

SIA taps tech to lift customer service, operations

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Singapore Airlines (SIA) is using digital technology to get to know its customers better as it goes all out to reclaim its position as the world's best carrier.

It is leveraging digital platforms and technology to learn more about customers' habits, preferences and travel patterns, said SIA's chief executive officer Goh Choon Phong.

"As we get to know the experiences of our customers on board better, we are now able to serve them in ways which they like. We now know better their favourite drinks, their favourite reading materials and more."

Speaking at the launch of SIA's Digital Innovation Blueprint yesterday, Mr Goh said the airline is also working with its partners to better understand travel patterns using data analytics.

So, instead of sending out promotions via mass e-mails, for example, the airline is able to be more targeted, he said.

The effort is part of the airline's three-year digital masterplan – its biggest technology initiative to date – as it faces intense challenges that have eroded its profits and affected its ranking among travellers.

SIA will tap digital technology in various areas – from customer service, company operations and processes, to aircraft maintenance and repair.

In recruitment, for example, the airline will use data analytics to hire staff who are "more attuned" to passenger service, said Mr Goh.

To encourage more ideas and innovation, SIA is asking staff for suggestions on how to improve processes and procedures – with the bar set low to encourage as many ideas as possible.



From left: National University of Singapore president Tan Eng Chye, Economic Development Board assistant managing director Lim Kok Kiang, Singapore Airlines chief executive Goh Choon Phong, Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) S. Iswaran, A*Star chairman Lim Chuan Poh and Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore deputy director-general Tay Tiang Guan launching SIA's Digital Innovation Blueprint yesterday. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

Staff whose ideas are selected will be given \$5,000 and time off from work to develop their ideas, Mr Goh said.

He acknowledged that the flip side of this effort is that there will be mistakes. "If we want 100 per cent certainty before we do anything, I don't think that can be done."

He said: "We will have to accept that some of the ideas being explored will not work and when that happens, we will have to learn quickly and move on."

SIA is also collaborating with government agencies and the National

University of Singapore to use digital technology to build new capabilities that will benefit both consumers and the airline itself.

For instance, it is working with the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*Star) to develop a way to predict when critical parts of aircraft need to be fixed or replaced.

Work has started on A-380 aircraft parts, and this will be progressively extended to other aircraft types in SIA's fleet.

It is also working with the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore and the Economic Development

Board on its digital journey.

Speaking at the launch at the SIA Training Centre, Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) S. Iswaran said that "digitalisation is transforming, if not disrupting, industries and catalysing new growth areas", including in the aviation and aerospace industries.

"And we are likely to see a significant impact across the value chain – from customer service and airline operations, to aircraft manufacturing and maintenance, repair and overhaul," said Mr Iswaran.

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