



## SECTOR CASE STUDY

# LOGISTICS EXPERTISE TRANSFORMS GROUND HANDLING OPERATIONS FOR LEADING EUROPEAN AIRLINE

Our partnership with one of Europe's leading short-haul airlines demonstrates how applying a logistics mindset to ground handling operations can lead to significant operational improvements, cost savings, and enhanced customer satisfaction.

**DHL Supply Chain – Excellence. Simply delivered.**



Our customer connects to over 100 European destinations, offering low-cost air travel without compromising excellent service and customer satisfaction. Their aim was to build an outstanding network, transforming revenue, delivering ease and reliability, and driving their low-cost model; however, their efforts were significantly hindered by the inefficiencies in their operations at Gatwick Airport.

As a trusted partner with a proven track record in delivering sustained levels of performance, quality, safety and service, we took on this unique challenge by applying our operational excellence and expertise in logistics operations to transform crucial ground operations for our customer.

## CUSTOMER CHALLENGE

In 2016, Gatwick Airport was not ranking favorably for on-time performance (OTP) – a critical aviation metric – in our customer's network. A prevailing mindset in the ground handling industry at the time focused more on cost-cutting rather than delivering quality services, leading to poor performance. For our customer, delays had become a common issue, creating a domino effect on their operations throughout the day and causing significant financial strain.

Employee engagement and satisfaction were also at an all-time low, alongside high turnover and absenteeism rates.

## DHL SUPPLY CHAIN SOLUTION

We started our ground and baggage handling contract with our customer at Gatwick Airport in 2017. We drove our solution design by applying our logistics operational excellence approach to complex airport operations. We worked closely with our customer, reviewing their existing processes and challenging long-standing procedures to ensure

### CUSTOMER GOALS:

- Poor on-time performance (OTP) at Gatwick Airport
- Operational performance caused significant delays and low customer satisfaction
- Aircraft grounding countermeasures caused considerable financial strain
- Overall low employee engagement and satisfaction with high turnover and absenteeism rates

### DHL SUPPLY CHAIN SOLUTION:

- Applied logistics operational excellence approach to complex airport operations
- Review of their existing processes and process optimization with efficiency, safety and exceptional service levels at their core
- Successful TUPE of 850 employees

### CUSTOMER BENEFITS:

- Improved OTP at Gatwick Airport
- Employee absence and turnover rates reduced to 3.7 and 1.8% respectively
- Partnership extension at Gatwick, which now includes ground handling, baggage and cabin appearance services
- Expanded scope of operations to include Manchester, Bristol and Liverpool airports

optimized operations with efficiency, safety and exceptional service levels at their core.

We implemented significant investment in the working environment with new equipment and facilities to enhance these improved, optimized operations. We also undertook the largest Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) or TUPE process in UK ground handling history, successfully transferring 850 colleagues.

The combined approach delivered substantial process time reductions, enhanced employee engagement and a strong safety culture, which improved overall operational performance.

## CUSTOMER BENEFITS

In 2018, Gatwick had been transformed into one of the highest performing airports in the customer's network. Our focused and innovative approach led to a significant improvement on the previous years OTP. We also saw a massive decrease in employee absence, which fell to 3.7 percent, and turnover fell to a record airport low of 1.8 percent.

The success of our partnership at Gatwick caught the attention of the broader organization. By 2019, we began ground handling and baggage contracts at Manchester and Bristol airports and an additional cabin appearance contract at Gatwick. Through this expanded service offering, we now hold the largest ground handling and cabin appearance operations in the UK.

In 2022, after supporting the customer through the biggest crisis in aviation history, we extended our partnership at Gatwick and expanded the operation at Manchester to include cabin appearance.

Our customer continues to add new contracts, most recently at Liverpool in 2023. Today, we handle ground



services at four of their bases in the UK, including three of their top five.

Overall, this partnership exemplifies how a logistics-focused approach can transform airline operations, leading to improved performance, reduced costs, and increased passenger satisfaction.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact our supply chain experts [here](#) >  
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