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Interviews

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Where to go?

Why do many airports appear to pay so little attention to wayfinding?

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INFORM, based in Aachen, Germany, specialises in IT systems for the optimised planning and control of business processes. In the aviation arena the company's flagship product is GroundStar, a suite of IT systems designed to cover airport and ground handling processes from operational database, through the planning and daily management of resources and tasks, to integrated monitoring of operations, invoicing for services and production of business intelligence.

GroundStar is in use at more than 200 airports of every size worldwide, employed in practically every ground activity.

Carlos Sanjuan, director business development, explains more about the products: "The name GroundStar is used for two suites of products that we develop and market, one of which is specialised for handling operations and the other for airports. We began with the ground-handling side and extended into the airport side with applications that were specific to airports and developed from what we already had. By this I mean products for the planning and management of infrastructure resources such as aircraft positions and gates, boarding lounges, check-in counters and baggage claims.

"From there we went into developing an AODB, which we have implemented in a few airports. We complemented that with modules to manage flight schedules and to handle seasonal and daily variations. We have recently gained some new clients and have also extended our installations with former clients.

"Our most recent contract was signed a few months ago with Dusseldorf Airport and we are now in the process of implementing the AODB along with a resource management system. In January this year we started the installation of a similar package for Budapest Airport, which is now in operation. The implementation of an AODB at Vnukovo Airport in Moscow began recently and will be finished early next year. We have previously worked there with a gate management system and staff planning and rostering system. Also we signed an agreement with the New Doha International Airport to implement the airport modules of GroundStar."

So the company has been keeping busy with installations of its existing products, but what

STAR SYSTEM

WELL KNOWN FOR GROUND HANDLING, GROUNDSTAR IS BEING INCREASINGLY DEVELOPED FOR AIRPORT IT



INFORM airport map at Berlin Tegel Airport

about future developments? Sanjuan continues: "One thing we are doing is participating in some major publicly funded projects. One of these is the Total Airport Management System (TAMS) project, for which we are developing our hub-control module. This is a module that is already implemented in Amsterdam and Madrid, but now we are enhancing it and integrating it with a number of other systems under the TAMS project under the CDM approach. We are also participating in an EU sponsored project by the name of AAS – an integrated airport apron safety project.

"In parallel we are doing our own internally financed development. As far as airport systems are concerned we just completed our Airport-Map, an interactive graphical representation of an airport apron, terminals and other elements such as hangars, runways and taxiways, where you can see in real time the aircraft that are approaching, being taxied, turned around, etc. Using colour codes and different graphical representations you can very easily visualise the status of the turnaround of each aircraft and the ground-support equipment on the apron.

"Another product we have developed and are launching with the first client next month is called Ground Fleet. It is GPS-based localisation of ground support equipment vehicles where we can control not only where the vehicles are at any time, but can also, through the use of geo-fencing, monitor vehicles and only allow them to move within a defined area. In addition electronic access ensures that only authorised staff use such equipment."

Sanjuan is bullish about the future for GroundStar: "We have around 55 clients in aviation, with the majority being airlines and handling service providers. Airports are the smaller component of our customer base – we want to expand that area because we think we have the right products."



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