

How API Integration Enhances the Traveling Customer's Experience



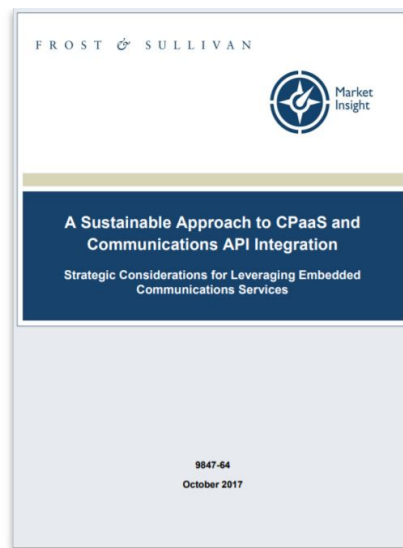
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No matter the industry, every customer expects a frictionless experience in today's increasingly customer-centric, technology-enabled marketplace. For transportation and logistics businesses that provide critical services in a highly competitive industry, providing excellent customer experiences is a distinguishing factor that gives them an advantage over the competition.



With the right API integration, any transportation and logistics business can provide top notch customer experience.

API integration, with its ability to create seamless communications and exceptional customer interactions within a company's existing CRM, is often key to improving the customer experience in transportation areas from air travel to shipping. Here's how transportation and logistics companies are leveraging the power of APIs to increase customer satisfaction and foster long-term loyalty.



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Flying the Friendly Skies with APIs

Travelers can encounter frustrating events at every turn, from delayed or canceled flights to sudden subway shutdowns to ride-sharing cars getting snarled in traffic. At a minimum, the customer will be inconvenienced. In the worst case scenario, they could become profoundly frustrated and vent their anger on social media channels. When unavoidable disruptions occur, a smooth customer experience is critical to recovering riders' trust and confidence. That's where APIs for transportation can make all the difference.

Take flight delays, for example. Whether they're embarking on a high-stakes business trip or elbowing other harried holiday travelers, no one likes to hear that their flight will be departing later than expected. Canceled flights pose an airline customer relationship management challenge, as the airline now has to step in to rebuild any lost trust. In years past, a traveler would find out about a flight delay upon arriving at the gate and wind up stuck at the airport. Now, thanks to API integration, the airline can send the customer an automated and timely notification via SMS or mobile app messaging and reach them before they leave their office or home.

Not only can airlines proactively notify their customers about flight delays on their preferred channels using APIs, they can also attempt failover delivery via a different channel if they detect that the message has not been read. Travelers who receive timely notifications from airlines can gain some flexibility and a measure of personal control. They are more likely to come away from the experience with a more positive impression of an airline company that prioritizes their needs.

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Delivering the Right Packages at the Right Time

Shipping companies also have a strong mandate to deliver a high quality customer experience. Logistics businesses in the transport sector can leverage the benefits of communications APIs combined with real-time geolocation data to ensure that packages arrive on time — and in the rare event that they won't, that the customer receives prompt notification.

Not so long ago, dispatchers and couriers were left to fend for themselves during changing traffic conditions, hurriedly calling up offline or outdated maps that rarely had accurate real-time information on road conditions. This barrier made it difficult for them to anticipate disruptions to the delivery schedule and prevented them from notifying customers about potential delays.

Major shipping companies now provide dispatchers and couriers with up-to-date information on local traffic jams using APIs, empowering dispatchers to track couriers in real time so they can minimize late deliveries. In the event of a delay, dispatchers can update the package's estimated arrival time and push out a notification via SMS or another channel to keep the customer informed. Customers also have access to the courier's location should they wish to see the progress of their delivery or receive email or SMS notifications when the courier is nearby. These customer experience enhancements go a long way toward ensuring greater customer satisfaction.

Improving the Airport Experience

Of course, airlines and shipping companies aren't the only entities using transportation APIs to enhance the customer experience. Public transport is the lifeblood of an urban economy, and to enable smoother movement of people and goods within their boundaries, cities are providing public transport data for a range of commercial uses using APIs. Airports around the world leverage this open data to improve the travel-planning experience for their customers by offering them real-time information on departures and arrivals from bus, train, and subway terminals.

According to Travel Weekly Asia, for example, Heathrow Airport has recently enhanced the customer experience for the over 6,000 visually impaired passengers that pass through its gates every year. The airport now provides on-demand voice access to a trained professional agent for personalized help navigating the airport. This tailored app also provides real-time information on developments that may affect their journey, such as updates on flight status or gate changes. In this way, Heathrow has created a more accessible and less stressful experience for blind and visually impaired people who travel independently.

With the right communications APIs integrated into an existing CRM, more airports can provide valuable services like Heathrow's. A unified-communications-managed API can provide automated voice messages or have AI-powered chatbots direct travelers to public transportation areas of the airport, while SMS APIs can send real-time information on subway and bus schedules. Like Heathrow's recent initiatives, these integrations are what take transportation and logistics companies to the next level. By satisfying their customers' needs and providing them with timely communication, these companies stand to reap the rewards of customer loyalty and repeat business.