

# Self-service kiosks: Bane or boon?

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The self-service kiosk industry is growing at a fast clip, with transactions at these expected to surpass US\$607 billion this year in North America alone, according to the IHL Group. But are the kiosks really increasing efficiency for consumers?

It's not easy to find something to like about air travel these days - the industry, after all, has the lowest customer satisfaction ratings in the economy - but Gail Bower, president of Bower & Co. Consulting, has: the self-service kiosks that just about every airline now uses to handle automated tasks.

They are easy to use and they keep the lines down to a minimum, she commented. And they are smart - a trait Bower experienced firsthand on a recent trip to Florida. "I had to catch a connection to get to my destination, and the airline's kiosk only printed out one boarding pass," she told *CRM Buyer*.

She thought it had made a mistake and was resigning herself to a wait in line and possible complications at the desk. "Then one of the attendants told me that the boarding pass was good for both flights - that the kiosk automatically booked me through."

For Bower - and indeed, most of us who use these kiosks in airports, hotels, grocery stores and retail chains - this incident illustrates the reasons why we both love and hate self-service kiosks: When they work as planned, they are a happy convenience. When they don't work, they become the focal point for all that is wrong with customer service.

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