Blueprint for departure: make airports smarter

Mexia Interactive works to help customers unlock the hidden value in their locations, creating high-tech digital platforms to track the passenger journey through the terminal and improve the user experience. Founder and CEO Glenn Tinley discusses how airports can harness real-time data to make travelling easier for everyone, from the check-in desk to the flight departure gate.

Glenn Tinley travels a lot. He works in as many time zones as he can simultaneously, he says, so he's given significant thought to what his ideal airport experience might look like.

"The ultimate for me is: I arrive and my boarding pass is already on my device," he says. "As I pull up to any airport, my device will know what city I am in, where I am going and what time my flight is, provide me with the security wait time and tell me how long it will take me to walk to my gate – and if I stand in line longer than the airport KPI, provide a coupon for a free drink after security."

In his capacity as founder and CEO of Mexia Interactive, he's made this a reality, having worked with airports across the world for a year and a half developing integrated digital platforms. Tinley began this collaboration, he says, when clients came to him looking for new ways to maximise the potential of their locations.

"Non-aviation revenues needed to rise because aviation-based revenues were falling," he says. "Profits from landing fees and things like that were dropping as the industry changed, so we started having some interesting conversations and got going to the space we're in now."

Connect more

With his technology, Tinley says, there's real potential to make travellers' lives better, reducing the anxiety we all experience when at the airport, while at the same time helping operators to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by combining their digital and physical space.

Central to Mexia's Platform is the internet of things – the idea that devices and the people using them are able to connect with whatever environment they are in, turning physical environments into interactive and personalised digital spaces.

"We should be communicating with passengers in security and letting them know that their gate is a five-minute walk and they have 40 minutes to before they need to be there," he says, "then, if the wait is longer than anticipated, provide an offer to their device for a free coffee or drink after security".

"More people have smartphones, and are connected and want to be connected with the environment they find themselves in. In order for all this to work with the devices people have, there needs to be an infrastructure for all of this to come together."

SMRTer than your average

That infrastructure is the SMRT (see, measure, report, track) Sensor platform – the most comprehensive analytics and engagement platform in the industry. The SMRT Sensor provides mobile and video analytics, engagement through Beacons (including iOS/Android SDKs and a CMS for mobile apps) and 802.11ac Wi-Fi services.

"With our SMRT Sensor platform, we monitor the air for mobile signals at a 2.5m level of accuracy and measure queue waiting times in real time to the minute through our video analytics," says Tinley. "Then, with an accurate understanding of passenger behaviours, we can offer engagement through an existing app or can provide a base app to build on.

"In addition, we can provide airports with an upgrade path to 802.11ac Wi-Fi. Simply put, we provide the platform for the internet of things."

All of this combined helps to inform passengers through the FIDS or mobile app and reduces traveller anxiety to create a better experience.

Tinley adds: "A less anxious traveller is inclined to spend more money, thereby achieving our overarching goal of helping our airport clients find new revenues."

Tinley doesn't mince his words when he refers to Mexia's Platform in comparison with others in the industry. "This has been engineered from the ground up to be a platform for the internet of things to help our clients.

"Granular analytics and personalised engagement are real, and passengers are demanding them, but this just simply can't be accomplished by trying to make something like existing Wi-Fi AP's provide this level of information.

"Wi-Fi access points are set up to provide internet access at their core; they are not engineered to provide high degrees of accuracy for analytics such as segmenting departments in your duty-free retail. Our SMRT Sensors are essentially indoor satellites on multiple fronts, and we can tell you that and much more," says Tinley. ■

Further information
Mexia Interactive
www.mexia.ca