FROM ORDER TO JOURNEY:
RETHINKING AIRLINE SERVICE DELIVERY

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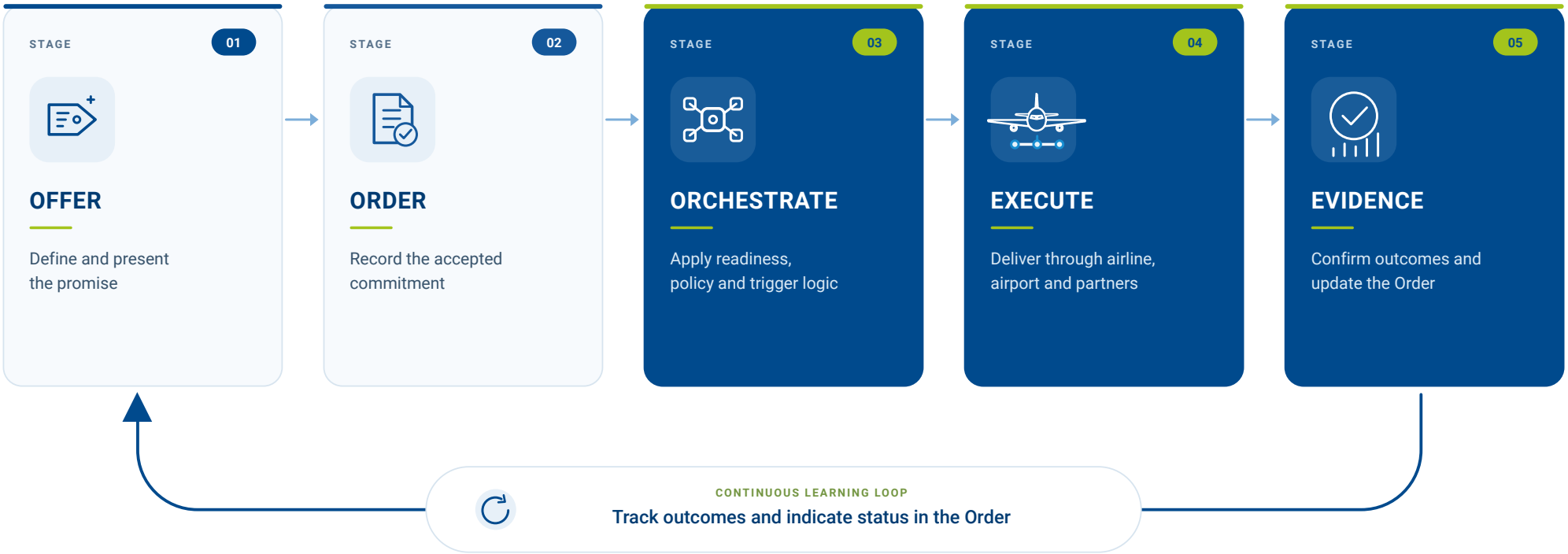
SECTION 02 / WAITING IS NOT AN OPTION

Note that the future model should not aim to recreate the DCS under a new name. The design challenge is to decide which responsibilities move to the Order, which remain in specialist operational systems, and which require Service Delivery to orchestrate readiness, delivery instructions, fulfilment evidence and delivery outcome messaging. The conventional DCS model is optimised around a flight, a departure window and a set of airport transactions. MAR, by contrast, is organised around a customer commitment that can span multiple flights, services, partners and moments in the journey.

Many airline MAR programmes defer operational delivery to a later phase. This sequencing may first appear pragmatic, but it leads to legacy constraints shaping the new model. Order states may be designed without sufficient operational meaning; fulfilment may remain dependent on customer and service records recreated in the DCS; fulfilment evidence may be too fragmented to support automation; and the late discovery of airport, interline or any other partner requirements can force expensive redesign.



