

NEW PASSENGER SOLUTIONS

When looking at new technologies and how to implement them, Ron Reed, senior manager, airport sector strategy for SITA Airport Solutions Line, says getting worked up about the latest gadgets is not exactly the way to go. Instead, he says, technology needs to be installed based on the pain points of the airport.

"What is the local issue that an airport is trying to resolve," asks Reed. "Those issues vary from airport to airport."

At SITA, Reed says, the goal is to help set the standards. "So when airports want to adopt a certain technology, the standards are there to support the tenants so that when you travel from airport to airport you get the same level of consistency in terms of the use of that technology that's being deployed."

According to the 10th SITA and Airline Business Airline IT Trends Survey, the key to cost reductions and ancillary revenues in the face of high fuel costs can be found online. Among airlines, the survey found that the average airline spends 2.2 percent of its revenue on IT — about \$11 billion this year, a five percent increase over last

year, Reed says this kind of investment can help airports by improving passenger service as well.

"What airports have to consider when they're doing their plan is what is the future of air travel?" comments Reed. "How will customers continue to demand a certain amount of service, and how can technology enable you to provide that type of service to your passengers?"

Reed says a big piece of this will be in self-service, optimizing technology passengers already use and are familiar with — for example, more than 50 percent of passengers already use self-service kiosks.

"Self-service is continuing to transform how passengers travel," Reed says. And it's not just at check-in.

"Self-service will become pervasive throughout the whole travel journey — at the gate; self-boarding technology; self-tagging where you would tag your own bag; self-service to file claims when your bags are missing. This is in response to passengers' needs."

The biggest inhibitor of using self-service kiosks is the need to check bags. But, Reed says, self-tagging is on its way,

already implemented at Montreal.

He says the success of self-service will be in giving passengers control over their journey and improving communications.

"[Passengers] want to stay connected, so mobility is the big area of focus as well," Reed says. He notes that more than 90 percent of airline passengers carry a mobile device.

Reed says text messaging in particular will be key — such as sending passengers texts to let them know if their gate changes, flight is delayed, or baggage was not on the plane with them — before they spend 45 minutes waiting at the carousel.

"The industry, as vast as its network is, we can never totally do away with disruptions," Reed comments. "But we can minimize the impact it has on passengers."

Recent research from SITA shows that the world's 3.2 billion cell phones — which, at current growth rates, will be five billion by 2011 — could, if used correctly, save the airline industry up to \$600 million, simply by reducing flight delays.

The technology could bring an

increase in revenue for airports as well. During a trial at Manchester Airport in the U.K., redemption of vouchers sent to passengers' cell phones resulted in 45 percent higher spending than among other shoppers.

The biggest piece of the puzzle to reaching this goal? Getting the stakeholders to work together, Reed says.



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SITA also announces a partnership with Straatch Systems Limited to support airlines and airports with foreign objects and debris (FOD) removal on runways. The partnership will be the world's first intelligence-vision-based airfield runway surveillance system for airport customers allowing them to identify, track, and display FOD in real time. Following a successful 15-month trial, Straatch's all-weather iFerra™ solution will be tested by FAA this winter at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport.