

COMFORTDELGRO INTRODUCES SMS TAXI BOOKING SERVICE WITH JBOSS

FAST FACTS

Industry	Transportation
Geography	Singapore
Opportunity	Provide an alternative channel for taxi booking to alleviate phone call booking overload during peak periods.
Solution	Short Message Service (SMS) booking system developed on JBoss Seam.
Benefits	Allows customers to book a taxi anytime, anywhere using SMS in just 30 seconds, which means less waiting time for customers and more booking jobs for cab drivers.



BACKGROUND

ComfortDelGro is the world's second largest public-listed passenger land transport company with a fleet of 45,000 vehicles. The Group has a global workforce, shareholder base and outlook. Headquartered in Singapore, it has operations in China, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, Vietnam, and Malaysia.

ComfortDelGro was formed in 2003 through the merger of two land transport giants - Comfort Group and DelGro Corporation. Both had started out in the 1970s and had, by the time of the merger, grown to become successful listed land transport companies.

Comfort and CityCab, the group's two taxi companies, are the largest in Singapore with a combined fleet of about 15,000 taxis.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Catering to more than 20 million taxi bookings annually, ComfortDelGro's Customer Contact Centre is running at full capacity, with the situation becoming more pronounced during peak hours and on rainy days.

In 2007, the Company started to explore more ways to automate the booking process so as to handle the increasing volume of calls and reduce the time it takes for calls to be handled. Part of the booking process had already been automated with the broadcasting of call bookings to taxis using General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) technology via the in-vehicle Mobile Data Terminals.

As mobile phones are widely used in Singapore, ComfortDelGro decided to implement the Short Message Service (SMS) taxi booking service.

SOLUTION

A closed tender was called with three vendors pitching for the project. "Our criteria were the vendor's experience in the SMS platform, its track record and support level. The platform must be able to integrate seamlessly with our existing Java-based solutions," said Ms. Wong Oi Mei, Vice President, Information Technology of ComfortDelGro's Taxi Business.

After carefully considering the options available, the Company decided to pick the JBoss Seam-based solution proposed by Maven Lab, a Red Hat Business Partner under the Infocomm Development Authority's (IDA) Infocomm Local Industry Upgrading Programme (iLIUP).

"Maven Lab's proposal matched our requirements. The Red Hat solution also offered lower cost of implementation," said Oi Mei.

Maven Lab took three months to develop the system, which runs on Windows on HP Intel-based servers. JBoss Seam was used as the application server. A pilot run involving staff and selected customers started in January 2008 and following feedback gathered, the improved and more user-friendly SMS taxi booking service - the first of its kind in Singapore that enables commuters to book a taxi via SMS any time from any location without having to register - was launched.



BENEFITS

The service has proven to be a hit with many customers switching to SMS taxi booking since waiting time is now a mere 30 seconds. It has, in particular, been a boon to another group of customers – the speech- and hearing-impaired passengers. They now can book a taxi by themselves via SMS without having to rely on others for assistance.

“All that our customers, including the speech- and hearing-impaired passengers, have to do is to send a SMS and wait for a SMS response. This process bypasses the contact centre agents and IVR, saving time on waiting for the call to be answered and waiting on the line for confirmation. Our customers will also not have to experience getting an engaged tone during busy periods,” said Oi Mei.

Around 2% of all taxi bookings are now made via SMS. ComfortDelGro aims to increase this figure to 5% of all bookings by the end of 2009.

“ComfortGelGro is using the SMS taxi booking service as another channel to help improve customer experience. Using the Red Hat's JBoss Seam-based solution has ensured that the company has a stable, reliable and cost-effective system to support this service,” said Hiew Wee Soon, Director of Maven Lab.

Oi Mei is pleased with the success of using open source solutions. “We are impressed with JBoss for its reliability and flexibility, and the support and service level from Red Hat,” she said.

Building on this good experience, ComfortDelGro will be using JBoss Seam and Hibernate for its customer and driver portals, both of which are expected to be launched later in 2009.

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