How Airlines Can Provide a Consistent Passenger Experience During IROPs

From Hub to Outstation

Plan3

Passenger Disruption. Solved.

WORLD AVIATION FESTIVAL Asia

The Challenge of Providing a Consistent Passenger Experience

A third of all aviation reviews focus on the impact of disruptions on the customer experience. Interestingly, it's not that a disruption occurs – 73% of all business travellers expect a day-of-travel disruption – but rather, it is how the airlines respond to the disrupted passengers.

> When a disruption occurs most of the passenger negative sentiment focuses on two themes:
>
> **Lack of information**
> The passenger does not know what is happening, nor how long will it take to resolve.
>
> **Lack of agency**
> The passenger has no input for the solution provided.

Ensuring passengers stay informed during IROP events is a dominant aviation theme and it was a central talking point for the Customer Experience track in Aviation Festival Asia (2024).

Airports and airlines alike spoke of large-scale coordinating objectives to enable their personnel to provide real-time information to disrupted customers. In order to provide a consistent customer experience, there was a consensus that more personnel and training were needed.

However, alignment of personnel, flow of information, and the consistency of the passenger experience becomes increasingly unlikely the further a passenger is outside an airline's central control. This is evident in the contrasting experience of the same airline brand between one of their hubs and one of their outstations. Hubs are better resourced with data, oversight, and personnel.

Is this level of passenger experience achievable with third party providers in an outstation on the other side of the globe?

The answer from our conference roundtable was an emphatic NO.

This highlights the limitations of personnel-driven processes (manual) and reveals – when operating at scale – that the inconsistencies of the passenger experience are not training related but rather a lack of the right tooling.

Airlines seeking to provide a consistent passenger experience from hub to outstation must begin by understanding the journey of the disrupted passenger before examining their solutions and empowering their personnel.

Airline Health Check for Passenger Disruptions

This report is the result of an airline roundtable where we workshopped the impact of a disruption on the passenger journey and discussed the tools and processes necessary to restore the value of the trip.

In order for airlines to identify gaps in resourcing and tooling, we encouraged airlines to score their capabilities in six areas that make up the passenger disruption journey:

01	Monitoring	Passenger Visibility
02	The Impact of a Disruption on the Passenger Experience
03	Level of Airline Preparation to Respond to each of the Passenger's Pain Points
04	Communicating Directly with the Passenger
05	Self-service	What Level of Agency does your Passenger have?
06	Reporting	Optimising the Business Case

Scoring based on what is "**Industry Standard**" or "**Best-in-class**" simply serves to highlight where an airline should prioritise solutions in the future.

If your airline is looking for more efficient and cost-effective ways to solve passenger disruption, book a **call with Plan3**.

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# Monitoring | Passenger Visibility

Question for airlines

- What level of granularity does your airline's PSS provide regarding disruptions?
- Can it monitor disruptions at a PNR level?
- What are the implications of limited passenger visibility?

Industry Standard

Airlines monitor disruptions solely from an operational perspective in terms of scheduling, crew, hangar, gate times – what's good for the airline is good for the passenger.

Best-in-class

Airlines can monitor disruptions at a passenger level and respond accordingly.
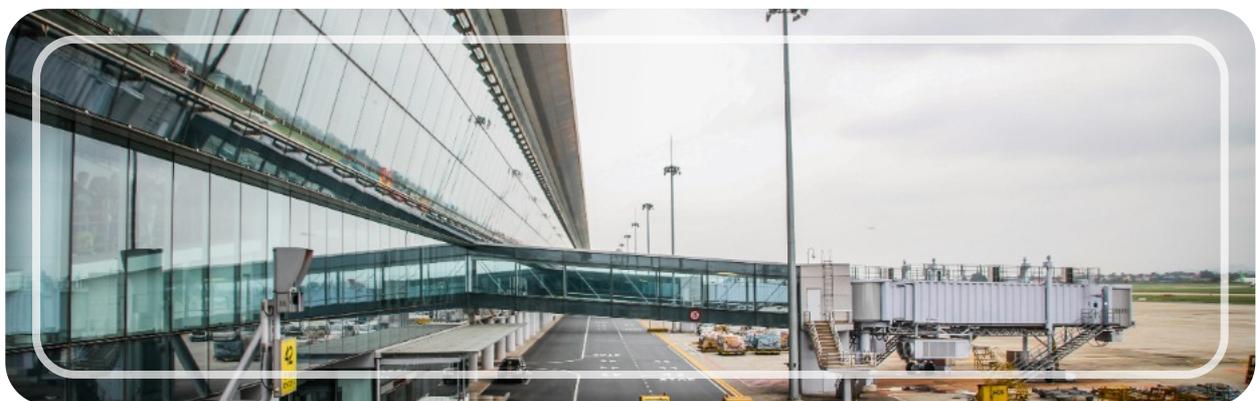
The Impact of a Disruption on the Passenger Experience

