

Going beyond the traditional FFP



Natalia Zalcman
Product Manager
Loyalty & Airlines Solutions
Email: natalia.zalcman@comarch.com
Website: www.comarch.com

Comarch Headquarters
Al. Jana Pawla II 39 a
31-864 Krakow, Poland

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Once a sign of an innovative approach and a means for differentiation in the market, Frequent Flyer Programs are now used by nearly every airline. An FFP has become a standard in the airline industry. Passengers no longer find the existence of a program a novelty, but are instead surprised by its absence. Frequent flyers have become accustomed to the various benefits that have been offered and are now coming to expect fresh ideas and special offers.

At first glimpse, a loyalty program may appear merely an expense for an airline, but is this really so? If we take a closer look, it turns out not to be a cost consuming initiative but rather one that generates profit. An FFP is one of the best ways to reach a customer and is a great channel for advertising and stimulation. Knowing passenger preferences and the ability to estimate their behavior is a key to understanding what services are most valuable and is a key in successfully retaining and bonding customers emotionally. In order to achieve this, constant attention must be paid to the program's attractiveness which is best enhanced with a pinch of unconventional thinking. So how can we go further and offer more to meet ever-increasing customer expectations?

From the FFP to the VIP

An FFP is a great departure point for more comprehensive and advanced forms of customer care. Personal notifications and programs dedicated to the most valuable customers may be among the most appreciated. According to the Pareto rule (20% of most valuable clients produce 80% of the revenue), identifying key customers and providing them with specialized care and services can bring a notable increase of income. What do VIP passengers care about? Extra miles, free tickets? Probably not so much. However, what may be of more value is a sense of recognition and proactive management of potential problems. Imagine a specialist ensuring seamless support of an entire journey, monitoring the schedule and handling any potential disruptions. Every passenger would value such personal attention and VIP treatment. Yet traditional concierge services are too costly for widespread use and are reserved for only a few. So the question becomes, is there a way to enhance the experience of the average traveler in a cost effective way?

Reducing anxiety

Air travel can often be a frustrating experience. Tight schedules, airport traffic, flight delays and hours spent waiting lower overall customer satisfaction levels. Stress and anxiety is omnipresent in the world of today's travel. Accurate and timely information is the key to comfort. Can you provide passengers with a consistent and updated travel itinerary, accessible over various channels 24 hours a day?

Would you value direct communication regarding any schedule changes or flight delays? Current technology makes it possible to provide this service directly to mobile devices at a minimal cost. Comprehensive information can reduce the amount of contact center calls and save travelers time spent waiting in line at the airport information desk. Offering these extra services is something your members will value and even consider spending their miles on.

Enhancing the service through direct marketing

Long hours spent waiting are the most disliked part of a journey. Why not take advantage of this period and target passengers when they are most susceptible? By involving customers in dialogue, you will learn about passengers while they gain benefits from your customized offers. Knowing their personal details and locations gives you the advantage of utilizing context-aware messages. Engage passengers, encourage them to visit a special promotion zone, send discount e-coupons to partner shops or provide entertainment directly through a mobile device. The possibilities are endless. Of course there is the issue of privacy and some customers will prefer not to be bothered. However, by letting your members customize when, how and with what they are contacted with, customer satisfaction as well as revenue can be increased.

Lead the passenger through the journey

The current level and pace of technology inspires thoughts of new possibilities emerging now and in the future. A new generation of mobile devices enables you to do things you wouldn't have dreamed of only a few years ago. A generation of youth fascinated by devices, blogs and communities is becoming travelers in ever-growing numbers. This begs the question, how can we approach this new wave of passengers? Can mobile technology enhance the travel experience in the near future? Passenger mobile devices can become a unified place for all travel information, documentation, a source for payments as well as a personal entertainment center. There is no visible technical barrier impeding the transformation of a mobile device into a traveler's virtual assistant. Guiding a passenger through a journey, navigating them through new places and reminding them of important events in their travel itinerary can reduce the anxiety connected with the journey while bringing value and savings to the airline. A well-informed passenger will move smoothly through the airport and is less likely to miss a boarding. Dedicated messages and offers will create a feeling of personal care and comfort. Entertainment, especially enabling interaction with others, can ease the burden of long hours spent waiting at the airport and improve the overall perception of the journey. Finally, not only will satisfied customers use a particular carrier's services more frequently, but they will also recommend these services to others, expanding the community of frequent travelers and driving ancillary revenues.