



## INNOVATION TAKES OFF AT PERTH AIRPORT

by Allan Leibowitz

Airports generally focus on airlines and retailers as their major customers, but Perth Airport is rewriting the book after going through an intensive innovation program.

Airport management is currently re-engineering its operations so that it can shape the customer experience, instead of relying on the airlines and retailers to meet the travellers' needs.

While the airport's 20-year master plan has just been approved by Canberra, all staff are focusing on the here and now, aiming to raise the airport's user-friendliness and improve its operational efficiency.

The current initiative began in the last 2 quarters of 2014, after a number of planning sessions run by Innovation Tank, an innovation generation company with a disruptive process that has been used by a number of leading Australian organisations.

"The initial sessions highlighted a number of opportunities to change the way we

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do things," says Executive General Manager, Rowan Chalmers. "These weren't just superficial changes. They involved flipping around our thinking and looking at every touchpoint between ourselves and our end-users."

A number of very detailed Innovation Tank sessions were held over November and December 2014, bringing together key Airport executives and employees, suppliers and outside experts.

The seven-step Innovation Tank process encourages fresh thinking by clarifying the challenges and opportunities, identifying causes and bottlenecks, and encouraging suggestions in a non-judgemental process that disrupts traditional business thinking.

Innovation Tank CEO Lance Orsmond says the collaboration and brainstorming has resulted in the creation of what he calls the Perth Airport Customer Experience Ecosystem.

"We started with a strategy that is focused on the customer. We then identified all the phases of a journey to explore the value chain," he explains. "It was important to identify each and every touchpoint – and then work out how it impacts the users. And, importantly, we spoke to customers and listened to their viewpoints."



# CEXP CASE STUDY



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Michael McNally, Landside & Customer Experience General Manager, cites the example of the airport’s long-term parking facilities.

“We looked at every aspect of the parking experience, from how easy it was to find the entrance to payment options, and put ourselves in our customers’ shoes, trying to find the most efficient, effective and even enjoyable solution,” he recalls.

What emerged from this comprehensive examination was a Customer Experience Framework – a sweeping understanding of every interaction, touchpoint standards, gaps and opportunities.

The innovation process was then applied to each touchpoint – more than 50 of them!

Perth Airport Chief Executive Officer, Brad Geatches, says: “We are on an exciting journey that has no destination; a journey we had struggled to begin in the past.

“We just made it into the top 10 ranking of Australian airports in the last airport service quality survey (conducted across 260 global airports by independent surveyor ACI) and we’re determined to move to the top of the list. We’d like people to want to come to the airport – not see it as some kind of chore associated with travel,” he says.

Having identified the touchpoints and the changes required to standardise and maximise the customer experience, the airport has now entered the second phase of its turnaround – refinement.

Technology developed by Innovation Tank’s sister company, Mobillytics, will allow airport staff to track customer touchpoints on

a daily basis, using a TrackerGRAM smartphone app.

Our approach, says Orsmond, is “design, operate, measure and refine”. This is a cycle, and by continuously monitoring the customer experience, airport staff are able to make minor adjustments to constantly improve.

Says Chalmers, “What we’re doing here is totally unique. In my 30 years of aviation experience I have not seen or heard of another airport anywhere that has elevated the customer experience to this level of focus.”

He is a strong advocate of the Innovation Tank process, which he says helped to unlock the creativity and problem-solving abilities of his talented team. “The answers were all right here all along. We just needed a catalyst to disrupt and accelerate us into action and guide us onto the right path.

“What the Innovation Tank process did was remove us from our routines, force us to invest time and effort in innovation, take us out of our comfort zone and allow us to contemplate scenarios that we just wouldn’t have come up with in our everyday thinking.”

While the combination of Innovation Tank idea generation and implementation via Mobillytics has already improved efficiencies and boosted staff morale and customer satisfaction at Perth Airport, Orsmond stresses that the processes and solutions can be applied to all industries, all disciplines and all interactions, from product development, to supplier interaction, to teambuilding.

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