

Top 5 Tips: Bag Drop

As traveler numbers rebound, post-pandemic, we're once again seeing congestion at various points in the air port, and bag drop is one of the most obvious places where that occurs. The goal, of course, is not simply to get bags dropped off and on their way to their destination, but to improve passenger throughput. Smart **bag drop** solutions have a number of common features, including being well-designed, easy to use and seamlessly integrated with other solutions. They should also require minimal supervision.

So what other considerations do you need to make when you're looking for a bag drop solution?



Solutions not products deliver the best improvements

Design your bag drop area to remove your biggest bottleneck(s).

The best bag drop solutions are the ones designed for purpose, in a brand new terminal, for example. In most cases, however, the solution is a retrofit, using existing desks and infrastructure. In either case, it's good to seek expert advice – for example on whether you want a one-step or two-step bag drop solution. In a one-step solution, everything is done in the same place – weighing the bag, tagging it, and sending it on its way. With two-step, the bag is usually tagged first, at a tagging station, and then weighed and inducted at the bag drop. The best solution will depend on the specific terminal lay-out, passenger flows and many other variables. You should also look closely at ergonomics – you can improve service dramatically, for example, with a low-profile loading conveyor. Side-loading instead of the more usual front-loading is also an added convenience.

Not all bag drops are the same. Look for technology features that speed up processing (fast and accurate tag reading) and mitigate risks or downstream issues (intrusion detection, bag hygiene detection, streamlined dimensioning systems). the full complexity of airport operations. The latest technologies can even be deployed off-airport in hotels, car parks and more. Explore what this could mean for you?



Talk to experts, start small and expand as needed

Bag drop solutions may need to be versatile and flexible.

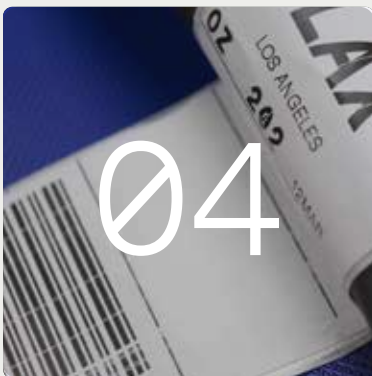
Surprisingly often, airports will install equipment that they will never use, or don't in practice need. It's better to discuss real needs with suppliers before making specific requests, and to start small and expand as needed: it's much easier to add capacity than to take it away. You may think you need a specific number of bag drops, but you might in fact need a more versatile, flexible solution, depending on actual numbers of passengers being processed and how many bag tags need to be printed. It's important that airlines should be part of the discussion. Airline software needs to be integrated with bag drop systems, so if the airlines aren't on board, the bag drops won't get used.



Prioritize flexibility and keep technology evolution in mind

Bag drop solutions should be ultra-modular and re-use existing infrastructure where possible.

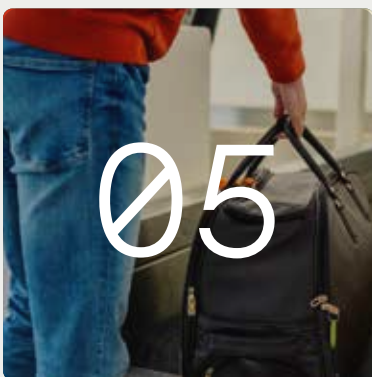
Different airports in different countries have different needs at different times. Early morning flights within Europe, for example, may see passengers with little or no baggage to process, whereas long haul passengers tend to travel with bigger, heavier bags. The way your airport is configured needs to be flexible enough to deal with quick self-bag drop for some flights, and agent-supported desk bag drop for others. Prioritize modular, adaptable solutions that support all variations and combinations, with variable licensing conditions – allowing you to experiment, by trying out one-step versus two-step bag drop. Also look at technology evolution – so even if you don't envisage using biometrics today, for example, you still have the flexibility of biometric-enabled hardware in the future. Finally, look for ways to re-use existing infrastructure. Mobile check-in kiosks, for example, could be quickly and inexpensively converted to print bag tags as well.



See the process through the passenger's eyes

Carefully design self-service areas to improve the experience and maximize passenger throughput.

When passengers arrive at the airport, ready to drop off bags, a clear pathway and good signage will help them avoid bottlenecks and the need to bother staff. Tagging stations can be placed anywhere, but for bag drop stations this is different as they co-locate with belt and conveyor infrastructure. Changes can be difficult and costly, so it's good to work with airport architects to build up 3D models in virtual reality. That way you can see the journey through the passenger's eyes, instead of just taking a bird's eye view.



How much do payments cost?

Extra revenue opportunities can impact passenger throughput.

The need for payments can add a whole extra level of complexity to bag drop. You may need to experiment with where, when and how you process payments, to achieve the optimal balance between maximum passenger throughput and maximum revenue. If payment decisions are taken at the bag drop point, passengers may choose to start repacking bags to avoid paying altogether – causing both congestion and revenue loss. Payment infrastructure can also be expensive, so it's important to talk to experts and to do a cost / benefit analysis, considering revenue vs passenger flow vs traveler experience vs staff experience. Airports and airlines need to talk together about this, of course, as the final decision about when and whether payments are going to be needed belongs to the airlines.

Talk to SITA and Alstef Group about bag drop:

sita.aero