



Speaking volumes

George Best Belfast City Airport

Helping passengers with
reduced mobility get to
the right gate, at the right time.



BACKGROUND

Imagine lots of people, lots of cars and lots of bags, all in one place and all in a hurry. Each one is being watched by security and managed by airport staff members, all of whom have their own tight timescales to work to. These in turn are being watched and managed by airport management, who have targets to meet, and standards to improve. Add to this the needs and requirements of individual carriers and you have an extremely complicated, highly bespoke business that is perfectly matched to the flexibility of custom-built software.

Having begun our relationship with Belfast City Airport back in 1999 as their website developers, our expertise in solving business challenges with software has become more central to their operations, their reputation and their business. We have created solutions for problems like the management and exchange of documents among staff, carriers and the PSNI, evolving their web presence to provide a real time display of the flight departures and arrivals and even developing software that helps to keep birds away from the runway during takeoff and landing. However, one area where we knew we could make a serious difference was that of the management of Passengers with Reduced Mobility – an essential element of the service agreements established with each carrier and a necessity for the airport's own commitment to excellence in customer service.

WHAT WE DID

Like every good business, we value close relationships with our clients. It sharpens our ability to judge what they need and enables us to create solutions that work on every level. With Belfast City Airport, through a series of meetings and operational discussions, we were able to interpret what they needed into a software system that would bring both them and their carriers a serious competitive advantage. This time taking the lead from their interest in our cash management system for RMS, we developed a similar system that can track and locate one of the most unpredictable things in an airport - people.

Airports are big places and watching over every member of staff is a difficult process. But how can management judge if someone is doing their job properly if they're sitting in an office at the other end of the airport? How do they know that every member of staff is doing all they can to help fulfil your service agreements?

Getting from Check In to the boarding gate, or from the plane to the baggage hall can be a struggle for even the fittest of people, but for those with reduced mobility, it can be nearly impossible. The old way was to print some instructions and trust that an employee would meet the person at the right gate, at the right time with the right equipment. But modern service agreements don't just rely on someone actually doing a job, they rely on auditable evidence that a job has been completed.

Although not the first of its kind in the world, our Passenger with Reduced Mobility system is one of the most advanced. Created to help guarantee that everyone who needs a hand gets one at exactly the moment they need it, it also has the added functionality of instant reporting, providing evidential proof that targets are being set and achieved, service agreements have been fulfilled and European directives have been met.

It works by directing information from carrier booking facilities, like websites or travel agents via a web application which holds the information until the day of travel, upon which it is directed by airport management through to a network of specially adapted PDAs. From these, management can see exactly where every member of staff is and allocate jobs to them according to their proximity within the airport. They can then track how long it takes the individual to provide assistance, allowing them to better control and monitor staff performance.

Because we worked so closely with the management team of Belfast City Airport in the development of the system, the training schedule for the management team was simplified, but the needs of the rest of the staff still had to be met. Working on site, we provided one-to-one training on the practical application of the PDAs and the process maps for every job. The provision of written training materials also ensured that management could easily provide additional training for new recruits.

From an improved control over staff and the management of the needs of passengers with reduced mobility, to the all-important reporting facility that provides the essential transparency and auditing demanded by regulations, this is a software solution that will continue to propel Belfast City Airport ahead of its rivals.