

Integrate to accumulate

Communication between an airline's departments, its customers and airport authorities is often problematic during normal operating conditions, let alone irregular ones. Phil Douglas, CEO of **2e Systems**, speaks to *Future Airport Asia* about how integrating airlines' subdivisions under one online umbrella programme increases overall efficiency and facilitates effective responses to crises.

Please provide a brief overview of the services that your company offers.

Phil Douglas: We're a computer engineering and development firm that specialises in web technologies and high-volume messaging systems for the airline industry. The company was founded almost 13 years ago, and has offices in Frankfurt, London and Zagreb.

Our main product is eeSky Suite, an integrated system of automated modules supporting all aspects of passenger sales and management, as well as staff and crew operations. It includes booking facilities, check-in solutions, notification and messaging services for customers and crew, reward schemes and promotional packages, which can all be tailored to suit individual airlines.

What are the benefits of having all these services under one roof?

Having a fully integrated solution like eeSky Suite means everything can be centralised, so data and services are easily reusable across complementary services. This means more efficient processing, and a better quality of service to customers and staff. Connections to external systems like departure control systems and global distribution systems are also used more efficiently.

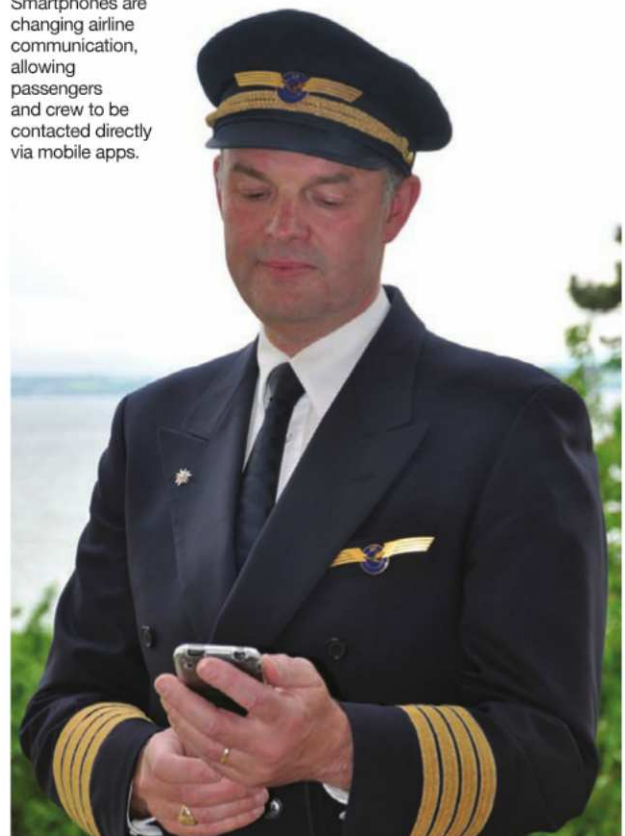
Another advantage is that it minimises maintenance and support costs, and allows for seamless collaboration between different modules. It's worth drawing attention to the passenger benefits; a significantly smoother and more complete service – very valuable for information and channel consistency, and extremely important for customer loyalty.

How does eeSky Suite facilitate crew communication, particularly during irregular operations (IROPs)?

Current communications are often manual; someone has to actually contact each individual crew member, costing airlines a lot of time. There are, of course, crew portals, but the problem is that in an IROP situation, the airline is dependant on the crew member actually logging in and checking for new information – they have to 'pull' the information – and that doesn't always happen.

Our eeCrewConnect platform is fully automatic; it 'pushes' the information to the airline crew members, who then interactively acknowledge receipt of their new instructions. During normal operations, this significantly increases efficiency. But it's especially beneficial during IROPs; for example, in 2007, the Valentine's Day blizzard caused huge amounts of trouble for one airline. In such situations, there are not enough crew control staff

Smartphones are changing airline communication, allowing passengers and crew to be contacted directly via mobile apps.



to contact the crew members. Even if there were enough staff, there wouldn't be enough phone lines and, again, even if there were, every call would take several minutes to clarify the situation. On top of that, the airline is dependant on the fact that a particular crew member is available and reachable at the very moment that contact is attempted. Essentially, these are scenarios that just can't be properly dealt with manually.

Since that blizzard, 2e has implemented a solution to assist them in such IROP situations; for example, using our eeCrewConnect system, the airline was easily able to handle Hurricane Sandy; arguably the next biggest IROP since the Valentine's Day blizzard.

eeConnect also allows direct passenger communication. How can airlines benefit from this?

At the moment, the fastest and most reliable way to contact a passenger is through SMS. It doesn't matter if they have an old mobile phone or if they're abroad with global roaming switched off. SMS will almost always get the job done.

Having said that, we are prepared for a paradigm shift in customer communication; more people have smartphones now, and phone companies are showing signs that they'll finally get rid of their ridiculous international roaming rates. Passengers will soon be contactable by methods requiring cellular data being activated on their device – we already offer our services connecting directly to mobile apps.

Regarding the social media revolution, our aim is to allow airlines to be present, rather than to sell anything directly; for example, offering postings to a customer's Facebook wall is something that will appeal to passengers who want to keep friends up to date on where they're going. It also acts as a subtle, free marketing tool for airlines. Of course the future may look very different and we are keeping our finger on the pulse regarding new development in sales and marketing via social media.

eeSky Suite modules can all be tailored to specific airline requirements. Why is this level of customisation so important?

Tailoring is integral to allowing our customers to differentiate themselves from the competition. If they were to choose a non-customisable solution from one of the big players, they'd just end up with tools that look exactly the same as their competition. With the internet and mobile areas fast becoming the most important sales channels, this can seriously damage their chances of stealing the lead.

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What effects do you think passengers printing their own boarding passes and checking themselves in are having on the industry?

The whole notion of the check-in process is antiquated. Most airlines are moving towards a fully automated process, and using a customer's mobile phone is an added verification that they are the right person. We check passengers in automatically and then notify them of their seat assignment. If the customer doesn't like the seat, they can click a link to change it online.

The broader benefits of this are obvious – it aids airports by reducing congestion, helps airlines to become leaner by trimming unnecessary labour costs, and benefits the customer by making the whole check-in process as smooth and time-efficient as possible. ■

Further information
2e Systems
www.2e-systems.com



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FOR PASSENGERS AND CREW**

eeConnect - helping passenger and crew notifications *fly*

eeConnect, the innovative and dynamic platform developed by 2e Systems as a part of the eeSky Suite, integrates a multitude of host systems and automates notifications for all points of contact in the airlines' operations. From pre-flight booking to crew schedule changes, rebooking as well as notifications for every aspect of your operation, we cover what is needed from A-to-Z.

2e Systems and eeConnect: our solution will make your notifications *fly*.

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