



Alexandra Strobl
Director Product Management
Austrian Airlines

“The GroundSolutions Platform gives us the flexibility to develop services which excite our customers and increase our revenues.”

More service for the passenger

Austrian Airlines is setting new standards for service and efficiency with the modern check-in solutions from Lufthansa Systems.

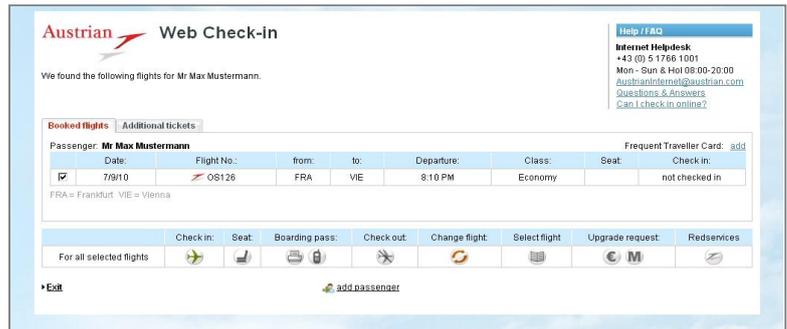
In a hotly contested market, airlines must continually strive to make their operations more cost-efficient and to offer their customers a wider range of services. Ideally, this will enable them to surpass their competitors. The introduction of the Lufthansa Systems GroundSolutions Platform for Austrian Airlines is an example of how these goals can go hand in hand.

Austrian Airlines set the bar very high when it decided to increase its automation and become one of the first airlines to offer passengers an online check-in option. “We want to take the lead in this field and provide our passengers a first-rate product,” said Alexandra Strobl, Director Product Management at Austrian Airlines. The experts in Vienna knew that user-friendliness and fast system response times would be the key to passenger acceptance. The flexibility to integrate additional functionalities was also important.

When Austrian Airlines chose Lufthansa Systems as its provider, it was the start of a success story for both companies. In January 2006, just seven months after the project started, passengers flying with Austrian Airlines could conveniently check in online. “It was a challenge to get the first web check-in system up and running, but from the start we sensed that both teams had the pioneering spirit and drive to create something really great together,” explained David Reszner, Product Manager On Ground Product at Austrian Airlines. This clearly succeeded, because the solution first implemented for Austrian Airlines is now being used by many other airlines as well.

Simple, fast and world-class

Thanks to the GroundSolutions Platform from Lufthansa Systems, Austrian Airlines can now offer its customers a range of check-in options which outshines even that of much larger airlines. Passengers can use any PC to choose seats online from an aircraft-specific seating plan, and they can either print out their boarding pass with a 2D bar code or send it to a mobile device such as a PDA or cell phone. Functionalities such as group check-in and employee standby flights are also integrated in the solution, and even charter passengers who are flying with a voucher instead of a ticket can use the service.



Mobile check-in via cell phone is yet another new option for passengers. Depending on their preferences or situation, passengers can choose to check in at home, at the office or on their way to the airport.

Austrian Airlines is especially proud to have had the world's fastest, most convenient SMS check-in service since June 2009. Passengers are sent an invitation to check in via SMS and only need to respond with a single letter. As soon as they reply with a W for window, for example, they receive their mobile boarding pass via MMS.

Customers love the new freedom

Customer acceptance of this solution has been overwhelming. Even as the number of passengers declined during the economic crisis, the number of those using self-service check-in rose from month to month. In May 2010, the monthly figure surpassed the 100,000 mark for the first time, and it has grown steadily ever since. The service experts from Austrian Airlines expect high long-term growth rates for mobile check-in via cell phones, iPhones and Blackberrys because these devices are becoming increasingly important to passengers in their everyday lives.

"The passengers of today don't want to line up at a counter, they want to decide for themselves when and where they check in and how much time they spend at the airport," Alexandra Strobl said. The time saved by passengers is matched by personnel savings on the part of the airline, since fewer counters need to be staffed if many customers have already checked in by the time they reach the airport. Austrian Airlines has already been able to close its telephone check-in service.

One platform with many advantages

The GroundSolutions Platform has fully met the expectations of Austrian Airlines, and not just as regards user figures. "The fact that this is a platform solution is very important to us," David Reszner stressed. This means that everything comes from a single source, with a standardized service level agreement, clear points of contact and – last but not least – a uniform user interface which reduces training costs by around 50 percent.

When customers use mobile boarding passes, the first personal contact they may have with the airline is while boarding or even after they are already on board. It is therefore all the more



important for passengers to have access to the familiar Austrian Airlines check-in channels no matter where they are flying from. This goes a long way towards ensuring customer satisfaction.

Since September 2010, Austrian Airlines has been able to offer passengers its own online check-in service for flights from Switzerland as well. This was previously only possible using the online check-in solution of a local provider, since Austrian Airlines flights departing from Switzerland are handled by a different backend system (HP/EDS). Austrian Airlines is therefore also one of the first companies in the Lufthansa Group to benefit from the multi-backend capability of the GroundSolutions Platform.

The flexible system architecture and opportunities for further development were key criteria which prompted Austrian Airlines to choose the solution from Lufthansa Systems. These features guarantee that the airline can continually offer its passengers innovative new services.

New services increase revenues

The new services include the so-called Red Services which ensure greater passenger comfort and additional revenues for Austrian Airlines. Online upgrades were the first service of this type; since the end of 2009, passengers have been able to increase their travel comfort at short notice by booking a business-class upgrade while checking in online. "Upgrades which aren't available until 23 hours before departure don't cannibalize our premium product because they offer the service, but not the flexibility, of a business class ticket, and we can precisely control their availability," Alexandra Strobl said, explaining the airline's considerations.

Passengers can pay for upgrades with either a credit card or frequent flyer miles, and they regularly take advantage of the offer even for the 30-minute flight between Vienna and Munich. "The economic success of the upgrade offer has far exceeded our expectations. We counted on a return on investment of one year, but we achieved this after just three months," Alexandra Strobl said.

With the GroundSolutions Platform, Austrian Airlines will be able to continue its success story. Other new offers which will increase customer satisfaction and the airline's revenues are currently being planned for implementation together with the experts from Lufthansa Systems.



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Lufthansa Systems AG
Corporate Communications
Am Weiher 24
65451 Kelsterbach
Germany

Tel. +49(0)69-696 90776
Fax +49(0)69-696 90777
publicrelations@LHsystems.com
www.LHsystems.com