

16 Sep Mobile Self Service: Don't Blow It! Here's How Airlines & Telcos Are Doing It Right

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Like the fundamental shifts within the customer service industry driven by the earliest days of social media and smart devices, mobile self-service integration is still considered an optional benefit by the consumer but verges on becoming an expected convenience. With a focus on end-user ease and successful applications ranging from streamlining air travel to an additional mode of contact within cross-channel communications, the automated tool is establishing itself as one of the most versatile yet cost-effective platforms available.

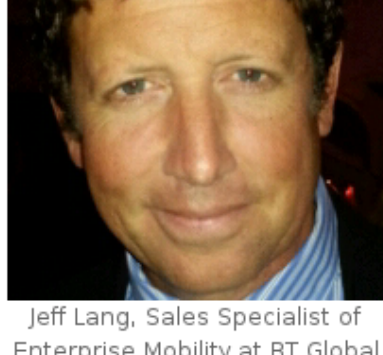
[Alaska Airlines](#) emerged as an industry leader in self-service amenities in 1995 as the first U.S. airline to sell tickets online and introduced its mobile self-service check-in option in 2001. Curtis Kopf, Vice-President of Customer Innovation at [alaskaair.com](#) describes the airline's traveler-driven tech evolution as "an exciting journey." He continues, "We've put the customer at the center and built features into our mobile app that our customers most want—be it the ability to see their place on the upgrade list or to purchase a ticket. This strategy has worked well for us and the customer feedback we've received so far has been terrific."

Jeff Lang, Sales Specialist of Enterprise Mobility at [BT Global Services](#), classifies self-service solutions available on mobile platforms as a "must have" and "core" to BT's customer experience strategy. The telecom giant "understands that in today's marketplace customers expect immediate and flexible access to customer service resources to solve their technology issues and problems...Mobile self-service capabilities empower our customers to fundamentally redefine how they provide a more comprehensive, innovative customer service vision and strategy."



Curtis Kopf, Vice-President of Customer Innovation at Alaska Airlines

Lang cites the high adoption rate of BT's mobile self-service options as an indicator of the feature's ability to provide an agile, multi-layered experience as customer service becomes increasingly central to organizations' operational strategies. The industry, he says, "has evolved from being considered as a cost center item to a key customer service component capable of transforming the customer relationship. BT Global Services believes providing additional self-service options that enable delivery of a greater personalized experience will be essential services required to increased brand loyalty and customer satisfaction for our customers."



Jeff Lang, Sales Specialist of Enterprise Mobility at BT Global Services

After its third consecutive win as Europe's most punctual carrier, [Scandinavian Airlines](#) (SAS) injected humor into its 2011 mobile offerings with The Timekiller App, aimed at travelers waiting for delayed flights on competitor airlines. The game's viral popularity introduced SAS' technical capabilities to a wider audience. Karl Eklund, Head of Digital Sales for SAS, says their playfulness has evolved into a focus on "speed, simplicity and creating an app that identifies [easier travel]...One of the challenges a

company like ours meets is to hold back the fun stuff, the over-informative product updates, the large campaign packages, deep and heavy inspirational content. It's hard to be firm and say no to all managers, departments and functions who claim right to develop their areas into the app."

In addition to improved experience quality, growing adoption rates and streamlined customer response times, Lang notes that BT discovered an unexpected benefit to its mobile self-service implementation with increased hiring flexibility across geographies. "Additionally, mobile self-service functionality has enabled BT to recruit and leverage a larger global pool of qualified, experienced technical resources that possess superior knowledge capable of supporting complex technical issues to deliver a superior customer service experience."

SAS' mobile self-service check-in option is one aspect to the airline's overall strategic vision of a consistent and uniform, yet individualized, customer experience. Eklund says the feature encourages SAS' travelers to use the carrier's other automated options, harmonizing customer demand for simplicity blended with personalization. "The customer experience has a vision to be the same in all digital touch points and the mobile development led the way to interact with customers in different ways for different channels," he says. "The major upcoming challenge is to decide how much of the mobile approach should spill over to how we transform the other digital channels. We are also looking into mobile and digital solutions can help out during irregularities such as over-bookings and cancelled flights shortly before departure. Also to push relevant info and offers in the right time, to the right person—we know that the fine line between being intrusive and helping is difficult to balance, nevertheless it's needed to explore where the line ends to be able to deliver great digital services."



Karl Eklund, Head of Digital Sales for SAS

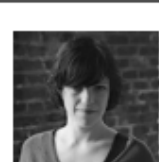
Despite the key role self-service features play in Alaska's goal to provide the most hassle-free flying experience possible, Kopf maintains the automated elements are complementary to the essential human component of the carrier's customer service approach. "More and more, customers are using their mobile phones to do things they used to do on a computer and at a check-in kiosk," he adds. "Mobile gives our customers the option to be more self-sufficient on the day of travel, and while it is convenient, we know for some of our customers nothing replaces human interaction. The friendly service from our agents and flight attendants continues to be a critical part of the Alaska Airlines experience that distinguishes from other airlines."

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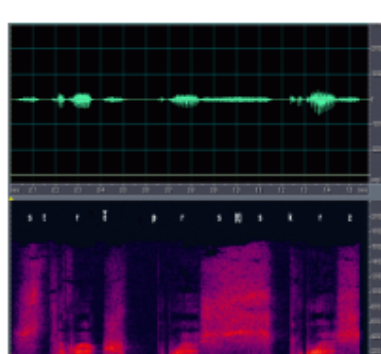
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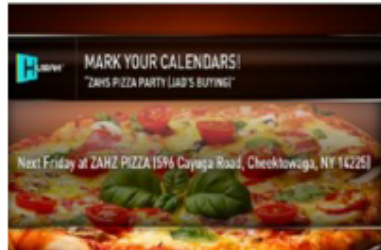
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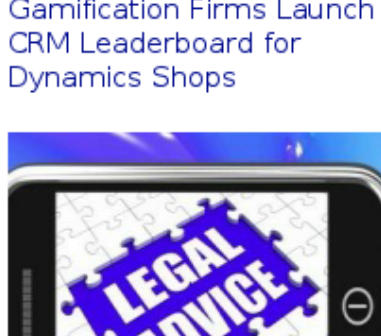
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