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## Gatwick Airport Reverts to Whiteboards
August 2018

Gatwick Airport is a major international airport 30 miles south of London in the United Kingdom. It is the second busiest airport in the U.K. and the eighth busiest airport in Europe. It is a single runway airport. In 2017, 45.6 million passengers passed through the airport.

Breaking Out the Whiteboards

On Monday, August 20, passengers at Gatwick were forced to get their flight details from hand-drawn whiteboards after Gatwick's information systems went down.

Gatwick had to post flight information on whiteboards after its digital screens failed due to an IT glitch. Personnel updating the whiteboards communicated via walkie-talkies with a control room to get the latest gate information.
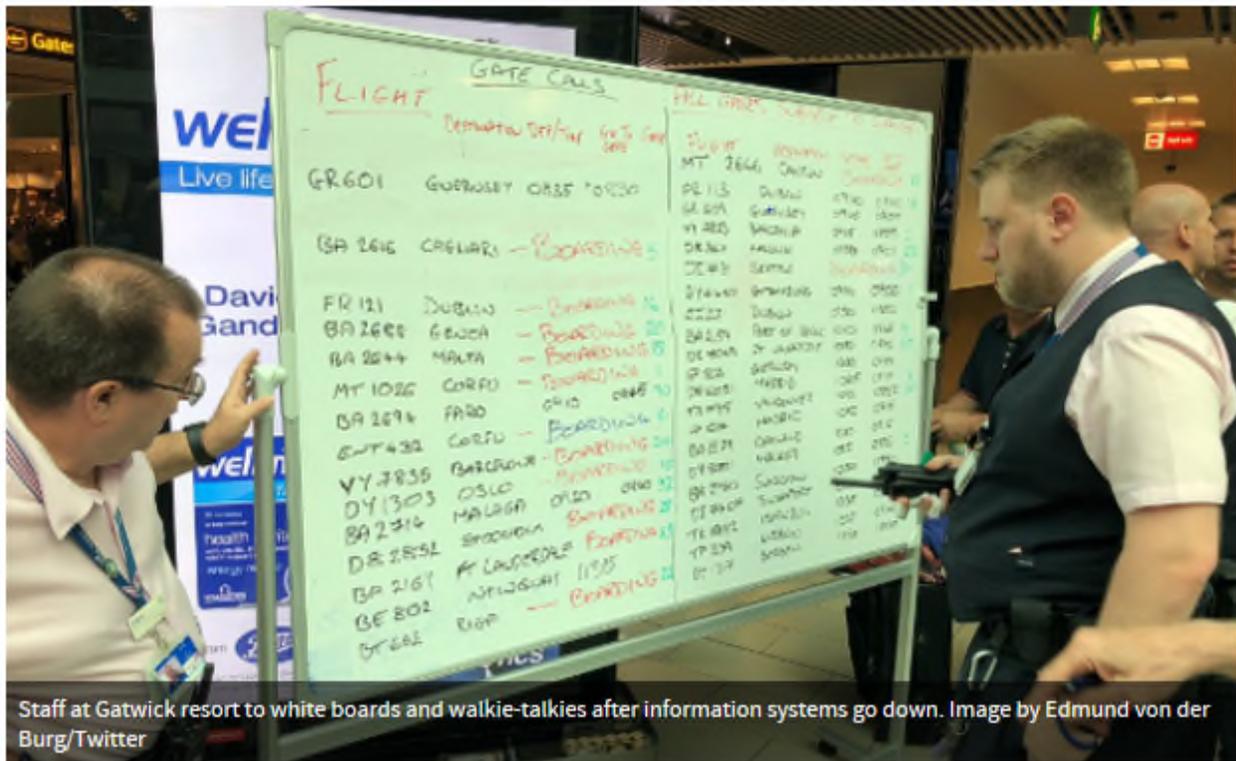
Staff at Gatwick resort to white boards and walkie-talkies after information systems go down. Image by Edmund von der Burg/Twitter

The Cause of the Outage

The problems began at 8:20 AM. All the digital screens in the airport went down due to the technical issues.

The problem was caused by a damaged fiber cable that is used by Gatwick to carry flight information. The airport blamed the outage on Vodaphone, which is responsible for IT support at the airport. Vodaphone confirmed that a damaged cable caused the problem. The airport said that this was an example of ongoing issues with Vodaphone.

Managing the Whiteboard

Staff members used walkie-talkies to get updated information, erasing and updating the whiteboards with the latest 'live updated' flight information as it changed. People crowded to see their gate numbers, but the huge crowds made it difficult for passengers to see their gate information.

To help ease the crowds, the whiteboards were accompanied by a projected Word document containing the gate information. However, sometimes the whiteboards and the Word displays did not match due to the staff having to shout the gate numbers across the concourse to each other.

Restoration of Service

By Monday evening, the cable was repaired and the displays had become operational.

Summary

A handful of people missed their flights, but no flights were delayed. The good news is that tens of thousands of people managed to depart on time.

Acknowledgements

Information for this article was taken from the following sources:

Gatwick Airport posts flight info on white boards after digital screens fail, *Cnet*; August 20, 2018.
Gatwick, UK's no. 2 airport, shows flights on white boards after IT fails, *Reuters*; August 20, 2018.
Gatwick passengers forced to read flight information from white boards after information screens go down, *Computing*; August 20, 2018.
A Technical Glitch at Gatwick Forced Airport Staff to Update Flight Statuses on Whiteboards, *MSN*; undated.