



## UNDERSTANDING YOU.

# DUBLIN AIRPORT ADOPTS SPEECH RECOGNITION FOR ENHANCED CUSTOMER SERVICE

Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) is not only Ireland's largest airport, it is also one of the ten busiest airports in Europe, servicing more than 60,000 passengers per day, rising to 80,000 during the peak season. In 2006, Dublin Airport was responsible for 21 million passengers and handled over 2 Million telephone enquires.

### THE CHALLENGE - PROVIDING WORLD CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE

As a result of the booming Celtic Tiger economy, Ireland's business and tourist development has grown dramatically over the last 10 years. In turn, the airport has had to cope with a phenomenal and increasing demand for its services with a 30% rise in passenger numbers over the last 3 years.

Prior to installing an automated solution, the airport operated an inbound call centre, whereby one central number was used to reach the information centre, flight enquiries and also internal staff using a complex DTMF menu. Once an incoming call was answered, a live operator would transfer it to the appropriate department. However, the capacity of this operation was severely limited and as the number of calls increased, the system began to buckle under the pressure. This led to longer wait times, more abandoned calls, and ultimately a large number of complaints.

Head of Passenger Operations at Dublin Airport, Declan McCarthy explains, "The main problem was the high demand for information during peak times, the call centre operatives coped well during the quieter times, but during the busy times, such as early morning, late afternoon and holiday periods, the cen-

*tre was simply swamped with calls. Expanding capacity by adding more operators did not make sense, as the additional operators would be fully utilised for only part of the time. What was needed was a two-tier solution whereby callers who needed simple flight information such as arrivals and departures could be answered automatically, freeing up our agents for more complex enquires."*

In order to address these challenges the airport realised that an automated system based on speech recognition could provide the perfect solution as the system needed to understand information such as alpha numeric flight numbers, cities and airports, in order to provide the correct flight information to customers.

### THE SELECTION PROCESS

DAA researched the market and invited a number of leading speech recognition vendors to tender for the new system. IT Solutions Manager at Dublin Airport, Suzanne McKenna comments on the selection process:

*"VeCommerce had all the functionality we required and we were very impressed by their established track record in the telephone betting and financial services markets, industries like ours, that manage large volumes of demanding calls often from impatient customers!"*

Suzanne McKenna continues, "VeCommerce also had a very good understanding of our incumbent telephone technology and this gave us the confidence that the integration and installation would be successful."



UK +44 1 628 632 263

USA +1 978 486 3225

SYDNEY +61 2 9428 9555

MELBOURNE +61 3 9804 5076

AUCKLAND +64 9 358 0588

WELLINGTON +64 4 916 0655

INFO@VECOMMERCE.COM

WWW.VECOMMERCE.COM



Flight Information enquiries within the next few months.

**Benefits achieved so far:**

- Expected ROI within 12 months of deployment.
- Over 1 million calls handled by the VeCommerce solution per annum saving live operators an average of 53 seconds per enquiry
- A significant reduction in the volume of complaints from customers
- Taxi drivers, a heavy user of the service love it as they never have to wait to find out if a flight is late
- Automated Attendant – speech-enabled application allows Dublin Airport employees to be directly connected to the staff member they require quickly and easily
- Web based tuning tools allowing new destinations and new staff members to be easily added to the applications
- In addition the airport is planning to use the VeCommerce solution to add new ‘customer-facing’ features including integrating check-in times and gate numbers into the application to provide a total customer experience

**SOLUTION OVERVIEW**

VeCommerce, in partnership implemented its ‘VeFlifo’ solution that allows customers to naturally speak to an automated system to establish real-time flight arrival and departure times. So for example a caller might ring to find out when a flight is arriving and the system would ask them if they knew the departure city and also possibly the name of the airline. The system recognises the caller’s responses and responds with the appropriate information. VeCommerce also provided ‘VeDialler’ an Automated Attendant application that would allow incoming calls to be distributed directly to members of staff by saying their name or extension number.

According to Dublin Airport, both the installation and integration were very straightforward. Firstly, a week’s worth of calls were analysed and common queries and flight patterns were used to fine-tune call flows. The service was launched internally at first with DAA staff who reported favourably on the experience via the organisation’s Intranet. It was then piloted with external organisations including, AA Road watch, taxi drivers and local hotels. This proved very popular, especially with ‘meeters and greeters’ such as taxi drivers who could plan their ‘pick-ups’ with far more accuracy.

**THE RESULTS - HAPPIER CUSTOMERS**

Suzanne McKenna comments on the results so far:

*“We have been very impressed with the feedback we have received from our customers. Overall the solution provides a self-service option that meets customers’ needs and allows our call centre agents to be freed up for more complex enquiries.”*

With further experience and tuning, DAA expects the success rate of the system to rise to over 80% of all

**ABOUT VECOMMERCE**

VeCommerce Limited (part of the Salmat Group), is a global leader in the provision of voice self-service and speaker verification solutions with deployments around the world.

VeCommerce has been a pioneer in the industry since 1997 and has grown to be a recognised market leader with a host of references to back this claim.

VeCommerce was one of the first organisations in the world to recognise the business benefits of voice self-service solutions utilising speech recognition and speaker verification technology.

VeCommerce clients around the world include: AAPT, Suncorp, Ladbrokes, ASX Perpetual, Pizza Hut, Radio Taxis, Standard Life, TelstraClear, Westpac Bank, Auckland Co-op Taxis, New Zealand’s Ministry of Social Development and Tabcorp

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**Suzanne McKenna**  
IT Solutions Manager

