



This time it's personal

Hyper-personalisation enables airports and their airline partners to take a data-driven approach to delivering highly contextualised communications and services tailored to specific customer preferences. Paul Sillers reports.

Aviation's shift to self-service solutions, with increasing reliance on automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered chatbots for customer service, and a general lack of staff presence at airports in the wake of the pandemic, can sometimes make air travel feel somewhat impersonal – a potential loyalty issue.

A recent study by Gartner found that “brands risk losing 38% of customers because of poor marketing personalisation efforts”.

The problem isn't technophobia or a lack of humans in the customer service loop. Issues mainly arise when communications and interactions between airports (or airlines) and their passengers

aren't relevant or specific enough to resolve the passengers' needs.

According to Nicholas Key, CEO at 15below, a UK-based specialist in hyper-personalised, automated passenger communications in the travel sector, airports and their airline partners “have

to show they're offering a better customer experience, especially during times of disruption”.

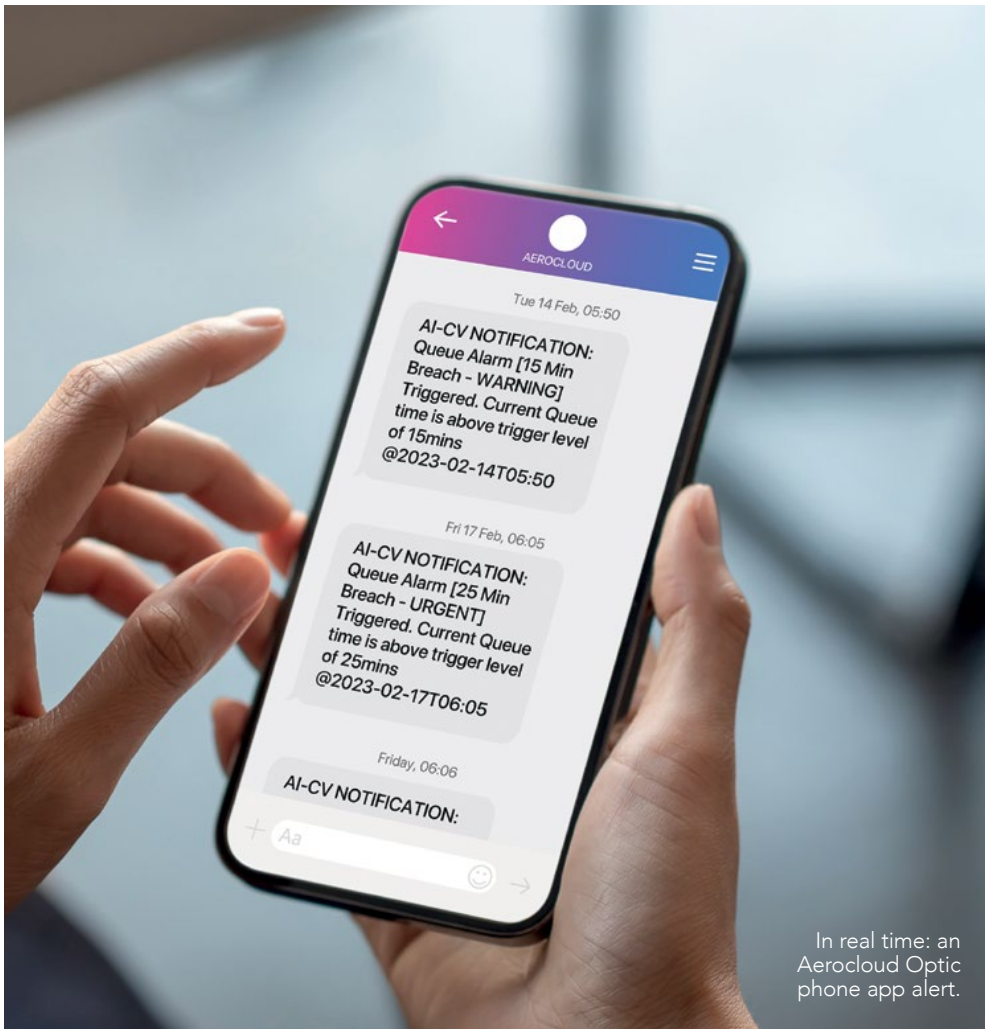
15below uses advanced algorithms and bespoke workflows tailored to each organisation to handle mass disruption, automating operational tasks and preventing human error while delivering cost savings.

In 2020, some 338.9 million notifications (via email, SMS, WhatsApp, mobile app, push voice messages, and other communication channels) were sent through the 15below platform.

Historically, personalisation in the

“Personalisation is really important for how you manage your passengers in that situation and how you provide a good customer experience.”

Nicholas Key, CEO, 15below



In real time: an AeroCloud Optic phone app alert.

“As far as we’re concerned, no solution till now has been able to offer airports this level of passenger insight without compromising privacy.”

Matt Allen, Senior Product Delivery Manager – Optic, AeroCloud

aviation world has originated in the area of the offer and the online booking experience.

What 15below does, says Key, “is to take some of that technology, and some of that personalisation approach, and extend it out to how passengers are managed for the entire journey, from the point of booking all the way through the different touch points. Personalisation is really important for how you manage your passengers in that situation and how you provide a good customer experience.”

DIFFERENT STROKES

Key cites an example of how airlines and airports can deliver hyper-personalisation

to meet rising customer expectations in the following scenario.

“If a flight of 100 people is disrupted by four hours, we want to be able to provide support in our messaging to all 100 passengers in a slightly different way, depending on a number of factors.

