

SmartNews

60 Seconds with Stewart Fox-Mills, Commercial Director, Abellio

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

It's my role to set out the vision and strategy for customer mobility at Abellio, this encompasses how we deliver an appropriate Digital solution that makes travel simple to plan, purchase and environmentally sustainable.

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

Convenience has to be the biggest benefit, we have to make it as easy as possible for a customer to travel. If you look at any customer driven organisation, removing friction from its processes or its product itself will have a huge effect on customer experience. We also live in a world where customers and businesses are realising that we have to really think seriously about our impact on the environment. Broadly I think customers are already there, and whilst train is definitely a more eco – friendly way to travel we are still churning out millions of tonnes of paper every year. Ticket purchases and fulfilment for other products or services have been predominantly electronic for a long time and we really have some catching up to do.

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

I think as an industry we have to settle on a technology and fulfilment method, its far too complicated for customers out there at the moment, particularly if they are travelling in and out, or across multiple towns and cities. We seem to have been pushing fulfilment methods that cannot deliver on every nuance of a customers' requirements. When things become complicated or the route to purchase is inconvenient then customers will resort to the path of least resistance and... we are back to paper again!

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

Ultimately we have to be aiming for completely frictionless travel. Imagine a world where stations feel like an amazing retail experience rather than a multitude of impenetrable glass windows and rows of unwelcoming gates. An experience where I can arrive early, enjoy my time at the station, walk unhindered to a seat on a train and then again to my destination at the other end whilst automatically being charged the lowest available fare for the service is our ambition. Rail travel has to be easier than the alternatives and memorable for all of the right reasons.