Question for airlines
- Can you identify the passenger pain points that result from a single flight disruption?

While all IROPs can be measured in loss of time for the passenger, the restoration of the value of disrupted trip varies from passenger to passenger.

Consider three scenarios
1. Trans-Atlantic weekend break with friends
2. Two week family vacation
3. Short haul work trip for a meeting

How does a five hour delay impact the value of each trip? The loss of value should determine the solution an airline provides.

For example, in scenario 3 a five hour delay could void the entire value of the trip (ie. the meeting was missed). Would the passenger still want to be rebooked on a later flight that day?

In the case of a significant delay or cancellation, 49% of business travellers would prefer a refund than the airline to rebook their flight (AMEX).

Industry Standard
Airlines consider disruptions only on a flight by flight basis, disregarding the passenger journey.
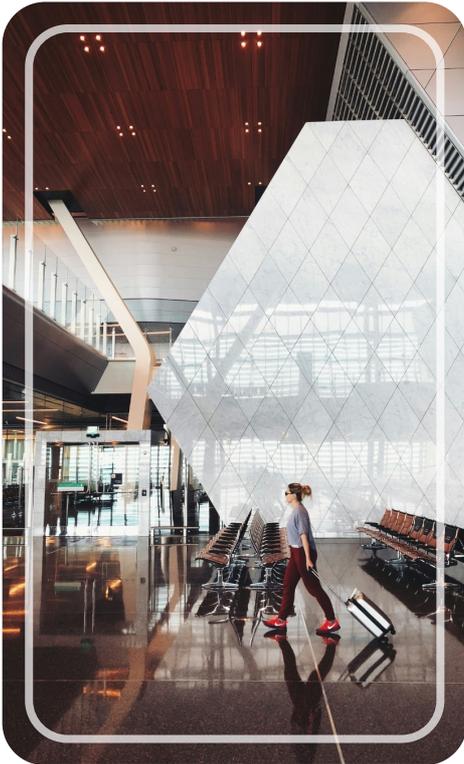
Best-in-class
Airlines have the ability to identify the impact of disruptions on each touchpoint of the passenger journey, in real-time.

Level of Preparation to Respond to Each of the Passenger's Pain Points | Proactive vs. Reactive

Questions for airlines

- Considering your current solutions and processes, how prepared is your airline to provide timely solutions for each passenger scenario?

The other factor in the passenger journey is time. Some airlines have solutions in place but they are manual and disconnected from other essential services – think one agent trying to book hotel rooms for hundreds of passengers, then passing the process over to another agent to book transportation or food options.

- How connected are your services?
- What level of manual input do they require?

Industry Standard

Most airlines focus on restoring flight schedules thereby employing a one-size-fits-all approach - bulk migrating the disrupted passengers to the next commercially viable flight with no input from the passengers.

The minority of airlines that have a passenger process in place rely heavily on manual support which drags out the solution and is subject to human error.

Best-in-class

Airlines that have aggregated all their disrupted-related services in one place, forecast for every disrupted passenger scenario, have an opportunity to fully automate deployment of solutions.

Communicating Directly to the Passenger

Question for airlines

- How does your airline define communicating with the passenger?

