

# Passengers facing disruption: handle with care

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Today's technologies enable a level of customer service far beyond the standards of just a few years ago. This is particularly relevant for the almost \$8 trillion global travel and tourism industry, an industry that is driven by the quality of customer service provided to travelers.

The world's airlines are at the travel industry's forefront in using technology to improve customer service. Mobile, artificial intelligence, personalization, geolocation and other leading-edge technologies are all being used today to provide customers with end-to-end, comprehensive levels of care.

Today's travelers expect and demand this new level of customer service, and they do not hesitate to use social media to call out airlines, or indeed any brands, that fail to deliver. From an airline perspective, brand reputations are constantly on the line.

## **A problem that can't be ignored**

Nearly 16 percent of all flights handled by the top 10 airlines were delayed in 2016 and on average 21% of global airline flights were canceled or delayed in the last year.<sup>1</sup>



## **About the author**

Derek Sharp has global responsibility for Travelport's commercial relationships with airlines and rail suppliers. In this role, he leads a worldwide team of sales, business development and operations experts focused on expanding and improving upon the company's value proposition to the supplier community. In addition, Derek also manages Travelport's airline IT solutions business, which delivers hosting and IT solutions to airlines around the world.

Derek joined Travelport in 2010 from EDS/HP where he held numerous senior roles in the US, Europe and Asia in strategic sales, corporate development and major account management.

Prior to EDS/HP, Derek worked as a management consultant with Bain & Company and as an international account executive with United Parcel Services (UPS). He has a BA in Political Science from Texas A&M University and an MBA from the Amos Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College.

Derek lives in London with his wife, Missy, and their two children.

The unforeseen nature of these events often makes them unmanageable and creates undue stress on an airline's operation and these disruptions can have major financial implications for airlines. They can also create significant operational costs when it comes to providing additional personnel at the airport and in call centers to service customers who need new flights and hotel rooms.

Just as critical, however, is the reputational damage to an airline's brand when customers experience poor service and a breakdown in communication.

Imagine your flight's been unexpectedly delayed or cancelled—you missed the last connecting flight of the day. You now find yourself in an unfamiliar airport in an unknown city, and there is little to no guidance on what you should do. You don't even speak the language.

Tension levels rise in situations like this one as travelers feel the stress of trying to rebook their flights and finding a place to sleep for the night. Meanwhile, families miss out on weddings, birthdays and holidays. Job interviews are missed, careers are curtailed and business travelers can't connect with important clients. These shared experiences and opportunities are lost forever.

The impact is far-reaching for all concerned, and the airline's reputation is on the line. Passengers might forgive their airline for falling short of their initial expectations, e.g. transporting them to their destination on time. But they rarely forgive an airline for not showing empathy, failing to keep them informed and not doing their best to remedy the situation. That's a surefire way of losing that customer forever.

### Technology as an enabler

The answer to this challenge is automation. Automated processes allow travelers to control their own situation with no manual intervention from airport agents and no paperwork. Automation also provides passengers with immediate flight and hotel options while reducing the required number of airline personnel to interact with passengers.

The old airline standard of care required you to stand in a long line with other displaced passengers, patiently waiting your turn to talk to a stressed airline employee in order to rebook you on a new flight and give you a paper hotel voucher. Once you had your voucher, you then tried to find a shuttle or other transportation to the hotel of the airline's choosing.

At the hotel, you needed to wait in line to check in and receive your room key. This entire process would take hours, even if it went smoothly—leaving you with little time to sleep before waking up and returning to the airport to board your new flight.

Now imagine a new standard of airline customer care. It's based on an intuitive, highly-efficient and customizable mobile-based system that uses advanced technology to increase customer satisfaction and decrease customer frustration.

Irregular operations are a big issue for everyone

**21%**   
of all flights are disrupted each day<sup>1</sup>

**866 million**   
passengers are disrupted each year<sup>2</sup>

**\$60 billion**   
costs to the travel industry<sup>3</sup>

It's the same scenario as before. Your flight is cancelled or delayed. But, this time, you receive a notice on your mobile device (smartphone, tablet or wearable device) that the airline is aware of your circumstances and will guide you through the process of getting you to your destination, including options for accommodation, transfers and meals, if required.

