

CUSTOMER CONTACT INFORMATION

Submitted by PSG

Background Information

In 2013, a paper was presented at the Passenger Agency Conference from airlines in the IATA Simplifying the Business Steering Group, highlighting the major challenges facing airlines during flight cancellations or delays, gate changes and other operational events. In these circumstances, it becomes very difficult to contact passengers due to missing, incomplete or incorrect contact information in the PNR. This leads to a poor customer experience, and negatively impacts passengers, airlines, travel agents and airports.

Accurate contact information enables airlines to provide proactive and real-time information, and ensure that passengers are always informed. This brings many benefits to all players in the industry value chain:

- For Passengers
 - Improved experience
 - Ability to receive advance rebooking alternatives
 - Faster recovery in disruption
- For Agents
 - Improved customer care and satisfaction
- For Airlines
 - Improved customer satisfaction
 - More efficient process in the airline back-offices, especially at the hubs to perform rebooking activities, improved revenue management and load factors
 - Reduced recovery costs
- For Airports
 - Reduced congestion in times of disruption in the terminal building and better managed passenger flows
 - Improved passenger experience in the terminal

Conference Action in 2013

In 2013, the proposal to the Passenger Agency Conference noted that providing customer contact information is already stipulated in Passenger Agency Conference Resolution 830d. A proposal was submitted to modernize these provisions which had been adopted on 23 Dec 1983.

The proposal sought to strengthen the requirement for the Travel Agent to provide contact details on behalf of the passenger for operational purposes only. This aligned with changes that had been made to Reservation Standards allowing this information to be exchanged between the booking source and participating carriers.

The proposal clarified that the contact details were to be used exclusively for the purpose of passenger notification in the event of operational disruptions, and not for marketing purposes.

This proposal was not adopted as submitted due to opposition from one airline, and an amended proposal was adopted which left the collection of this information recommended but optional.

Monitoring of the situation has continued under the Passenger Experience Management Group, reporting to the Passenger Services Conference.

Remaining challenge

As at 2017, over 14 of the major GDS systems have provided the ability to enter customer contact information for this purpose, covering over 80% of global passengers.

Despite ongoing regional campaigns and local efforts, there have been only minimal increases in travel agency compliance. In some cases agencies have even imposed fees to passengers wishing to receive travel updates. In addition to low agency compliance, information has often been inputted incorrectly (i.e. incorrect dialing codes, formats, numbers, email addresses or spelling errors etc.), making it impossible to update passengers during disruptions or changes.

Due to the lack of uptake, airlines are often not allocating resource to monitoring the collection of this information (which is possible by simply interrogating PNR data, as validating carrier or even as a participating carrier) and managing agency behavior.

As a result of these combined issues, many airlines have opted for workaround solutions. Member airlines and their alliances have adopted customer contact collection methods at time of online or airport check-in, but this is often too late. The best solution to this industry problem continues to be the collection of this information at time of booking, and the exchange of this information between the booking source and participating airlines using the industry standard reservation procedures designed for this purpose.

Involuntary Flight Change Workshop

Passenger Experience in Irregular Operations has continued to be an area of concern for airlines, and has received attention at senior industry forums including the IATA Annual General Meeting.

Where there is a perception of an inadequate industry response, there is also a risk of regulators becoming involved to impose obligations on airlines and other players in the value chain which may introduce expense and complexity.

In the recent IATA passenger survey, passengers over-whelming reinforced this concern. 63% of passengers identified real-time information shared directly with the passenger as the top service that could improve experience in a disruption.

To explore these issues, and other issues with existing industry standards governing involuntary flight changes, an exploratory workshop was held in Montreal in February 2018.

This workshop was attended by customer-experience, commercial, operational and finance teams from airlines, together with technology providers and other industry stakeholders. Airline attendees included AA, AC, AY, BA, DL, JL, KL, and LH. This workshop was held under the authority of the Passenger Services Conference, combining activity in progress under the Ticketing and Reservation Committees and the Passenger Experience Management Group; with collaboration from the Interline Billing and Settlement Operations Working Group under the Financial Committee.

