

PASSENGER TERMINAL *WORLD*

ANNUAL SHOWCASE 2022

2022 *SHOWCASE*

THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW
OF AIRPORT TERMINAL DESIGN,
TECHNOLOGY, SECURITY,
OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Mixed fortunes

WHILE MOST AIRPORTS HAVE SUFFERED ENORMOUSLY
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, SOME HAVE FOUND
A SILVER LINING TO HELP WEATHER THE STORM

SILENT OR AMBIENT?

Silent airports have been around for more than a decade, yet misinformation continues to surround them



■ In 2008, the UK's London City Airport brought ■ in a silent airport policy. Since then, others have followed suit, such as Dubai, UAE, and Helsinki, Finland. Uptake varies by continent as silent airports are slightly more common in the Asia-Pacific region than in Europe. There are also very few in North America, despite the notable recent addition of San Francisco.

Becoming a silent airport means managing the flow of passenger announcements across the terminal. While such announcements are intended to improve the passenger experience and enhance operational efficiency, they can have the opposite effect. Often they result in increased passenger anxiety, poor use of staff time, lower passenger spend on retail and hospitality, and delayed pushbacks from gates. It is no exaggeration to say that an airport's passenger announcement policy can have a direct effect on its operational efficiency, passenger satisfaction and more.

Not actually silent

Silent airports are not truly silent, because announcements do still need to be made. At the very least, calls are needed for last-minute gate changes, lost children as well as safety and security information. In fact, going silent may not mean reducing the number of announcements at all. With a smarter approach, passengers are left with the impression that there are fewer announcements. This is because announcements are carefully targeted, passengers hear only information relevant to them, in their own language, at the most

AviaVox's recommendations for a silent airport can be found in the white paper on its website

A silent airport is far more likely to have **well-informed, relaxed passengers** who make it to the correct gate on time

Johan Godin, managing director and co-founder, AviaVox



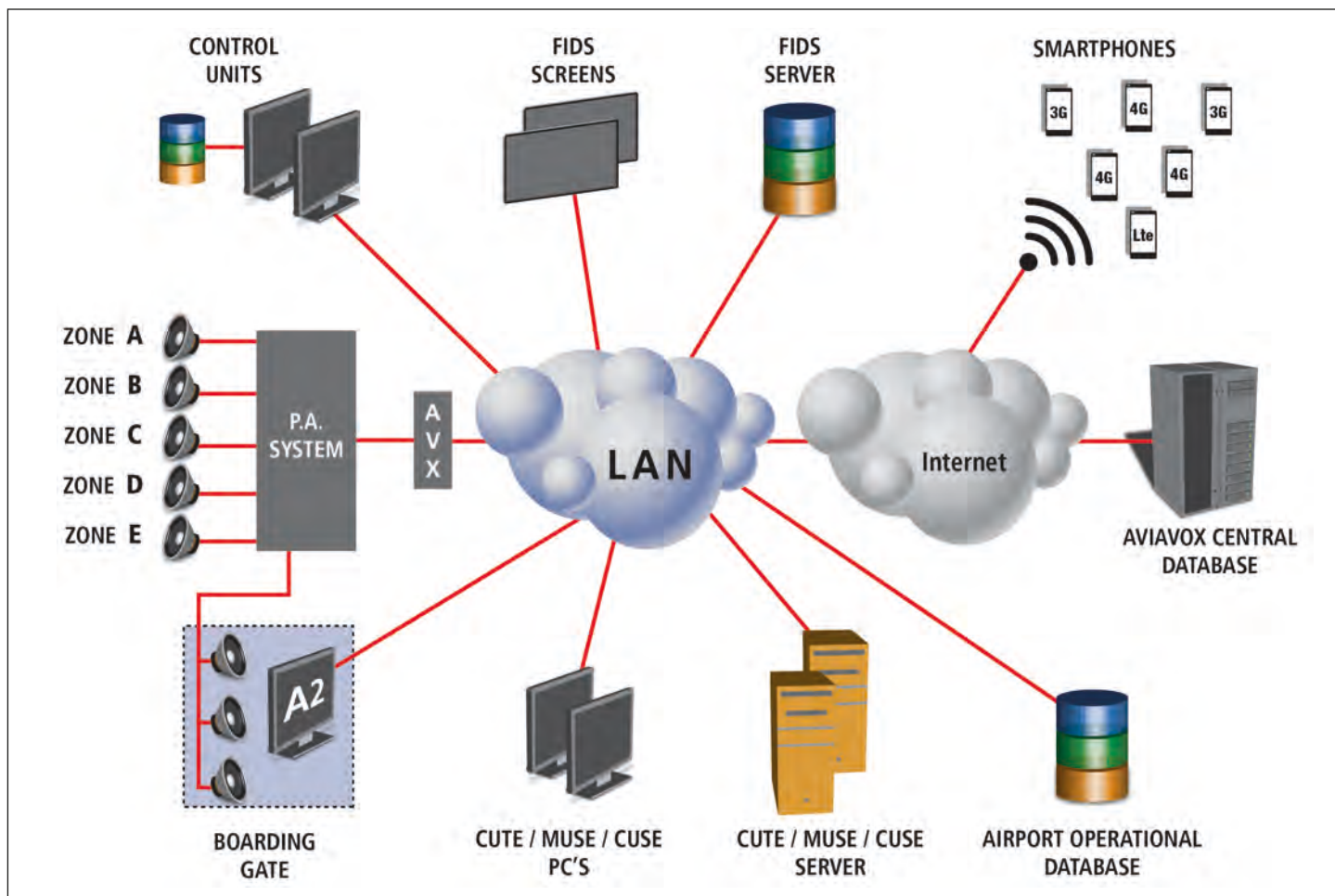
appropriate time and in their own location within the building. Previously, every message would have been broadcast across large areas of the terminal, competing for the attention of every passenger. In contrast, silent airports feel calmer and quieter, and announcements are relevant and helpful. Perhaps a better term might be 'ambient airport'.