With this new standard of care, airlines can provide their passengers with a dramatically-improved customer service experience during disruptions.

### Mobile holds the key

The technology needed to improve the customer experience and deliver meaningful personalized information, insights and experiences exists today, and passengers are ready. According to Google Analytics research, mobile phones are now the #1 most indispensable item that travelers carry.<sup>4</sup>

As a messaging platform, mobile offers airlines unprecedented opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of customer preferences and expectations throughout the travel experience. Mobile also delivers personalized experiences that improve the traveler journey.

The adoption of mobile channels is the key because flight and hotel bookings during airline disruptions represent a major friction point when managing customer experiences. Airlines can solve this challenge by giving passengers the ability to book flights and hotels automatically using their smartphones.

This creates a clear win for the airlines and their customers, signaling an end to long lines at airport desks and numerous calls to customer service centers.

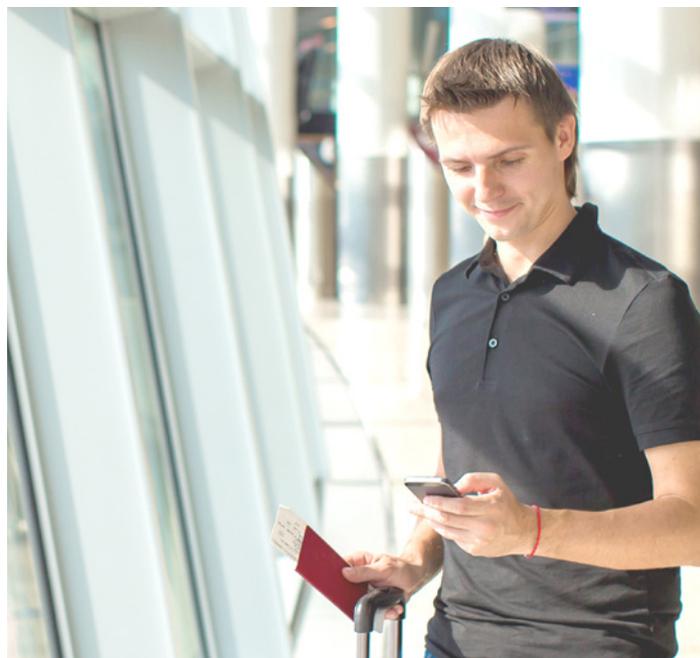
### Resolving the challenge of flight disruptions

Many airlines have already made great strides in empowering passengers to rebook their flights on their smartphones. The next area to conquer is hotel bookings.

When disruptions occur, travelers just want to know “When's my next flight?” and “Where will I sleep tonight?” As airlines take customers through this journey, they need to make sure the experience runs as smoothly as possible to protect their brand using automated technologies and timely communications.

Combining today's mobile technologies to connect the ecosystem of airlines, hotels and ground transportation with travelers—while also leveraging advances in artificial intelligence, personalization and geolocation—create a frictionless experience when it's most needed. Today's travelers expect and deserve this new level of care, and those airlines that embrace this new reality will lead the way in ending the stress of flight disruptions.

Travelport has developed a capability that allows you to achieve this mission and put the traveler first—using seamless automated operations that make it easier, faster and more cost-effective to source and distribute hotel rooms when flights are delayed. Our solution, Travelport Resolve, accelerates your airline's performance and delivers a first-class experience that drives customer loyalty during flight delays and cancellations.



1. Source FlightStats report. On average 21.2% of “Global Airlines Arrival Performance June 2016 - May 2017”

2. Travelport estimate 7.95 million flights canceled or delayed. 109 average customers per flight resulting in an estimated 866 million passengers disrupted in 2017. Based on IATA reports © International Air Transport Association, 2015. ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY. All Rights Reserved. Available on <http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/Documents/economics/IATA-Economic-Performance-of-the-Industry-mid-year-2017-report.pdf>.

3. Ira Gershkoff, T2RL Principal Consultant

4. Google Analytics (Travel Vertical), “How Micro-Moments Are Reshaping the Travel Customer Journey,” July 2016

Find out how Travelport is making a difference to airlines and their customers every day at [travelport.com/resolve](http://travelport.com/resolve)

**Travelport**   
Redefining travel commerce