## NETWORK STRATEGY
# EMIRATES

"A fantastic network and a fantastic service"

Panel judge

If imitation is really the sincerest form of flattery, then Emirates is being flattered to bits by its neighbours in the Gulf – and carriers further afield – bent on trying to emulate the Dubai-based airline's network strategy.

While there is no doubt that Dubai is favourably positioned in geographical terms, Emirates has demonstrated that success is less a matter of what you have than what you do with it.

"A fantastic network and a fantastic service," said one judge.

The Gulf carrier has steered customers away from the daunting durations associated with long-haul flying, capitalising on – and, in turn, helping to drive – Dubai's ambitions as a business and tourism connecting point.

Emirates' strategy has connected cities which are not served by non-stop operations, and its use of large aircraft types on high-density routes – even relatively short sectors – has allowed it to benefit from cost efficiency.

Using Dubai as a 24h connecting point has provided opportunities to develop a rich network to North and South America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Asia-Pacific and Africa.

Sir Tim Clark, a founder member of the Emirates team back in 1985 and a key architect in its network success, remains hungry for more. "There's nothing to stop us doubling in size, to be frank," he says.

Emirates' confidence in its network strategy is reflected in its shunning of the conservative route of developing new links with smaller types, opting instead for the bold use of high-capacity transports, spearheaded by the Airbus A380 and Boeing 777.

Its willingness to adopt such an approach to expansion has rattled competitors, particularly those whose reputations have been built on premium long-haul flying.

Emirates has managed to spread its reach without any affiliation to the global alliances. The carrier dominates intercontinental capacity to the Middle East, enabling it to offer thousands of one-stop connection permutations across a network comprising more than 150 destinations.

This has been particularly effective in such countries as India, providing access to extensive numbers of routes, the majority of which are not served by Indian operators.

But it has embarked on a strategic partnering initiative to broaden its network further through a focus on regional development, forging codeshares and tailored links with specific operators, notably its extensive tie-up with Qantas, which overhauled the long-standing connections to Australia through Asian cities.

Emirates has also deepened its pact with Qantas by building a relationship with low-cost arm Jetstar, while increasing its reach into Asia and Africa, and feed to Dubai, through a close partnership with Malaysia Airlines and TAAG.

Such ties amount to recognition by competing operators of the power of the hub Emirates has built at its Gulf base, catapulting Dubai up the ranks to become the world's third-busiest airport – and the busiest by international traffic – when, five years ago, it hadn't even broken into the top 10.

Emirates is set to complement its regional division with the exploration of thinner route potential with the introduction of new twinjets.

Its use of high-capacity aircraft on long sectors means its unit costs are naturally low but, even so, the carrier has kept them favourable in comparison with, for example, legacy long-haul operators in Europe. Through a network and fleet strategy which, at times, has defied convention, Emirates has positioned itself as a ubiquitous operation, akin to a modern-day Pan Am, in the space of a single generation. It is a a worthy inaugural winner of the Network Strategy award.

David Kaminski-Morrow



Clark has been key to success