Southeastern Rail use Dynamic Route Map to revolutionise customer service

Introduction

3Squared's Dynamic Route Map represents a pioneering step in delivering real-time information to customers.

In the fast-paced world of rail, Southeastern Railway faced a challenge of meeting customer expectations for instant and accurate real-time information. Southeastern were keen to deliver timely updates through various channels, including the website, custom information systems at stations, traditional screens, announcements, social media, and the Southeastern Rail app.

"Nowadays, customers having so many apps and tools at their fingertips, means they want information in an instant and get very frustrated when we are not able to provide the information that they want." Explains John Till, Head of Information Delivery at Southeastern Railway.

Finding the right solution

Recognising the shift towards mobile usage, Southeastern wanted an application that was not just confined to desktop, but also fully responsive on mobile devices. Additionally, Southeastern were searching for a solution that would present information in an easy-to-digest format, personalised to each customer's journey, as described by John:

"We needed a way to present information to customers in a really easy, clear, digestible way that was personal to them, to their part of the network. And so that's where the live map came from."

Reducing manual interventions

3Squared's Dynamic Route Map technology emerged as a solution to Southeastern's need for a dynamic and automated system. Unlike their traditional Rainbow Board system which was driven by manual data and required staff in the control room to manually send out messages, the Live Map connects to Darwin, the national real-time database, significantly reducing manual interventions.

In addition, the Dynamic Route Map offers passengers the convenience of using the calendar to see whether their journey will be affected by scheduled engineering work. Behind the scenes, the map can provide a clear visualisation for Control Room staff as to when services are likely to return to normal following service disruption.

Moreover, during significant disruption, the system can display alternative bus routes and indicate whether ticket acceptance has been co-ordinated with bus operators.
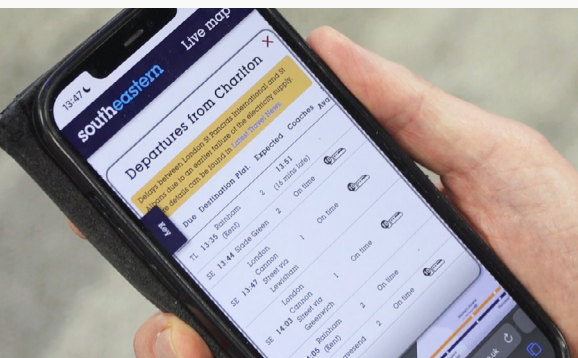
John Till, Head of Information Delivery at Southeastern Railway
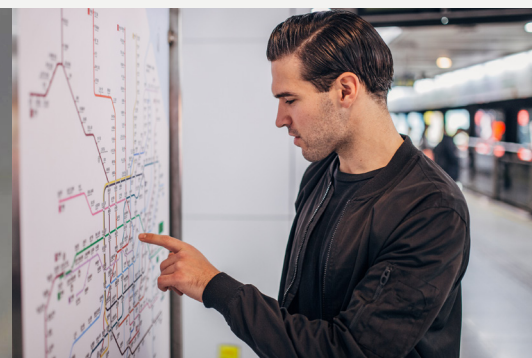
Positive feedback

The implementation of the Dynamic Route Map received positive feedback from both customers and internal stakeholders.

Southeastern customers fed back and said they appreciate the map's visual representation of disruptions, with colour-coded lines indicating the level of disruption experienced. This graphical approach has enhanced Southeastern's communication techniques, enabling them to share screenshots of the map during disruptions, which has subsequently fostered better customer understanding.

Award-winning recognition

Southeastern jointly won a National Rail Award for 'Customer Service Excellence' alongside two of their suppliers. 3Squared's Dynamic Route Map application played a part in this success, thanks to its ability to provide incredibly useful information to improve customers' journeys.

Future enhancements

Looking to the future, Southeastern has plans to evolve the Dynamic Route Map further in collaboration with 3Squared, after recognising there is a lot more they can do regarding accessibility.

Priorities moving forward include presenting real-time information on train station amenities, such as lift availability and step-free access, and identifying accessibility-related issues i.e. a live status of whether such facilities are working or not.

Southeastern are also keen to better support its two audiences: it's paying customer base, as well as its internal audiences.

Enhancements being considered that would help with service management include plans for the map to interface with other systems and products, providing a comprehensive view of the network's status. For example, visually mapping out where there are broken screens or stranded trains on the network.

Team collaboration

The success of the Dynamic Route Map exemplifies a two-way collaborative team effort with 3Squared. John Till, Head of Information Delivery at Southeastern Railway, highlights the openness of the process, with the team actively contributing ideas and suggesting alternatives to find better ways of meeting Southeastern's goals:

"Whilst we had some of the initial ideas (the proof of concept), the team has been brilliant about coming forward and suggesting alternatives or slightly better ways of doing it. So, I'll be honest, if the product had been built purely against our outline requirements, it would be nowhere near as good as it is today. It's been a real team effort and that's really been appreciated."

This collaborative approach resulted in a product that surpassed Southeastern's initial expectations.

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