Grounded by Data: 5 Costly Flight Information Mistakes Airports Make Every Day

New data and market insights for airports

Author:

FlightView®
Executive Summary:

Flight information sits at the very core of the airport experience. It’s crucial to every airport objective – from customer experience and safety to operational efficiency, revenue generation and customer service.

Just think about all the parties that interact within and around the airport: travelers, the people picking them up, airlines, ground transportation companies, hotels, government agencies, airport and airline operations, TSA and even the restaurants and retailers in the airport. Every one of these parties is affected and impacted by flight information daily.

Yet despite the criticality of flight information today, many airports are still making some major mistakes in the way they aggregate, analyze and disseminate data – which is having a direct impact on operational efficiency, customer service, IT costs and the airport experience.

This FlightView report highlights the top five data management mistakes that airports make today and how to overcome them.

Mistake #1: Manually updating the AODB

At some airports today, airline gate agents still manually update the airport operations database (AODB) every time a flight takes off or touches down. Not only is this a huge drain on staffing resources, but it’s a time-intensive process that’s prone for errors and mistakes.

At other airports, the airport IT team is responsible for aggregating data from the airlines flying into and out of their airport. While this is an improvement over the first scenario, the process is still ripe for automation, and gets complex when the airport team has to aggregate data from smaller airlines that only have a few scheduled flights each day.

Consider that most airlines have different ways of disseminating data – which places immense pressure on airport IT teams to integrate multiple data sources, transmissions and formats into a single system, all while ensuring that the info is formatted correctly and ready to display across the airport’s various internal and customer-facing systems as quickly as possible. Not only is this challenging on a typical day, but relying on airlines for data puts the airport at significant risk should an airline feed go offline.
Mistake #2: Failing to paint the full flight information picture

For airports where a number of airlines offer service, it is challenging to have data on every flight – as a result, airports that aggregate their own data tend to have information gaps. Major carriers flying in and out of an airport will typically provide the necessary information in a timely manner. However, it can be extremely challenging to consistently get data from smaller, regional airlines.

According to FlightView, airports that aggregate their own data tend to be missing 20 – 40 percent of the data they need to operate at the highest, most efficient level. And that only takes into account the airlines with flights into and out of that particular airport.

The reality is that, for today’s traveler, the picture is a lot larger than just a single airport. Travelers crave global flight information, and want full visibility into what’s happening everywhere – not just the airport where they are currently located. In fact, according to a FlightView survey of 2,160 travelers, 90 percent said they want the gate and status of their connecting flight pushed to their phone. And more than 86 percent of traveler said they value terminal displays with departure information for nearby airport hubs where there are frequent connections.

Unfortunately, airlines tend to only provide airports with updates for flights that are specific to that particular airport’s operations. Without a third-party source of information, it’s difficult for airports to paint a full picture of what’s happening for their customers.

Mistake #3: Failing to advance the customer experience

Providing actionable, real-time and easily-accessible day-of-travel information is critical to creating an enjoyable, stress-free and productive airport experience for customers.

And while airports have always played a role in keeping travelers informed through flight information displays (FIDS) and other gate-side technology, today’s travelers want more. The competition for in-trip services is intense – with airlines, OTAs and third-party mobile travel apps all competing for traveler stickiness. But just because the market is crowded, that doesn’t mean airports shouldn’t try to win their fair share of the pie. The key is investing in the right channels to ensure customers can access the data they need, from the airport, when and wherever they want it.

In fact, according to a recent FlightView study, 93 percent of travelers said they want airports to automatically push alerts to them regarding important day-of-travel information during their trips. Specifically, of the travelers FlightView surveyed:

- 84% expect airports to keep them updated on their flight’s status
- 79% want updates on security wait times
- 48% would value updates on traffic delays
- 38% want to be kept updated on the weather at their destination city
The best airports today provide a ubiquitous experience by giving travelers access to information anytime, anywhere and through multiple channels – including mobile, Web, kiosks, gate-side displays, traditional FIDs and more.

