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SCANDINAVIAN AIRLINES



SAS installed fingerprint reading machines at all its domestic points in Scandinavia

SAS is an airline that is “prepared to be a first mover” and to pioneer the latest information technologies in its operations, despite challenging market circumstances and financial pressures, the Airline Strategy Awards judges found.

And there are two areas in particular where SAS has proven its pioneering spirit when it comes to technology: its recent move to install biometric identification equipment throughout Scandinavia; and its involvement in “green approach” trials into Stockholm Arlanda Airport.

The former was a response to a change in the law in Scandinavian countries, which SAS took one step further, explains Peter Soderlund, the carrier’s vice-president of product and customer concepts. “A change in security demands meant that we needed to connect the passenger, their ticket and their baggage,” he says. “But with so many passengers using self-service it was not possible to force them to show their ID at check-in and at the gate, so we were forced to find a fully automated solution.”

The approach SAS chose was to install fingerprint reading machines at the baggage drop-off areas and gates at all its domestic points in Scandinavia. This means that once passengers have checked in online or via sms, as more than 70% of SAS passengers do, “they don’t need ID or a ticket – they can travel on their finger”, says Soderlund. “We will extend this to all flights out of Scandinavia and between Scandinavian countries within a year.”

Challenges included convincing the authorities in Scandinavia to change the wording in the security rules so that photo ID did not need to be shown; getting around the “integrity issue” for passengers; and working under time pressures of less than eight months. SAS solved the integrity issue by agreeing to erase passenger fingerprint records after they had taken the flight.

“We are the only airline in the world to have a fully implemented biometric solution,” says Soderlund, adding that it was “an uphill struggle both internally and externally”. The judges described the biometric ID programme at SAS as “a leading step forward in an industry which is only now moving away from paper tickets”.

The other achievement that caught the



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Vice-president product concepts, SAS

attention of the judges was its work on green approach trials. These involve using an aircraft’s flight management system to follow an optimal pre-defined descent flight path and communicate over datalink a more exact landing time to air traffic control, saving fuel and cutting carbon dioxide emissions.

Peter Larsson, project manager of the green flight programme at SAS, says the airline carried out 2,300 trials between spring 2006 and December 2007 as part of the NUP2+ project. A new ADS-B Rockwell Collins radio was also developed to connect the flight management system on the flight deck with the air traffic control ground system. “We wanted to equip four aircraft with this. Three are now equipped and we’re working with Rockwell Collins to fit the fourth aircraft in July,” says Larsson. “Our ambition is to continue doing trials and research on those four aircraft. Long-term SAS has identified 23,000 tonnes of excess carbon dioxide emissions a year on flights into Stockholm Arlanda alone, wasting at least €4 million [\$6.3 million] a year.”

Larsson is hopeful that eventually green approaches will become commonplace in the airline industry, although he says it will require co-operation and it “will take some years before we are there”.

KERRY EZARD

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