SECTION 04 / THE TARGET ROLE OF SERVICE DELIVERY

SERVICE DELIVERY HAS FIVE KEY FUNCTIONS THAT DEFINE ITS ROLE IN THE MODERN AIRLINE RETAILING WORLD

Having established that the DCS should not simply be replaced, the next question is what Service Delivery must actually encompass. In an Order-native operating model, Service Delivery is the business domain that defines how accepted Order commitments are prepared, coordinated, evidenced and reflected back into the airline ecosystem. To that end, Service Delivery performs five core roles:

Delivery readiness

Determines when and under which operational conditions an eligible Order item may proceed to delivery. Order Management remains authoritative for entitlement and eligibility; admissibility capabilities remain authoritative for identity, document and regulatory decisions. Service Delivery evaluates the execution conditions based on these regulations, including operational readiness.

Process orchestration

Translates ordered commitments into operational tasks, triggers and instructions for the relevant airline, airport or partner executors. Orchestration coordinates the ecosystem but does not imply that one central platform performs every activity.

Journey monitoring

Tracks execution, consumption and exceptions across airline, airport and partner systems.

Exception detection

Correlates execution evidence, determines whether a meaningful operational delivery disruption has occurred, and evaluates its impact on the expected journey. Service Delivery can raise or initiate corrective workflows without assuming ownership of every recovery decision.

Delivery outcome messaging

Shares governed delivery outcomes with the Order and with downstream capabilities such as customer communications, disruption, finance, loyalty, accounting, settlement and analytics.