At this workshop, identified pain points across the entire end-to-end process were distilled into areas for industry activity. A number of short-term actions across industry standards were proposed.

Critical to the passenger experience challenges was airline access to accurate customer contact information for contacting passengers during disruptions. It was agreed that requiring Travel Agents to at least offer passengers the option of having this information made available to airlines should be mandatory within the IATA Agency Program. Airlines at the work shop agreed that this should be re-presented to the Passenger Agency Conference in 2018.

Proposal

The proposed changes to Resolution 830d seek to establish a framework for ensuring that airlines and Travel Agents can work together to ensure the passenger receives the best possible experience in a disruption, and can always receive accurate and timely information.

While contact details are typically always obtained from the passenger, very often these are not shared with airlines participating in the itinerary, and this fact is not communicated to the passenger.

The proposed changes would amend the Resolution to require that the Travel Agent actively asks each passenger, at or before the time of ticketing, whether they wish to have their contact details (mobile number and/or email) provided to airlines participating in the itinerary for the purposes of contact in an operational disruption.

Reference to the time of 'ticketing' is important, as this allows for reservations made before named passengers are confirmed, such as group reservations, and inclusive tours etc. This language clarifies that the information need not be requested, collected or provided to airlines until such time as the names of passengers are known.

Where the passenger provides their consent to have this information shared with airlines, these details must be entered in the Passenger Name Record (PNR) in compliance with the Resolutions governing reservations procedures, using the dedicated SSR element for contact information, and in compliance with all applicable data protection directives and regulations.

In the event the passenger exercises their right not to provide contact details, the Travel Agent must

- indicate that the passenger has declined such details, and to enter the refusal in the PNR

- Actively advise the passenger that refusal to provide this information means that they may not receive information from the airline in the event that there is an operational disruption.

This action would then become a required behavior for Agents, and a required system process for GDSs. Airlines would be able to monitor this (if desired) by interrogating PNR data automatically, and would be able to directly address non-compliance with individual agents, just as they do today on other aspects of the Agency Agreement or their own commercial policies.

Proposed Action

PSG/108 endorsed the changes to resolution shown at Attachment 'A'.

Conference to adopt the Resolution changes with effectiveness 1 June 2019.

Amend Resolution 830d as shown below:

RESOLUTION 830d

RESERVATIONS PROCEDURES FOR AUTOMATED ACCREDITED AGENTS

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4. To be able to advise passengers of irregular flight operations and disruptions Members and BSP Airlines need to have sufficient contact details available to proactively contact the passengers. Consequently, at or before the time of ticketing, the Agent ~~should~~ must actively ask each passenger whether they wish to have their contact details (mobile number and/or email) provided to airlines participating in the itinerary for the purposes of contact in an operational disruption.

The Agent must ensure that the Passenger's consent is obtained in compliance with any data protection directives or regulations.

Where the passenger wishes to have their contact details provided to airlines participating in the itinerary, the Agent must enter it ~~provide contact details on behalf of the passenger~~ in the Passenger Name Record (PNR) ~~the passenger's mobile phone number and email address~~, while maintaining compliance with all applicable data protection directives and regulations. Contact details ~~should~~ must be entered in the PNR in compliance with the Resolutions governing reservations procedures. Members and BSP Airlines shall use these contact details exclusively for the purpose of operational notifications, e.g. flight cancellation, schedule change, etc. and shall not use the contact details for sales & marketing purposes.

In the event the passenger exercises his or her right not to provide contact details it is incumbent on the Agent to indicate that the passenger has declined to provide such details, and to enter the refusal in the PNR to limit any statutory liability. In such a case, the Agent must actively advise the passenger that they may not receive ~~shall not be provided~~ information from the airline relating to flight cancellation or schedule changes (including delay in departure).