

EURAIL *mag*

BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY

THE MAGAZINE FOR EUROPEAN RAIL DECISION MAKERS

**ROLLING STOCK & URBAN SYSTEMS –
TICKING THE RIGHT BOXES**

**SECURITY OF RAILWAYS AGAINST
ELECTROMAGNETIC ATTACKS**

**LOST IN TRANSPORT –
TRAVELLING THE INFORMATION CHAIN**

**KEEPING CABLE IN THE RIGHT HANDS,
THE RIGHT PLACE**

INTEGRATED CONTROL & ERTMS IN ITALY



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EDITO

Change & exchange

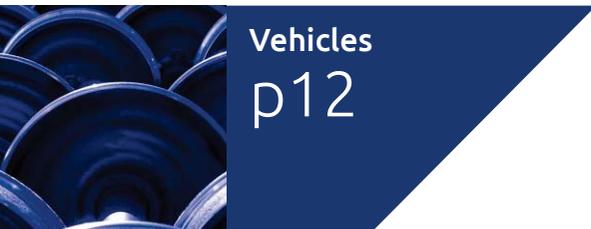
Alongside heightened awareness that rail is now a fully fledged global business, relations between major constructors and their suppliers are evolving – with the latter taking on the additional role of sub-system integrators. Furthermore, the importance of proximity between the two has never been greater. As Guy Leblon, from Stratiforme Industries, points out in this issue of EURAILmag: “We need to follow our clients in the changing rail market, both at home and at international level.”

At the same time, growing needs for high-capacity, high-performance rolling stock is putting extra pressure on fleet maintenance. To meet this dual challenge, downtime must be kept to a minimum. In response, constructors have now taken on servicing – needs, costs, and management – at the drawing board stage. As well as ensuring all the technical equipment is easy and swift to access, predictive systems are promising both time and money savings for operators through ongoing monitoring of the status of each train in service.

Yet another goal is achieving an acceptable balance between capacity and comfort. Passengers today are travelling more frequently, and further afield, by train. These ‘customers’ are seeking value for their money – space, clean coaches, air conditioning, and Wi-Fi (preferably for free), as part of reliable and regular services. It comes as little surprise that the railways – now both a domestic and international activity – are looking increasingly to the airline industry – which has always crossed borders – for inspiration.

For rail to keep pace with the demands of this 21st century requires ongoing research, development, and innovation across all its segments. Only by improving on materials, design, technology, and business models can the industry hope to strengthen its position in the ‘battle’ of the transport modes. And hopefully come out on top ■

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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN RAIL



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FOR MANY DECADES, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE RAILWAY SECTOR FOCUSED ON TECHNICAL, OPERATIONAL, OR FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENTS. FEW, IF ANY, ACTORS PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO THE END USER. FOR EXAMPLE, THE INDUSTRY ALWAYS THOUGHT ABOUT THE RAIL OPERATOR AS ITS IMMEDIATE CUSTOMER, AND OFTEN STILL DOES. BUT SCARCELY ANYONE CONSIDERED THE PUBLIC WHO USE THE SERVICES, THE REAL CUSTOMERS FOR WHOM TRAVEL BY TRAIN IS DESTINED.

In recent years the situation has altered, with passengers now increasingly the focus of attention. In response to this changing dynamic, industry meetings addressing the needs and expectations of rail passengers, and taking their experiences into consideration, now feature on the rail events calendar. In June 2013, the first Customer Experience in Rail conference was hosted by Marketforce in Covent Garden, central London.

Fifteen excellent speakers from all over Europe presented their approaches to satisfying rail users. And the opening question in the first panel discussion – “do you have passengers or customers?” – clearly set the tone. All the panellists agreed that

they have customers and that the needs of the latter must be central to any decisions made. Taken individually, operators, of course, interpret these needs differently. To give just one example: whereas **Hamburg-Köln-Express (HKX)** provides only a small number of add-on services (i.e. no Wi-Fi), focusing instead on low prices, the new private Austrian operator **WESTBahn** emphasises the benefit of Wi-Fi for its customers.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED?

In a session dedicated to delivering a better customer experience in general, speakers from **First Group** and the **South West Trains/Network Rail Alliance**, both from

the U.K., together with **WESTBahn**, all gave their views on how to deliver satisfaction. Central to the discussion was refocusing on enhancing service quality, with the hint that operators must be more creative and innovative with services. Also emphasised was the need for an end-to-end journey experience. Better service must be offered along the whole mobility chain: user-friendly ticketing, improved information systems, complementary services on the station and in trains, and much more besides.

THE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Representatives from **Transport for London (TfL)**, **HKX**, the telecom provider

Social media plays an essential role in actively informing passengers as quickly as possible – but it is also a must if operators want to react to requests or complaints

02, and U.K. operator **Greater Anglia** all put forward examples of best practice in customer experience. The recurring message they conveyed is the importance of learning from the experiences of other customer-oriented companies. In other words, by looking outside their box, rail actors can discover strategic benefits for their business. So, for example, insights from a telecommunication provider on its attempts to satisfy customers are pertinent to the rail community. At the same time, telecommunication is an essential part of rail passenger satisfaction! The outcome of this session was that excellent service across the board is a must. Furthermore, this quality must be challenged permanently, and feedback from customers not only requested, but taken seriously, too. Best practice case studies presented during the day prove that these guidelines offer considerable potential for growing passenger volumes.

INTEGRATED & SEAMLESS

During their slot, speakers from **Dutch Railways (NS)**, the **Go-Ahead Group** from the U.K., and the Italian operator **Trenitalia** talked about the integrated and seamless journey. Highlights included focuses on inclusion, the door-to-door mobility chain, and how to make travel for all as easy and stress-free as possible. For instance, NS has implemented a nation-wide smartcard system for use on trains, public transportation, and for hiring bicycles or cars, too. The card is also valid for car parking. The aim of this



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initiative is to provide seamless and very comfortable door-to-door travel. Similar systems from the U.K. were also presented.

COMMUNICATING & PROVIDING INFORMATION

The fourth and final session of the day focused on communication with customers and how to manage information in the best possible way. Here the importance of developing strong customer loyalty was underscored. Nowadays social media like Twitter or Facebook have become crucial tools, and on this topic a representative from **London Midland** gave an overview of the company's experiences. Social media plays an essential role in actively informing passengers as quickly as possible – but it is also a must if operators want to react to requests or complaints, since waiting passengers will often use Twitter to voice their frustration. The big challenge is (and must be) to respond to these messages immediately and honestly. If operators know a line will be interrupted for one hour or more,

it makes far better customer management sense to inform passengers at once, so they can use their redundant time in a meaningful way. The feeling of 'wasting' time is often what annoys travellers the most!

All in all, it must be emphasised that taking their needs and expectations into account is the only way that rail passengers can be satisfied, and that operators can gain more customers/revenue. This conference represented a first but very important step forward in focusing on the end user of the railways ■

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