

Critique on an article by todd weiss



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Critique on an Article by Todd Weiss on “ *United to Scrap Baggage System at Denver Airport*”.

The article by Todd Weiss tends to blame the application of information technology in the management of the baggage in airports and looks into a specific instance that involves Denver Airport where the application of technology has not yielded the desirable results. As the author of the article states, the technology on baggage management has not worked as per the initial expectations (Weiss, 2005; Par. 2). According to Weiss, the technology could have worked without any expected failures since he places more concern on the amount of time that it has taken United- the company responsible for implementation of the plan to work on it. Even though the author acknowledges the fact that the system was designed to involve hundreds of computers and thousands of remote controlled carts, he still believes that even the strides made by United are not worth complementing since they have not met the set expectations as per the prior plans (Ibid. Par 3). As stated by the author, the plan by the company involved- United showed early signs of collapse after the first 16 months into the project. Weiss states that the plan was for United to scrap the computerized baggage management system months after its failure due to reasons such as high maintenance costs and the need to save for the same costs as seen in paragraph 7. As per the suggestion of a consultant on such maintenance systems, it would be prudent for the project to have been tried on a small scale before its ultimate execution (Ibid. Par. 11).

According to this article, there are some issues that the author say that are right and at the same time there are some strong statements as well that I

do not agree with. For one, I do not agree with the author that such a system would have worked efficiently without slight challenges 16 months after its execution. Since it is the author's own words that highlighted the complexity with which it required a sophisticated system with several remotes and computers, it would still take time for it to work efficiently even if the design was okay (Paragraph 3). I also disagree with the author's view on the failure of the system. This is because he states that there are phases that work successfully like baggage transfer between flights, suggesting that it could still have worked in other parts of the airport as well (Par. 2). However, I do agree with the fact that the system could have been tried in a small scale first as stated in the last paragraph by the consultant to check if it could run in such a small part and upgrade it to a larger part. It is also worth noting that the procurement procedure that was used to give the tender to United did not take care of certain issues such as their plan on carrying out the project and their financial capability. This is explained in the bankruptcy of the company years later as well as BAE Automated Systems Inc., the company that did the design work for the project (Paragraph 9). In case the process of procurement could have been done appropriately by Denver Airport, problems of wanting to pull out of the plan as seen in United's representative comments could have not been the case and the computerized system could have been executed in small successful phases.

My take on the use of the computerized system on baggage control is that the system could effectively work if treated with essence and care. The plan as stated by Bruce Webster- IT consultant, is to first try if the system can work in small scale- something that United never did. Also, the fall of the two

companies involved in design and execution of the project suggests that only the procurement process is entirely to blame for the fall of the plan and not the computerized system itself. Moreover, going back to the manual way would not solve the problem as it will only result into more losses for the airline company. Risking the project on the two companies placed the entire successful of the process at risk. Computerized system is the way to solve the baggage problems and that Denver Airport should not let it fall as some advantages for the system are being felt like transfer of baggage from flight to flight. The problem is not the technology but United.

Reference.

Weiss, T. R. (June 13, 2005). United to scrap baggage system at Denver Airport: After 10 years, technology still doesn't work right. Accessed January 7, 2017 from: <http://www.computerworld.com/article/2555708/it-project-management/united-to-scrap-baggage-system-at-denver-airport.html>