

Melbourne Airport



Melbourne Airport is Victoria's gateway to the world, serving domestic and international travellers, flying to and from New Zealand, South East Asia and Europe. It is Australia's largest curfew-free airport, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The airport handles an average of 5,800 passengers every single day of the year on around 700 domestic and international flights.

In 2005 Melbourne Airport Corporation reviewed its ability to provide flight information to the public outside business hours and during unplanned events. To increase efficiency, staff productivity and improve customer service, IVR (interactive voice response) was put on the agenda.

Implementation

More than 20 million travellers pass through the airport each year. The airport's reception is the entry point for the huge number of phone calls the airport receives every day.

Melbourne Airport's after-hours enquiry line was handled in person by airport co-ordination staff. Calls from the public requesting routine information, particularly flight information, consumed a large percentage of co-ordinators' time. During peak activity times, such as adverse weather conditions or peak aircraft movement periods, after-hours staff found it difficult to handle the volume of calls in addition their co-ordination responsibilities. Inevitably lines became congested, resulting in frustration for the travelling public, their businesses, family and friends.

Melbourne Airport needed to find a cost-effective way to quickly handle the varying volume of arrival and departure enquiries including peaks, to provide accurate and timely service to callers while freeing staff to deal with more complex phone enquiries. The Airport wanted to eliminate the frustration level amongst both customers and staff, which it recognised was affecting the public's perception of the airport's ability to handle its growth. The Airport drew up a wish-list, and Australian technology developer MESSAGEmanager Solutions was approached to provide an answer.

As it operated 24/7, the airport decided to automate the system for after hours operation, while deciding staff would continue to take all calls during standard business hours.

In the course of the scoping phase, Melbourne Airport saw the potential for the phone system to handle other types of routine calls and include information such as parking arrangements and general airport information, enabling it to improve service across the business.

In depth consultations between Melbourne Airport and MESSAGEmanager led to MESSAGEmanager producing a tailor-made solution, its Speech Enabled IVR software was designed to deliver a vastly improved telephone system that met Melbourne Airport's requirements. Callers now encounter a friendly automated service providing instant access to routine enquiries as the callers now enter information via the telephone keypad and navigate through the system to find the specific information they need.

MESSAGEmanager accesses information within a Melbourne Airport database and responds to the caller, instantly reducing call loads and waiting times. Routine calls are automatically answered, with more complex enquiries given individual attention by reception staff.

The system was designed to share the same information as the existing web based flight Information. As most callers to the airport have limited details on the flight they are enquiring about, the system was customised to meet their needs.

Initially, callers chose to go straight to the operator. The system was then modified to encourage use before giving the choice of selecting an operator. The number of calls to the operator fell by 16 percent and hang-ups remain low. During a typical week of live operation outside business hours the system caters for approximately 4300 calls.

The beauty of the system is how accurately it directs callers. User satisfaction is very high with routine enquiries rapidly handled, but more complex issues accurately and quickly escalated for personal intervention.

According to desk staff, this has freed them to deal effectively with more complex enquiries, ensuring that more callers receive exactly the information they need without extended waiting times. **“Straightforward calls about flight times and carparking are answered quickly and efficiently by the system. Callers are happy because they’re not kept waiting. Our staff are happy because they’re not repeating information over and over, and can help people who have more detailed enquiries,”** said Chris Shawyer, Electrical and Communications Manager at Melbourne Airport.

The telephone system uses the latest flight information with changes in schedules updated as soon as the airlines make the information available. This is vital to ensure the public receives accurate, timely information.

Melbourne Airport and MESSAGEmanager are looking at additional applications to further improve the system.

The Technology

MESSAGEmanager Interactive Voice Response is an open standard communications and messaging platform based on Microsoft Windows and VoiceXML 2.0.

Powered by Intel Pentium and Xeon hardware, Speechworks Speech Recognition (ASR) and SAPI RealSpeak™ or Speechify Text-to-Speech (TTS) engines, MESSAGEmanager leverages existing corporate investments in web and backend business applications to deliver information to telephone callers via speech or the telephone keypad.

MESSAGEmanager supports all VoiceXML 2.0 tags and JavaScript using native Microsoft XML and scripting engines, and is one of the first messaging solutions to support both IP Telephony and TDM switches and PBXs.

MESSAGEmanager is well suited for customer service applications such as tracking freight shipments, checking accounts, providing callers with information such as stock quotes, airline flight information or weather details, conducting on-line banking, order-taking and paying accounts.

MESSAGEmanager supports access to multiple applications from any port, which means voice ports are not bound to a particular application. Multiple applications can be supported simultaneously according to calling number (ANI), called number (DNIS), line number or date and time.

More information

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