Most airlines define passenger comms as the ability to deliver a message to the passenger. However, effective communication must allow for a passenger response.

Does your airline employ a mechanism that allows your passengers to respond in times of disruption and choose the solution that best suits their needs?

- What is your airline's time threshold for first communication when a disruption occurs?

This varies from airline to airline, but depending on the disruption many airlines do not make contact with the passenger until a delay exceeds one hour.

Communication with the passenger can be complicated by the input of multiple departments (ie. rebooking flights, accommodation, food options etc.). If an airline's services are fragmented it will be reflected in a lack of coherency in communicating with the passenger.

Furthermore, there will be no path to automation and personalised messaging will always require manual input that does not scale.

Industry Standard
While most airlines have a passenger disruption process in place it is often informed by multiple stakeholders, gaps in solutions, and largely executed by manual input, which will be reflected in how the airline communicates with the passenger.

Best-in-class
Airlines with passenger visibility and aggregated solutions have the opportunity to fold communication into the fully automated disruption workflow.

Self-service | What Level of Agency does your Passenger have?

Question for airlines

In the case of a disruption, how much input does the passenger have in the solution?
What level of optionality do you provide your passengers when a disruption occurs?

The benefits of self-service across all industries are well understood and include:

- Reduced overhead by removing human input (ie. reliance on call centres and ground staff).
- Higher conversion and NPS (ie. customers that choose their own solution are more likely to follow-through and post higher NPS scores).

Industry Standard

Airlines can boast self-service options with functionality as minimal as confirming a rebooking or choosing a refund.

Best-in-class

Airlines looking to increase self-service among passengers must attend to each of the areas above.

Reporting | Optimising the Business Case

Question for airlines

Does your airline know the cost of a disruption? Overall cost, per passenger, per option package (itemised by rebooking, accommodation etc.,), regional and so on.

The vast majority of airlines have limited to no visibility of passenger costs per disruption (this is based on conversations with 100+ airlines in the last year). This is due to a number of factors, including:

- Lack of oversight of third party providers.
- Siloed departments.
- Limited understanding of how a negative disruption experience impacts future customers

In order to calculate the incremental gains a new solution can achieve for an airline, an accurate benchmark is required.

Industry Standard

Many airlines have visibility on the operational costs of a disruption, but the passenger aspect operates as a cost centre for the airline.

With increased passenger expectations, the majority of airlines are prioritising better passenger disruption solutions.

Best-in-class

Airlines with full visibility of the passenger disruption journey, available tooling, and processes which affords greater opportunity to optimise.

Plan3

Developed by aviation industry experts, Plan3 provides airlines with a holistic view of the passenger disruption lifecycle and the tools to automate solutions that empower passengers to self-service. Airlines that use Plan3 can eliminate >75% of their customer support traffic, resulting in significant cost-saving while achieving higher customer satisfaction scores.

World Aviation Festival

The World Aviation Festival is a global conference and exhibition that spans three continents gathering the leaders of the world's airlines, airports and their most senior executives in charge of software, services, marketing, and distribution. Next event will take place in Miami, 15-16th May, 2024.

If your airline is looking to increase passenger self-service, book a call with Plan3 to find out how we helped our client achieve >80% self-service during IROP events.

Resources

1. Navigating Towards a New Normal: 2023 Deloitte Corporate Travel Study

2. Cost of Disrupted Flights To The Economy ~ AirHelp

3. 2023 Passenger IT Insights ~ SITA

4. The First-Ever Patent Analysis in the Airline Industry ~ Lufthansa Innovation Hub

5. How to Improve Airline Customer Loyalty Programs ~ McKinsey & Company

6. Corporate Travel: Collaboration is Essential For Successful Covid Recovery ~ PwC

7. Loyalty and Disruption: The New Age of Travel ~ OAG

8. Shaping the Future of Airline Disruption Management ~ Amadeus

9. The Impact of Flight Disruption on Airline Customer Perception and Loyalty ~ CMAC

10. Disruption Proofing the Aviation Industry ~ Accenture

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