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Mobile & Wireless

BA to roll out email to workers' mobiles

Bye-bye pigeonholes...

Tags: mobile phones, communicate, phones, field

By Julian Goldsmith

Published: Wednesday 31 October 2007

British Airways plans to roll out corporate email to workers' mobile phones next year. The airline has been extending email connectivity to more than 20,000 in-the-field staff around the world - such as cabin crews, flight crews, baggage handlers, check-in staff and cargo agents - with more than 80 per cent of them now logging on to their email accounts once per month.

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According to BA manager for employee self-service (ESS), Allen Huish, the email system provided by CommuniGate Systems is part of an initiative that includes replacing a paper-based, pigeonhole system used to notify field workers of changes, with an electronic channel. It was the construction of Terminal 5 at Heathrow that prompted the switch to an electronic method.

The tech behind Terminal 5

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Huish told silicon.com: "It seemed pointless to build 20,000 pigeonholes into a new building."

Up until now, the service was used mainly as a conduit for HR communications and management communications to staff. But Huish pointed out that the service came into its own in August when airlines were told by security services to be careful of passengers carrying vessels of liquid, which caused major disruptions to flights.

He said: "Being able to communicate news like that to staff is very powerful. We were able to communicate the situation to everyone within two hours. Having one version of the truth out there is very powerful."

Staff access their email from home, hotels or dedicated kiosks deployed throughout the world's airports. The next phase will be to extend the service to workers' mobile phones. Huish hopes to complete that rollout by the end of 2008.

BA CIO Paul Coby said in a statement: "ESS is one of my favourite programmes because it has delivered an enormous business transformational bang for a very small investment buck. It works because it contains vital services and is easily accessible. So, guess what? People use it."

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