

## Check out check-in kiosks

by Rob Ranieri \* December 30 2003

*Editor's note: Ranieri is the practice lead for IBM's e-access center, which develops self-service check-in kiosks. IBM has more than 3,000 self-service check-in kiosks installed at more than 200 travel-related locations worldwide.*



Most travelers have started using self-service kiosks to check-in for their flights at the airport. The time-saving convenience offered by these devices is a welcome relief for today's weary travelers. Looking ahead, the good news is that it's about to get even better.

Imagine checking in and getting your boarding pass for a flight from the same kiosk you use to check out of your hotel. Or getting a boarding pass from a check-in kiosk at the convention center where you're wrapping up a tradeshow. Or imagine a one-stop, check-in kiosk that allows you to check-in for multiple airlines plus rental car companies - and also allows you to purchase tickets for movies or plays, or make dinner reservations while you're in the area.

It's not as far-fetched as it sounds. This "future vision" is actually beginning to unfold now. Long the purview of airlines, hotels are starting to experiment with check-in/check-out kiosks. Hilton Hotels announced that they are teaming up with IBM to roll out a pilot kiosk program at its New York and Chicago properties later this year.

### Beyond experiments

While hotels have experimented in the past with check-in kiosks, it seems that today the technology and the user acceptance have advanced to the point where there is real viability for this time-saving application in the hotel industry.

Also, this fall Las Vegas' McCarran International Airport will be deploying the first "shared use" kiosks in the U.S. In conjunction with its business partner, ARINC, IBM has designed and built these kiosks with a new software platform that allows multiple airlines to share the same kiosk. In Las Vegas, this will initially mean that about three dozen kiosks located throughout the airport will allow travelers on any of the participating airlines to check in from wherever they are. Some of the kiosks will also be located at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Initially 10-12 airlines will be accessible through these units, and the list of participants is expected to grow during the next year.

This new technology platform, which was developed by the International Air Transport Association, will extend the overall availability of kiosks to passengers, while reducing the cost burden to individual airlines. It is also an attractive alternative for airports, who would rather not spend extra money to expand ticket lobby areas.

In addition to delivering the e-business application of flight check-in through shared kiosks, the shared use nature of the kiosks is extremely versatile which means they can be located almost anywhere.

### Security: the eyes have it

Security is also top most on travelers' minds. Check-in kiosks are already lending themselves well to security screening via biometrics. Biometrics technologies are the foundation of an extensive array of highly secure identification and personal verification solutions.

The most popular for kiosk are facial recognition, hand geometry, fingerprint and iris scanning. Biometric-based solutions built in to the kiosks will be able to provide for extremely accurate identification while maintaining personal data privacy.

This technology is already finding its way into the customs areas of international airports, freeing customs officers to focus their energies on identifying and dealing with high-risk situations. The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, for example has begun installing IBM-built kiosks based on iris-recognition in international airports within Canada, starting at the Vancouver International Airport.

This system identifies and verifies travelers by cross referencing a real-time iris scan with the travelers' pre-registered iris data, which is stored on an encrypted smart card. The kiosk will be located in the pre-passenger inspection line in the customs hall. Frequent travelers will apply and pay for the privilege of becoming expedited passengers.

But even IBM admits that technology is not the total answer. The ability to process passengers with a high level of security requires the integration of both technology and process.

No one believes that a single self-service kiosk will provide authoritative security screening. The final answer will lie in having kiosks that work in concert with secure databases and human intervention, to provide a screening net that helps expedite passenger processing in a merger of convenience and security.