Rail Delivery Group

National Rail

Interview with Kamelia Lazarova, Smart Ticketing Scheme Manager, Greater Anglia

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Hi Kamelia, please tell us a bit about your role and the work you do?

I changed role within Greater Anglia to start working on the South East Flexible Ticketing prior to the Central Back Office inception. At the time it included a fair amount of negotiating on what was required including building up Greater Anglia's knowledge on smart ticketing as a whole. I have therefore been involved and shaped our technical, commercial and customer facing proposition from project to live operation.

We managed to build a great team, albeit rather lean which included a technical consultant, service manager and customer proposition embedding role plus myself. We were the first UK TOC to join the Central Back Office which enabled us to have our smart ITSO offering from February 2016.

Since those days my role has developed to include the live service management, customer offering enhancements that included around c30 committed obligations related to smart and oversight of the smart strategy to ensure cohesion with some of our other offers including barcode ticketing.

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

I have always been a great believer that customers should never have to think about how 'tickets' work, struggle to buy or indeed have to jump through hoops for a better ticketing experience. Offering a smart card was intended to make customers, namely those travelling with a season ticket, have an easier buying and travelling experience. And whilst we can criticise the great number of band-aid processes that no doubt every TOC has, including ourselves, on the face of it our customers have a very positive experience using smart and it's something my team and I have been always focused to seek improvements on. Our customer satisfaction rose to over 80% which supported the 75% season ticket conversion we had achieved at the end of 2019.

The benefits of smart have always remained as:
- durability of the form-factor saving our customers time having to do the usual encoding of their paper ticket
- ease through gates by taping in and out
- quicker customer offer once the customer has their smart card

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

Our customers experience these benefits on a daily basis, what is more challenging is when things go wrong. Examples like failures to collect, challenges around buying, including only having a small subset of products on offer. The biggest challenge lies around the processes that support each and any delay causes customers, who perhaps were once curious to try and use smart, to want to return to their paper ticket of old.

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

A subscription-based ticketing model that sees customers benefit with a variety of ancillary products, perhaps using their phone, to add and take advantage of a variety of services both across TOCs and the various business around our respective rail networks. This in one easy to use app perhaps 😊…moon on a stick!