For airports, striking a balance between budget and new technologies and processes is important, as not every technological advance will have a direct impact on the passenger experience. Regardless of which technologies an airport rolls out – it all starts with being able to provide the right data and information.

**Mistake #4: Overlooking the value of in-trip customer stickiness**

Whether at home, work, at the airport or in transit, travelers consume massive amounts of information immediately before, during and just after they travel. This creates a substantial opportunity for airports to keep travelers’ attention for longer periods of time, opening the door for more advertising revenue and higher levels of customer loyalty.

For example, what would happen if just 25 percent of the travelers that fly through an airport went back to that airport’s mobile website or app for flight updates, airport parking information, or terminal maps after they left? A massive spike in site traffic and mobile impressions, and ultimately, more advertising revenue.

**Mistake #5: Miscalculating the real costs of data aggregation**

Many airports mistakenly view third-party data providers as a cost center. In reality, these airports are failing to calculate the real costs – both from a financial and resource perspective – of aggregating flight information internally.

After automating data aggregation through FlightView, Kansas City International Airport reported saving 25 hours a month in flight status updates and system maintenance. Using the average, mixed salaries of an airport manager and an airport systems technician ($64,460), that translates into rough savings of more than $40,000 per year for the airport.
And that only looks at day-of-travel information and services as a cost center. In reality, keeping travelers well-informed not only improves overall satisfaction and reduces the burden on airport and airline customer service teams, but it also leads to travelers spending more money at the airport. As a point of reference, take Tampa Bay International Airport as an example. Following several investments in travel information transparency throughout its terminals, Tampa reported a 10 percent increase in airside concession revenue and 6.8 percent increase in dollars spent per passenger. That’s valuable revenue for any airport, no matter how large or small.

**Airports: Fly Higher with Stronger Flight Information**

Investing in better flight information technologies and processes is a win-win for both travelers and the airport. The travelers benefit from an easier and more informed travel experience, while airports operate more efficiently, save money, streamline internal processes and better cater to customer needs – driving both revenue and loyalty.

When evaluating your airport’s current process for flight aggregation and dissemination, there are three key lessons to remember:

1. **Aggregating data internally is more costly than outsourcing to a third-party, single-source flight information provider.** By making the switch and automating the process, you’ll save valuable internal resources, cut costs and streamline operations.

2. **Today’s travelers demand comprehensive, global day-of-travel information.** It’s no longer enough only to provide data relevant to your airport. Today’s travelers want it all, and the more information you provide, the better. If you don’t provide it, someone else will – and your airport will miss out on a valuable opportunity for in-trip stickiness.

3. **More informed and satisfied travelers spend more at the airport and show stronger loyalty.** It’s all about the customer experience. And today, the easiest way to create a better, less stressful and more enjoyable airport experience is to keep travelers informed across all channels, and provide the self-service technologies and amenities they need to be productive. That all starts with accurate, actionable real-time information.
Ready to Take the Next Step?

- Learn more about FlightView’s powerful real-time flight and day-of-travel information, and how it can easily and directly integrate with your airport.

- For more insight on improving the airport experience, download FlightView’s latest report, Building Connected Airports that Enhance Customer Experience, Improve Operations and Drive Revenue.

About FlightView:

FlightView, the top provider of day-of-travel information and services for the aviation and travel industries, is at the forefront of helping airlines and airports increase customer satisfaction, retention and revenue. FlightView’s customer list has grown to include over 120 airports, several major and mid-sized airlines and other travel related companies who employ FlightView information in digital displays, Web and mobile sites, native apps, and other technologies. For more information, visit www.flightview.com.

Contact Us:

FlightView
55 Chapel St., Suite 103
Newton, MA 02458
www.flightview.com

Katherine Wellman
VP of Marketing & Product Management
kwellman@flightview.com
(617) 202-0480