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Airport Shuttle Service DS with Location-Based Content

Heading in the Right Direction

By Rich Germain

Destination Shuttle Services (DSS), a subsidiary of Shuttle Smart Inc, has installed digital signage on their consolidated hotel shuttle service buses at the Los Angeles International Airport, as well as interactive kiosks in the lobbies of the surrounding thirteen partner hotels that they serve. The solution was deployed to enhance the hospitality experience of passengers by providing them with relevant travel, hotel and city information while on the buses and within the hotels.

The shuttle service carries over 2.5 million people annually to and from the Los Angeles Airport and the partner hotels. DSS was looking for a way to communicate more effectively with their passengers as well as welcome them to the city on arrival and thank them for their visit on departure.

Each bus has a Windows based PC running Windows 7 and Omnivex software, as well as a GPS bud. Using Omnivex Moxie software and Microsoft Windows 7 location-based services, GPS coordinates, sent via a 3G network to the server in real-time, indicate the current location of the bus. Omnivex GPSLink is used to combine this information with intelligent rules to determine the most appropriate content to display based on the current location of the bus, e.g. whether the shuttle is carrying arriving or departing passengers.

Inside the partner hotels a kiosk, running on the same software, delivers interactive content and information for hotel guests. Omnivex GPSLink delivers information which the Omnivex Moxie software uses to display the location of the buses on a map along with the estimated time of arrival of the next bus at the hotel.

Content on the kiosks in the hotels and digital signage on the buses includes information such as flight departure status and advertising about local sites and attractions.

We talked to Brian Clark, Managing Partner at Shuttle Smart about the deployment.

DS EUROPE: First of all, why did you decide to make the deployment?

BRIAN CLARK: We wanted to deploy cutting-edge technology that would differentiate our service. Travellers to the Los Angeles International Airport are well travelled so we wanted to deliver a new solution that they haven't seen anywhere else in the world. Most people don't think of buses as being a very sophisticated industry so we wanted to use the latest technology to change their bus riding experience.

DSE: What kind of messages are you using the digital signage on the buses to carry?

BC: The displays give passengers information that is pertinent to their location. When guests are travelling to and from the hotel we provide them with entertainment. Because the software recognises what direction the bus is going, the content is tailored to match this. The displays advertise hotel and local information on the way to the hotel and then flight and airport information, such as any delays or security alerts and where passengers can check-in, on the way to the airport.

DSE: Do you get a lot of advertising content from businesses in the airport then?

BC: It's a mix of advertising: we have everything from airlines to parking locations and restaurants. We have advertisers fighting to get on this network! The advertising works because this is proximity advertising and there is a very interested and captive audience.

DSE: How does advertising fit in with the other information presented on the displays?

BC: The screen divides into three parts: one third hotel information, one third airport information and one third advertising. The whole mix of content provides passengers with exactly that they need to know to get around in the area.

DSE: Can you use the advertising revenue to generate a ROI for this project?

BC: No, because it is not an advertising-driven network. It is driven by delivering a better customer service. The advertising revenue is an additional benefit of the network but the network is not reliant on this to justify itself.

DSE: How long has this project been up and running?

BC: The installation was started in July 2010 and we are still installing displays onto the buses. In total there will be 32 buses and 13 hotels as part of this network. There are 7000 hotel rooms in total which tells you the size of the audience who will see the content; it's around two and a half million people a year.

DSE: How does the digital signage on the buses fit in with the kiosks in the hotels?

BC: By linking the digital signage on the buses with interactive kiosks in the hotels, the whole journey becomes part of the hotel experience. The kiosks tell hotel guests where their next bus is and how long it will be before it arrives.

DSE: In addition to what the software can tell the customers, am I right in thinking that the software can tell you everything about the bus right down to its fuel levels: what information are you leveraging from the software to help run your business?

BC: In the past we were running an elementary GPS system, which told us where the buses are. Omnivex's software goes beyond this and provides intelligent content on the buses. The software provides us with useful information such as how many riders are on the bus, how full it is and is it operating on schedule. In our operations centre, the network operator can see the position and status of all the buses. This helps us to improve the service we deliver. The software also integrates with our other functions, such as audio announcements on the bus, so that we can manage the whole system from one place.

DSE: Are you planning future rollouts elsewhere?

BC: Once we have this solution installed on all of our buses and partner hotels in Los Angeles we will look at expanding to other areas.