American Airlines hires ITA Software for upgrade

DAVID KOENIG - AP Airlines Writer - Associated Press

American Airlines says ITA Software Inc. will provide tools to help the airline sell more individualized offerings to passengers.

A top official at the airline says American wasn't swayed by search giant Google Inc.'s pending acquisition of ITA, a deal that spooked some travel companies.

American's chief information officer, Monte Ford, said Thursday that new software will help the airline better manage its inventory and sell additional products and services.

As an example, Ford said, it would let American target a passenger whose flight is canceled with offers for first chance at seats on later flights, priority booking and hotel rooms.

AMR Corp.'s American is fighting with travel data provider Sabre and online travel agencies over how its tickets will be displayed and sold. Orbitz and Expedia no longer list American flights, and Sabre buried American flights in information it provided to travel agents until the airline got a judge to temporarily block Sabre's move.

Ford said the ITA software will be used regardless of who sells the ticket, and won't affect the dispute with Sabre. He said Sabre and other data providers, called global distribution systems, bid against ITA. Contract terms were not disclosed.

ITA, which provides technology to run airline reservations, has agreed to be acquired by Google for $700 million. A group of travel companies led by Expedia Inc. oppose the deal, fearing that Google could use ITA to unfairly manipulate online travel searches and hurt competitors.

American has not taken a position on the Google-ITA deal, which is being reviewed by federal antitrust regulators.

AMR shares rose 2 cents to $8.46 in afternoon trading.

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