Created a seamless customer journey with Star Alliance Biometrics, powered by NEC I:Delight

Smart Travel Experience

**Challenges**

- Creating a seamless and more efficient airport experience
- Adjusting to ever-evolving customer needs, such as improving safety protocols in light of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Protecting customers’ personal data and privacy, including adherence to the GDPR guidelines

**Solutions**

- Star Alliance Biometrics, built on NEC I:Delight, enabled a fast, secure and touchless travel experience at the airport
- Travelers can pass through both security access and boarding gates with just their face, powered by NEC’s facial recognition technologies
- Interoperable Digital ID allows for single enrolment that can be used across different airlines and destinations
- Platform is opt-in and secure, with data only collected when necessary

**Partnering with NEC**

- The ability to deliver an end-to-end solution while adhering to GDPR guidelines
- Understanding Star Alliance’s business operations to build a long-term and enduring partnership that is nimble, agile and flexible

**Looking Ahead**

- The use of a Digital ID can also extend beyond the airport experience to provide a truly personalized experience for passengers at retail shops, hotels and more.

**Introduction**

Launched in November 2020 at Frankfurt Airport and Munich Airport, Star Alliance Biometrics was the latest initiative from the world’s largest global aviation alliance, Star Alliance, to create a seamless airport experience that is simple, touchless and secure. Built on the NEC I:Delight platform, Star Alliance Biometrics employs best-in-class Digital ID technology to address key concerns of passengers travelling amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The existing airport experience has long been a common customer complaint. From long queues to the need for physical documents, customers desire a seamless and more efficient way to travel. Heidrun Holin, Senior Project Manager at Lufthansa Project Management Ground, said that the evolution to the new solution was “not only wanted, but also expected.”

In addition, Star Alliance has to constantly adjust to ever-evolving customer needs, which changed dramatically due to the pandemic. Jeffrey Goh, Chief Executive Officer at Star Alliance, shared, “As we were developing a more seamless experience for our customers, we were hit by the COVID-19 crisis. Safety and security became paramount for our customers, and we had to deliver on their hygiene expectations, such as less contact in the customer experience.”

Finally, Star Alliance had to ensure that the new solution would protect its customers’ personal data and privacy. Torsten Maus, Director, Services & Innovation at Star Alliance, said, “One of our main challenges in developing our platform was the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), one of the key terms of data protection within Europe to which we had to adhere.”
In partnership with NEC, the Star Alliance Biometrics identity verification platform was launched in November 2020 at Frankfurt Airport and Munich Airport. Built upon NEC I:Delight biometric and identity management platform software, the solution provides a fast, secure and touchless travel experience at all checkpoints.

Members of the Lufthansa and SWISS frequent flyer program who opt-in to Star Alliance Biometrics are able to pass through both security access and boarding gates in a touchless manner. This is made possible utilizing NEC’s facial recognition technologies to enable biometric identification of passengers to ensure high-precision certification.

Ranked number one in the world for accuracy¹, NEC’s facial recognition engine provides quick, accurate and secure biometric verification, even when face coverings or mask are present. Contactless thermal screening that is precise and autonomous also enables airport workers to keep a safe distance away from passengers without compromising health and safety protocols. Jens Sanner, Passenger Process at Fraport AG, which operates Frankfurt Airport, said, “The main benefits are speed and convenience for our customers. NEC is doing a great job with biometrics - you don’t have to touch, you can keep your masks on, NEC will get you through the airport.”

To enroll in the Star Alliance Biometrics platform, passengers follow just a few easy steps using a mobile device. Upon completion, passengers immediately have an interoperable Digital ID that significantly improves the travel experience. Holin said, “What makes the Star Alliance Biometrics platform special is that, as a passenger, you can enroll wherever and whenever you want, and you can use it on any Lufthansa or SWISS flight without having to enroll again.”

The Star Alliance Biometrics platform is opt-in and designed with user-centric data protection in mind. Travelers can customize how and where their data is used, with only the necessary data being collected by the system and store securely. Christian Draeger, Vice President, Customer Experience at Star Alliance, said, “Users have the ability to provide consent in a structured manner. While you will have the ability to provide consent so that your Digital ID can be used across the globe, you can also be more restrictive and say that you only want it to be used in certain airports or regions. We minimize the data that is stored and encrypt the whole data for use in your future travels, and you will also have the ability to opt-out at any point of time and request that your information be deleted.”

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The use of a Digital ID can also extend beyond the airport experience to provide a truly personalized experience for passengers at VIP lounges, retail shops, hotels and more. As Draeger shared, “We want to extend biometric features because the customer will expect to have a similar service not just for air travel but also when he rents a car or accesses his hotel room. The customer will expect to have a holistic experience from an identity management perspective.”

¹ NEC Face Recognition Technology Ranks First in NIST Accuracy Testing

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