

# FLYING THROUGH THE AIRPORT



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Every day millions of people benefit from faster and more personalized interaction with their airline. Self-service technology has become their preferred channel for fulfilling travel arrangements. They enjoy high levels of convenience and ease of travel.

IATA's Simplifying the Business programme has been the main driver. It led efforts to standardize the key building blocks—common use self-service (CUSS), bar-coded boarding passes (BCBP), and e-tickets—that will eventually save the industry

around \$5.5 billion each year.

It is just the start. A new phase of the programme, called Fast Travel, builds on the foundation of CUSS kiosk technology and 2D bar-codes to bring the benefits of self-service to a much wider group of passengers.

## BAGS READY-TO-GO

Until now, baggage drop off has often created a bottleneck in the self-service process. That is about to change. The key is to make the bag drop process fast and efficient to avoid replacing the traditional check-in queue with a queue with another name.

Two enhancements will achieve it. Firstly, CUSS kiosks are now being deployed with 2D BCBP readers and bag tag printers enabling passengers to use off-airport check-in (web, mobile phone), and then scan their 2D BCBP at the nearest kiosk to print bag tags. Self-tagged bags can then be handed to an airline agent at the bag drop point, speeding up the process.

Secondly, common-use bag technology allows a single bag drop counter to service passengers

from multiple airlines in the same queue—increasing passenger throughput, reducing costs and boosting efficiency.

That spells good news for passengers. Tests carried out by Swissport and SITA have shown that the bag drop process can be completed up to 30% faster than using traditional counter check-in procedures. Airlines can also drive higher usage of kiosk, web and mobile check-in channels, while airports use terminal space more efficiently.

## SELF-BOARDING

Another part of the journey through the airport that will get a facelift is at the gate. The current system of boarding requires processing a mixture of boarding card standards—magnetic strip, 1D bar-codes, 2D bar-codes, some printed on paper, others on mobile devices. It means technology at gates needs to be duplicated to handle the different variants used by different airlines. This is both expensive and inefficient. It is also slow and staff intensive, leading to long boarding times and frustration for passengers.

It does not happen when getting the metro or a train. The passenger feeds their ticket through a reader. It validates the ticket and opens the barrier allowing access to the train. It is simple, quick and reliable.

This is the vision IATA is leading the industry towards. A key driver is global implementation of a single industry-wide 2D boarding pass standard. That is scheduled for completion in

2010. Common use gate readers will then make self-boarding less the exception and more the rule for the wider industry and a smoother, quicker experience for passengers.

## BAG RECOVERY

Perception and reality can often be at odds and it really is an unusual event if your bags go missing. In fact, on average airlines get it right nearly 99% of the time. Nevertheless, it affects the owners of 33 million bags every year.

While airlines recognize that a process as complex as baggage handling will never be 100% fool-proof, minimizing frustration when problems do occur can make a valuable difference to the passenger experience.

One way is to speed up the process for passengers to file a mishandled baggage claim. Check-in kiosks have demonstrated that a well-designed interface can be just as convenient as, and often faster than, dealing with a human. The initiative, known as Bag Recovery, allows a passenger to use a kiosk located in the baggage arrivals hall to scan the bag tag, bar-coded boarding pass and enter any remaining contact details. The passenger can then continue their journey without further delay, using a unique claims ID number on the kiosk-printed receipt to later track the retrieval progress through a dedicated website or call centre.

So the future of travel starts today. Passengers can now experience more choice, control and convenience throughout their journey. ■



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