

60 Seconds with Aaron White

Hi Aaron, please tell us a bit about your role and your involvement with smart ticketing?

I have two roles at the Rail Delivery Group, Product Owner for Barcode Ticketing and Smart Ticketing Programme Lead for Pay As You Go on National Rail. As Product Owner, I act as the voice of the customer for this style of ticketing, driving improvements to the proposition to increase take-up. As Programme Lead, I am driving the PAYG proposition for a national roll out. We have recently had approval from all members on both a minimum and aspirational customer proposition which will form the basis of the development of the programme to deliver this method of purchasing travel.

What do you see as the key benefits of smart ticketing for rail customers?

One of the key benefits is to improve the experience for our customers. By digitizing tickets, we get much richer information on who is travelling, on what services and with what tickets. Using this we can start to make ticketing smarter by providing a better end to end experience for customers, for example in station wayfinding, real time journey updates, automatic updating of tickets to allow easements and automatic compensation. Ultimately the customer will be able to decide the level of services they want to receive and how they want to purchase their travel.

What do you see as the biggest challenge to realising these benefits?

The way in which the industry handles customer data, and the speed of messaging. Customers expect a level of service regardless of where they purchase their travel, the stations they travel through or the trains they travel on. How the industry will manage the information provided by digital ticketing, to make it smarter, is a key challenge. It also must be relevant, and the speed of messaging will need to improve. The recent introduction of 5G in several cities is the first step to a countrywide coverage which will enable near instant messaging.

As a customer, what would be the one piece of innovation you'd like to see in the rail industry and why?

Accurate real time information. We are getting much better at handling disruption and service recovery but need to be cannier about how we explain to our customers what is happening. Smart Ticketing will help this to happen by knowing who customers are, and perhaps where they are travelling, allowing a tailoring of the information and services they receive.