“If someone is travelling with their kids and there’s a delay, the primary concern is how am I going to keep the kids entertained in this airport? The challenge is to understand and respond to that so that the relevant information and assistance can be pushed to the passenger.”

That assistance might be in the form of a voucher to a family-friendly restaurant

in the airport, guidance as to where the baby-changing facilities or the children’s play area are, or even promotions on toys and treats in the travel retail area.

“Whereas for somebody travelling alone on business, if there’s a four-hour delay, they need to use that time to be productive. In which case they want to get to a lounge or a quieter area of the airport where they can plug their laptop in and get on with some work.”

In other scenarios, sometimes a one-way communication will be sufficient to resolve issues and deliver personalisation.

Sending an SMS message notifying of a gate change might be sufficient.

However, if baggage has been mishandled, a two-way conversation is required to gather information from the passenger about where they want their baggage to be forwarded to, so deeper interaction with the passenger is required.

Humans must remain involved in the loop for some complex cases where extra support is needed for those passengers who don’t want to interact with a self-serve tool.

DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

A primary benefit of hyper-personalisation is its ability to leverage cutting-edge technologies, such as AI, machine learning and data analytics to aggregate and interpret vast amounts of passenger data.

Matt Allen, Senior Product Delivery Manager – Optic at AeroCloud, says: “By analysing this data even when it’s anonymous, airports can gain deep insights into passenger movements, needs and expectations.”

The company launched its latest solution, AeroCloud Optic, earlier this year (following successful trials at John Lennon Airport in the UK and Sarasota Bradenton in the US) to help airports understand how passengers move through their facility from kerb to gate.

“AeroCloud Optic’s Count module counts how many passengers are in a defined airport area at any one time



Passenger processing

enabling them to support critical operational decisions, while its Track module uses computer vision to intelligently, anonymously and accurately track passengers as they move through an airport," says Allen. "The real-time monitoring of passenger flow means alerts are triggered in response to operational bottlenecks."

AeroCloud's AI and machine learning algorithms also allow staff to identify trends, draw learnings and predict future scenarios to inform more accurate decision-making and ultimately deliver a more personalised experience through better resource management and enhanced retail opportunities for concession partners.

Though airports have trialled a number of existing technologies, including Bluetooth and WiFi, to solve the



Time well spent: hyper-personalisation tools can help airports and passengers rise to meet everyday challenges such as keeping children entertained and in the event of travel delays.

decades-old sector issue of understanding how passengers journey from kerb to gate, AeroCloud believes Optic is the first technology to anonymously track passengers through

the entire process.

"As far as we're concerned, no solution till now has been able to offer airports this level of passenger insight without compromising privacy," says Allen.

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Passenger processing

“It gives airport operations teams that information that allows them to make informed decisions so they can react in real time as well as plan how to use their space more efficiently and better manage the passenger experience.”

PAINTING A PICTURE

Even in the retail environment, companies are leveraging the opportunity to personalise the passenger experience.

Danish company Intelligent Track Systems (ITS) launched its Intelligent Trolley solution at Hamburg and Vienna airports in March and April respectively following successful trials at Oslo Gardermoen, Nice Cote d’Azur, Riyadh King Khalid and San Diego airports.

The company’s Managing Director, Morten Pankoke, told *Regional Gateway*: “By logging on with their boarding pass, passengers receive alerts about their flight and boarding gate. The interactive map makes it easy to locate their gate, as well as restaurants and shops of interest



Intelligent Track Systems (ITS) launched its Intelligent Trolley solution at Hamburg and Vienna airports in March and April respectively following successful trials at five other locations.

and personalised promotions help increase revenue for airports and their retailers while boosting passenger satisfaction.”

ITS data collected by its intelligent trolleys, combined with user survey results, provide airports and their partners with valuable knowledge

about passenger and shopper behaviour.

Data from the company shows that 34% of trolley users say a trolley advertisement made them buy something, while 69% of passengers used the screen to find their gate and 39% of passengers used the screen to find a commercial point of interest. ■



Tomislav Lang, founder and Managing Director of flyvbird. Photo: flyvbird

One of the variables in the passenger journey that hitherto has been beyond the passenger’s choice is origin and destination – consumers have been constrained by airline route networks.

But one company in Germany is planning to overcome this constraint to

Personalising route options

provide route personalisation by providing airports with connectivity to as many other decentralised regional locations as possible.

Tomislav Lang, Managing Director and Founder of flyvbird (marketed as flyv), tells *Regional Gateway*: “If I want to fly from the southern region of Germany to the north, I have two options – Munich or Stuttgart, take it or leave it.

“Flyv will add more than 10 airports in the southern region of Germany to the choice – Stuttgart, Augsburg, Oberpfaffenhofen, Karlsruhe, Mannheim, Friedrichshafen, Ingolstadt, Oberpfaffenhofen, Nürnberg, Memmingen.

“And this is just the start – we can and will offer even smaller airfields which are safe and in operation.”

Lang adds that with consumer needs being increasingly delivered in an “as a service” format, it becomes evident that

personalisation is key.

“People want to have the choice to decide for themselves,” he says.

He notes that flyv is “focused on regional air mobility” and that “in lieu of a traditional hub and spoke network, the flyv scheduling platform uses a proprietary algorithm to optimise the daily flight schedule based on paid bookings and operational constraints”.

Flyv also aims to provide customers with a “guaranteed fixed travel timeframe to their destination at the point of booking, and exact itinerary details prior to departure”.

In February 2023, Italian regional aircraft manufacturer Tecnam and flyv announced a strategic partnership involving the delivery of P2012 twin-engine, nine passenger aircraft to serve smaller regional airports.

“Flyv’s first flights,” says Lang, “are slated for 2024.”