SECTION 05 / MODEL CHANGES

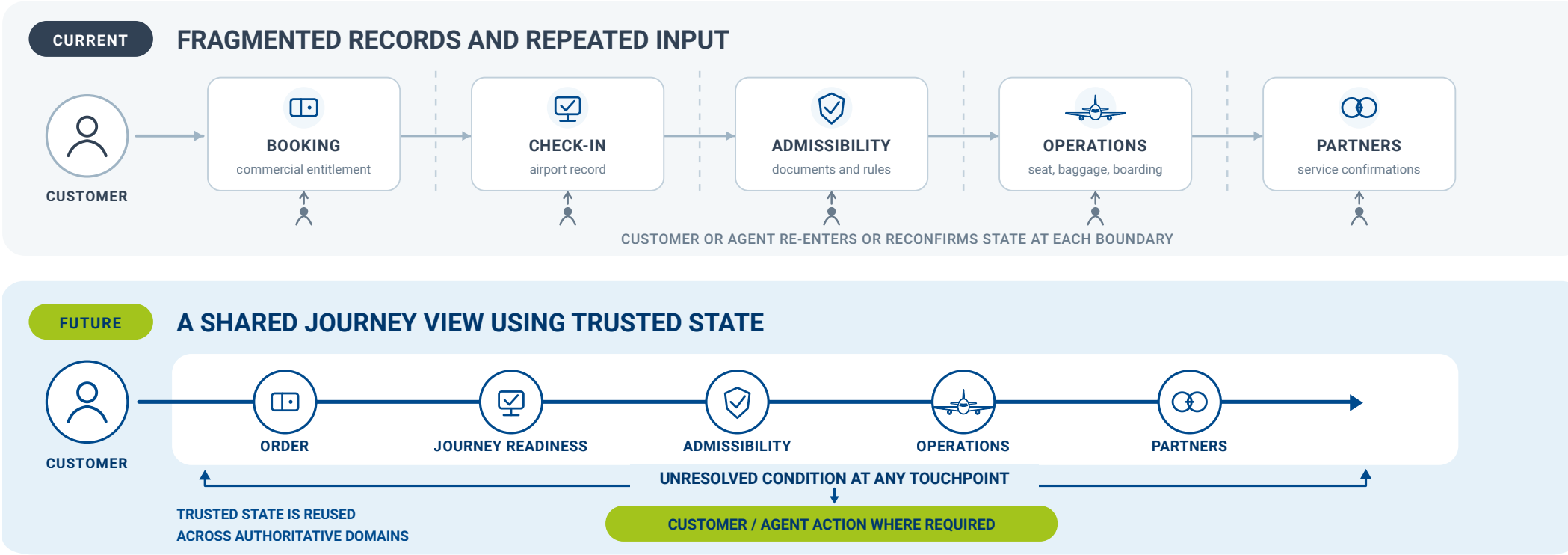
HOW THE OPERATING MODEL CHANGES

Customers experience one journey, but airlines currently operate it through a chain of records and transactions. A booking creates commercial entitlement; check-in creates or enriches an airport record; document and regulatory checks establish admissibility; seat, baggage and boarding actions progress through specialised systems; and partner services generate their own confirmations.

The customer must repeatedly declare intent or present information because the operating model cannot always reuse trusted state across those boundaries.

The future model requires a fundamental rethinking of customer processes and experience. A transaction should be required because an unresolved condition genuinely needs action—not because system boundaries require the customer or agent to recreate state that already exists elsewhere.

The future operating model depends on three shifts: tracking the journey against the Order, replacing routine check-in with journey readiness, and reusing trusted customer information wherever policy and consent allow.



SECTION 06 / SERVICE DELIVERY: THE AIRLINE BUSINESS CASE

THE BUSINESS CASE

The business case for Service Delivery comes from making delivery status visible and actionable across the journey, so the airline can reduce avoidable handling, protect financial accuracy, improve customer confidence and feed operational evidence back into future offer and product decisions.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

- Reduced processing time and fewer handling cases
- Fewer customer/agent interactions
- Failure prevention and proactive solutions for automated recovery
- Reduced manual reconciliation

FINANCIAL ACCURACY

- Timely revenue recognition through accurate delivery status
- Better refunds and compensation decisions
- More informed supplier settlement
- Clearer audit trail

VISIBLE + ACTIONABLE DELIVERY STATUS

CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE & JOURNEY EXPERIENCE

- Fewer duplicated customer steps
- Detection of journey irregularities, enabling earlier intervention
- More specific and timely communication
- Fewer repeated explanations and inconsistencies across channels

COMMERCIAL LEARNING & OFFER QUALITY

- Recommendations to adjust offering based on actual service consumption
- Identification of recurring service failures or slowness
- Improvement of bundles based on actual fulfilment
- Feeding product catalogue and stock keeper with operational truth

SECTION 07 / TRANSFORMATION ROADMAP AND LEADERSHIP AGENDA

JUST LIKE ALL OF MODERN AIRLINE RETAILING, SERVICE DELIVERY REQUIRES THOROUGH PLANNING

The transformation of Service Delivery is lengthy and requires proper assessment, planning, and validation at each step of the way The roadmap below represents a controlled transfer of operational accountability. Because Service Delivery is executed through many actors, each phase must include an explicit readiness view of the locations and third parties involved. It should progress by capability, journey and partner scope, not by attempting to replace every DCS responsibility at once.

	1 DEFINE	2 OBSERVE	3 CORRELATE	4 GOVERN	5 ORCHESTRATE	6 FINALISE
DESCRIPTION	Establish the decisions Service Delivery will govern	Make current fulfilment visible before changing authority	Connect operational events to the journey commitments	Apply policies that determine whether delivery can proceed	Coordinate delivery instructions, acknowledgements and exceptions	Transfer selected authority out of legacy constructs
BUILT / PROVEN	Target authority model, first journeys/services, ownership, evidence requirements and value baseline	Delivery events, current-state gaps, station/partner readiness view and baseline KPIs	Links between Order items, DCS records, airport events, partner updates and reconciliation controls	Readiness logic, eligibility / admissibility inputs, override rules and shadow validation	Partner tasks, operational triggers, fallback paths and support model	Native Service Delivery for selected journeys, services, stations or partners, with policy tuning and legacy retirement
GATE TO SCALE	Leadership agrees scope, boundaries, and funding	Evidence is sufficiently complete, timely and trusted	Data semantics and exception / reconciliation handling at accepted level	Shadow decisions match operational reality and teams accept procedures	Partners can execute, acknowledge and return evidence reliably	Value is realised, controls remain effective and specific dependencies can be retired

