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The Inside Track with: Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Issues Manager at Passenger Focus



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Today we speak to **Guy Dangerfield**, Passenger Issues Manager at **Passenger Focus**, a public body set up by the Government to protect the interests of Britain's rail passengers. With an emphasis on evidence-based campaigning and research, they use their knowledge to

influence decisions on behalf of passengers and we work with the industry, passenger groups and national and local government to secure journey improvements.

Luke Upton (LU): Hello Guy, thanks for taking time to speak to me today, perhaps we can start by you offering a bit more about your work at Passenger Focus?

Guy Dangerfield (GD): "Hello, yes, of course, in my role as Passenger Issues Manager I lead on our efforts to improve rail and bus passengers' experiences during service disruption, a key part of which is information and communications, and I am also involved in our work on rail fares, retailing and ticketing. This will often involve working with Research colleagues to develop new pieces of research – as an organisation we are driven by the data and feedback from passengers – and formulate policy and recommendations based on the findings. We then seek to influence train and bus companies, government at whatever level and other stakeholders to act on those recommendations."

LU: Thanks, and so very simply, what are the passengers saying?

GD: "Well, there's three key areas which passengers always care passionately about – train punctuality, the on-board experience, with the principal issue being the ability to get a seat and the desire for value for money."

LU: So although there has been a great deal of change in Great Britain's rail industry, passenger priorities are in-line with perhaps what they always have been?

GD: "Yes, certainly those three issues have been key for a long time. But one change I would look at is how passengers now have a greater awareness of themselves as customers and users of a product and as such expect a higher quality of service. After housing, transport is the number one expenditure that most people make and so it is not surprising that high standards are expected. But this is complicated in Great Britain somewhat in that only certain train routes offering a choice of providers.

If you are travelling between for example London and Birmingham or London and Brighton, you have the opportunity to choose which rail company you use, but most

journeys only offer a single train provider. So the majority of customers don't have a choice of which provider they use but do not want to be taken for granted by their provider. Building trust among customers who are conscious that you are basically a monopoly supplier is a key challenge for train operators in Britain."

LU: Interesting, and so at Railway Telecommunication 2013 your keynote address examines how passengers can be put at the heart of rail communications development, do you believe that technology can help improve this relationship?

GD: "There without doubt a huge amount that can be done with technology to improve and develop passenger relationships and this is something which has been the subject of a great deal of our research of late. Our report on social media, [Short and Tweet](#) for example, which examines rail passengers' experiences of and needs from social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Strong examples would be development of smartcards and passenger information systems but there is still room for growth. Passengers are very aware of the latest technology and are always keen to see it applied on the railways system. For example with many large courier firms it's possible to track a packages progress, but the facility to do the same with all trains isn't there yet."

LU: So this passenger-operator relationship is both a crucial and complicated one but technological innovation can help improve it?

GD: "Yes, I think so. The more operators know about their passengers the better they can connect with them, and new technological and digital platforms are the ideal solutions for this. For the customers a really important thing aside from the core requirements (punctuality, a seat and value for money) are that they see train operators caring about them, behaving as if they really 'get' that they are spending often large sums of money with them."

LU: Fascinating. Many thanks Guy, look forward to hearing more next week in Amsterdam.

Guy Dangerfield will be speaking at the [3rd Annual Railway Telecommunications Congress](#) in Amsterdam on 19-21 November 2013. Guy will be joining speakers including Transport for London, Hamburg Koln Express, SNCF INFRA, Netherlands Railway and 300 telecom and passenger service experts to create a vision for the future railway. A limited number of delegate and VIP passes are still available so click [here](#) to find out how you could attend for free.