Tuning out

Mass broadcasting of announcements across wide areas is not effective. Overwhelmed by the sheer number of them, and annoyed by their unintelligibility, passengers may find ways to reject the noise; they might put headphones on, do something to distract themselves, or ignore the sound altogether. Passengers may not even realize that they have tuned out.

This behavior means that passengers miss announcements that they do need, with significant consequences for themselves as well as for the airport and airline. Passengers might arrive late at the gate, be in a permanent state of anxiety about their departure time or gate, or could miss their flight and blame the airport. Neither the airport nor the airline wants to be dealing with the effects of their stress, hunting down missing passengers, or delaying pushbacks.

"It may seem counterintuitive, but a silent airport is far more likely to have well-informed, relaxed passengers who make it to the correct gate on time," says Johan Godin, managing director and co-founder of AviaVox, a Dutch software company that develops intelligent automated announcement solutions



for airlines and airports. “Going silent benefits everyone, from the passengers to airport and airline staff and those who monitor KPIs [key performance indicators], regulatory compliance and profitability.”

Come again?

In a non-silent airport, even when announcements are heard, they may often be unintelligible. Passenger understanding of announcements can be affected by surrounding noise, the acoustics, the quality of the PA system and the positioning of PA speakers. It also depends on whether the announcement is made in the passenger’s own language, and how fluently it is spoken by the announcer. This means that airports and airlines face a real challenge in making sure that passengers understand and comply with announcements. An intelligent announcement system addresses these challenges by ensuring that passengers hear relevant information in their own language and area.

Anxious passengers

Research shows that passengers find flying stressful; most would rather go to the dentist or file their taxes. Planning their journey, getting to the airport and worrying about potential problems can put people in a state of anxiety before they even enter the terminal building. Passenger stress levels matter because they affect punctuality and compliance, the volume of inquiries or complaints, and whether passengers feel relaxed enough to shop and make use of restaurants and bars.

According to Godin, “Once the passenger has arrived in the terminal, the rise or fall of their stress level is largely up to the airport and airline. Becoming a silent airport can play a significant role

AviaVox’s intelligent artificial voice systems automatically generate announcements using data from the AODB, and can be delivered in almost 40 languages

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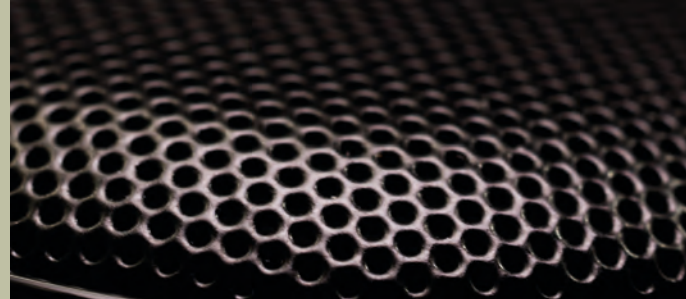
in reducing stress for staff, too, as they are forced to hear announcements throughout the duration of their shift and must deal with the effects of passenger anxiety.”

Example scenarios

An intelligent passenger announcement system can target specific passengers or passenger groups in targeted areas of the terminal building. For example, when monitors detect overcrowding in a particular area, this can trigger a Covid-related ‘keep your distance’ message in that zone alone.

Because the airport knows where in the terminal any group of passengers is likely to be (based on their scheduled departure time), automated announcements can be used to keep them flowing smoothly. For example, before a flight to Beijing, an automatically generated announcement can be delivered in perfect Mandarin across the security queues, informing passengers about how to deal with liquids, electrical equipment, belts and shoes. PA announcements can also be delivered on the apron shuttle bus or the corridor leading to the baggage area, before passengers reach the baggage reclaim hall. This can prevent passengers clogging up the hall’s entry points or areas around display screens.

“Every airport and airline is acutely aware of how challenging the last 18 months have been. As they begin welcoming back more and more passengers, but perhaps with fewer staff or under more difficult conditions, it is more important than ever to maximize both passenger comfort and operational efficiency. Adopting a silent airport policy and selecting an intelligent automated passenger information system can go a long way toward achieving these goals,” concludes Godin. ■



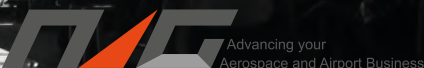
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