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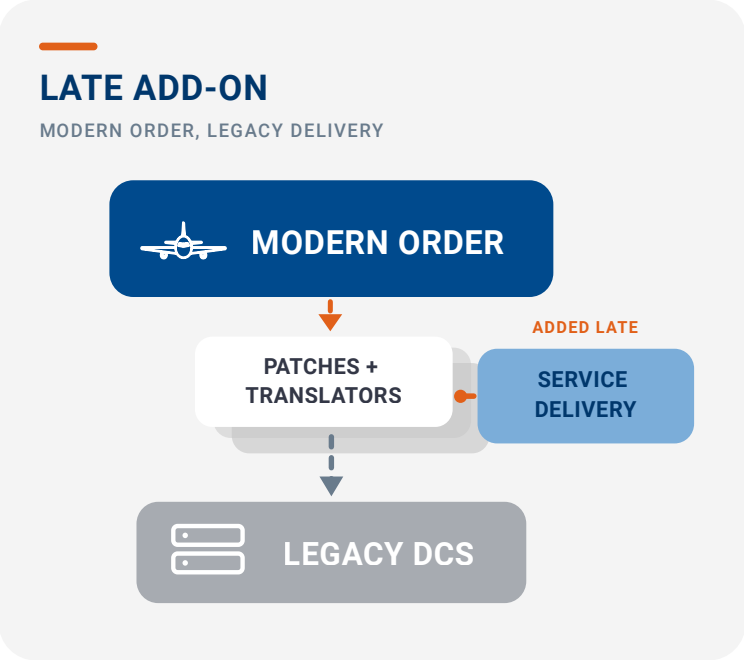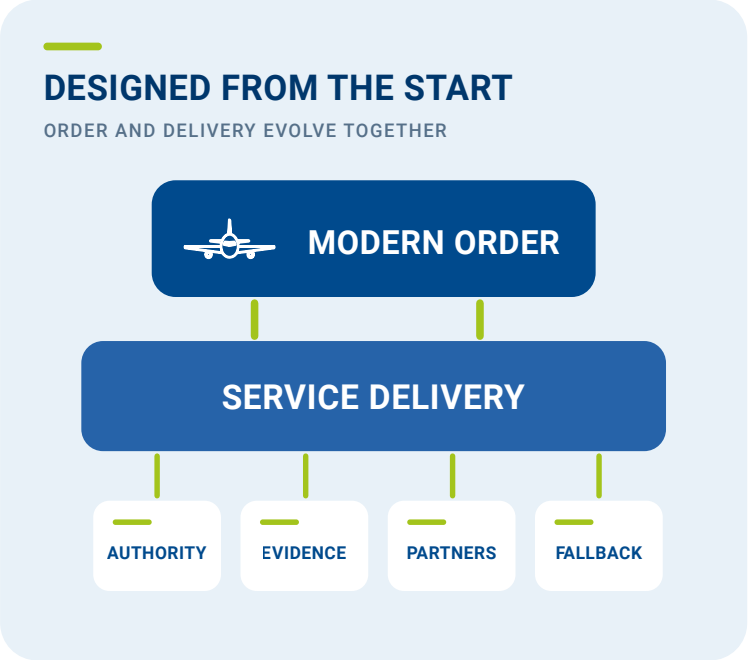
Airlines should resist treating Service Delivery as a late implementation workstream. The decisions required for delivery authority, operational evidence, partner participation and fallback must influence Order design from the start. Otherwise, the Order may become commercially modern while still depending on legacy operational constructs to understand whether the promise can be fulfilled.