand for electronic documents and use of e-delivery channels and formats, such as PDF, HTML or SMS text messages.

The Solution

Globus initiated a project to replace the aging document software with a more dynamic, user-friendly and scalable solution. Project goals included:

- A more sensible workflow
- Freeing up IT resources
- Improved customer communication service
- Improved business flexibility

Globus chose Thunderhead to replace its legacy system, streamline processes, and bring a new approach to creating and delivering travel booklets. Having document creation aligned with the business unit and its needs was a key criterion for choosing Thunderhead. By maintaining separate business rules governing output content and format, users can share content across as many document types and formats as needed, eliminating the costly, time-consuming effort once required to maintain redundant content.

The entire passenger document system was migrated to the Thunderhead environment without incident or disruption, and well ahead of schedule.

The team also implemented archiving and retrieval capabilities by producing PDF versions of printed booklets, with linkable content for easy research. Now, customer support staff can pull and research specific booklet content on-demand, making them more responsive to customer needs. The team also easily added agent-specific cover pages, while reducing paper used for this purpose by more than 50 percent.

“We wanted a solution that would reduce the time required to deliver a finished product, and something that placed design into the hands of the business owners. Additionally, our passenger booklet was a challenge for all solutions we considered. Booklet formatting and correct pagination was a difficult task for all those we interviewed at that time. Only Thunderhead was willing to promise to meet that deliverable.”

Jeff Anderson, Applications Manager, Globus family of brands

Results

Globus has experienced real benefits to their business by implementing and integrating Thunderhead.

- The pre-print review process alone has brought the average booklet printings per passenger down from 1.67 to 1.13 – a saving of over 32 percent. Globus also averaged a 25 percent reduction in paper costs in just its first 9 months of online documents.
- The process to change booklet has been reduced from 2 weeks to almost immediate and with approvals to just one day as business users can now modify documents on-the-fly without assistance from IT.
- Time-to-market has decreased without cost. New and changed tours can be introduced more quickly without the need to increase staffing costs.
- Re-use of content has become faster, more consistent and less redundant. Globus is utilising XML to repurpose other content vehicles, like websites and travel agent information. Previously these processes took months of IT resource, now they are virtually instantaneous.
- Globus is also seeing more consistency in completed passenger booklets, thanks to workflow management and approval processes that reduce error rates.
- Customers are happier as they can retrieve and share documents electronically and there's improved coordination with travel agents, thanks to their ability to retrieve passenger documents on demand.

In September 2015, Globus upgraded from on-premise Thunderhead NOW to the cloud-based **Smart Communications** and is looking to expand the use of Smart Communications throughout its business.

Globus plans to open the door to its global offices for consolidating documentation content and design, giving other offices in the United Kingdom and Australia the ability to customize content for their local customers. Globus will manage documents using Smart Communications at its US headquarters in Littleton, Colorado and the international offices will design their own document templates, giving all global passengers a common and consistent experience when they share a Globus vacation.

About Smart Communications™

Businesses around the world engage with their customers and each other everyday. As communications and interactions with customers and partners become more complex, businesses now recognise that communications increasingly take place in an interactive and real-time context and are critical to success. The Smart Communications suite of solutions helps businesses to move beyond traditional enterprise communications using the most modern architecture and cloud capabilities.

Today, hundreds of brands globally from a diverse range of demanding industry segments including banking, insurance, government, retail and telecoms are using Smart Communications to deliver the new generation of customer and business communications.

A division of Thunderhead, Smart Communications is headquartered in London and serves its customers from offices located in North America, Europe and Asia Pacific.

