

Digital Wayfinding Design & Prototype

Core 77 Award Submission–2018

In 2017, Southwest Airlines set out to improve the in-airport experience. We listened to Customers and Employees, tested a variety of solutions, then developed the most promising ideas. The result? A fully digital wayfinding and signage system designed to make traveling easier. This past fall, we tested it at Dallas Love Field to see what people thought.

“Communication is key. Flights get delayed, we get it. But some monitors were displaying ‘delayed’ while others were displaying ‘on time’. Lines were outrageous, and when I called SW customer service they didn’t know which gate we were at.”

-Southwest customer from initial research



Finding your way is about to get way easier.

We're testing new signage to help improve your airport experience. Let us know what you think by visiting us at SWAsgns.com

New flight board in airport from testing

Inspired by Customers and Employees

We began by talking with customers, front-line employees, and Southwest's operations teams to understand the broader context and the operational constraints. Based on these conversations, we identified three challenges that needed to be solved:

- Present Clear And Accurate Information
- Reduce Gate Crowding
- Enable More Meaningful Customer Service

"After TSA? I go to my gate. See if the plane is there. Then I'll go find the bathroom and get something to eat. I try not to go too far away (from the gate) though. Just in case."

-Southwest customer from initial research



Prototyping Responsibly In Real & Virtual Reality

Knowing that installing new hardware inside of a highly regulated airport and developing a functional back-end is a costly and logistically complicated task, we made sure to test the system responsibly before moving into a live in-market prototype. This included mocking up a full-scale airport using foam-core and projectors in order to conduct user testing as well as modeling the entire airport in virtual reality to better understand sight lines and sizing.

“LOVE all the new wayfinding signs! Beautiful, functional, very well-thought-out designs. Like everything else you guys do - just makes this loyal, long-time A-Lister more loyal than ever. Thanks for being a great airline! Love you guys - and gals!”

-Southwest customer feedback



Physical 1:1 mock-up



Virtual reality mock-up

A New Digital Wayfinding & Signage System

Working closely with Southwest's innovation, operations, and data science teams, we designed a new digital wayfinding system to guide customers through the airport. Based on customer and employee feedback, we redesigned all of the existing airport signage and added new sign types at key locations throughout the airport. Each sign in the new system was fully digital and location-aware, so that we could tailor each sign based on time of day, flight status, and customer needs.

"Without as many interruptions for flight status questions, I am able to spend more quality time with Customers needing significant assistance."

-Southwest employee feedback



A New Digital Wayfinding & Signage System



Flight Board

Gate Status Overview

Gate Signage

Gate Area Display

Jetway Threshold

Employee High Five

Flight Board

New to an airport? Our flight boards let Customers find their flight faster and then point them in the right direction to locate their gate. Our goal is to help customers move through the airport and make better decisions with their time by giving them boarding times, walking times, and directional arrows in addition to their flight information.

"These signs are beautiful, informational, and expertly located throughout the terminal. I'm an extremely frequent traveler and these signs were even helpful to me! I absolutely loved the 'walking distance' information as well as the arrows to point people in the right direction to their gate."

-Southwest customer from testing



Gate Status Overview

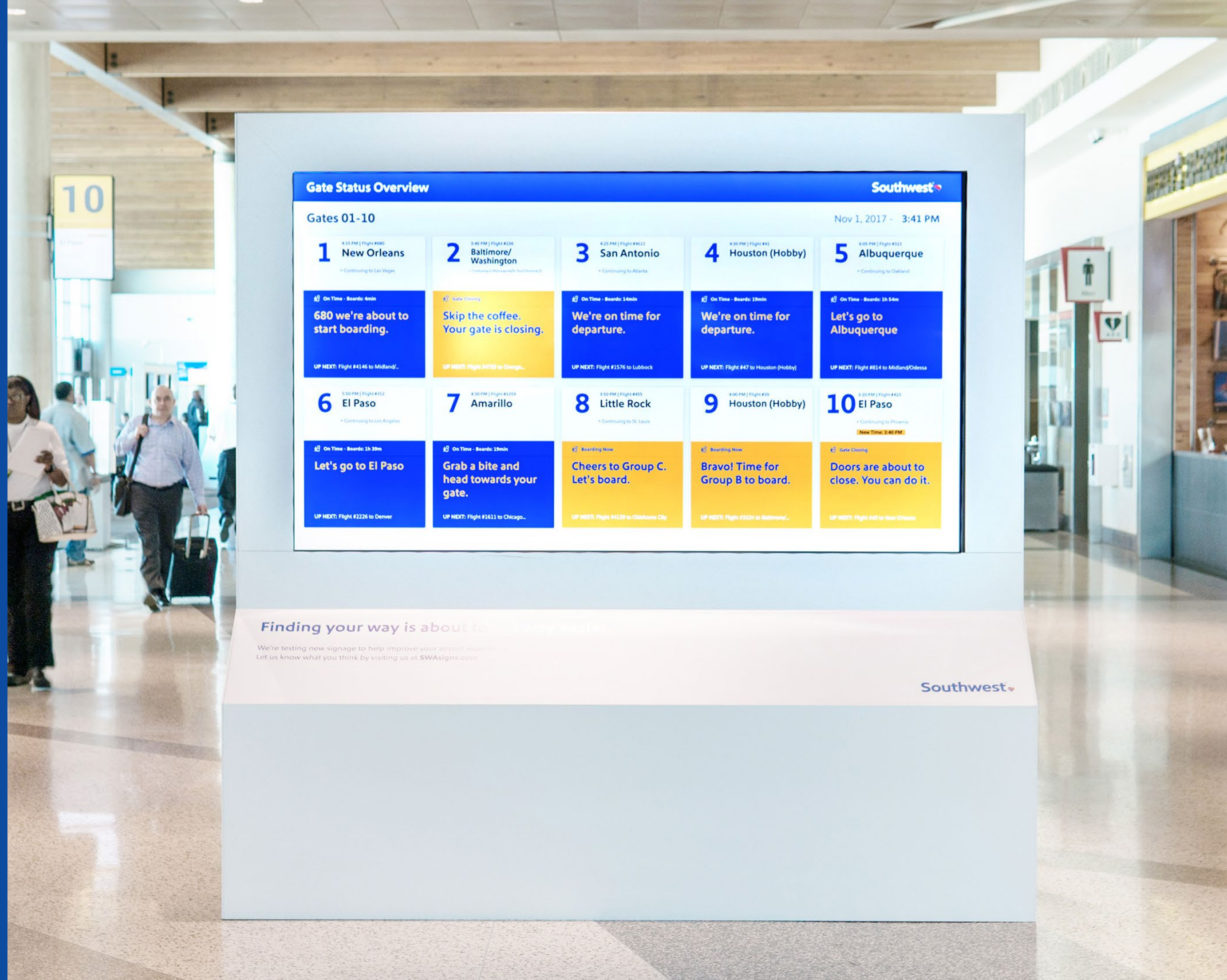
Customers no longer need to walk all the way to their gate to find out if they are boarding. Our goal is to provide customers and employees with information about the status of their flight without making them walk all the way to their gate. This will reduce gate crowding and let customers make better use of their time.

"This is a new board! I trust the information as it is from Southwest. The information on the Flight Board is from the airport. I don't always trust it."

-Southwest customer from testing

"I can glance at the board and see how many gates are boarding in the whole wing of the airport. It's great for knowing when our agents may need a little extra help if everything is boarding at once."

-Southwest employee from testing



Gate Status Overview					Southwest
Gates 01-10					Nov 1, 2017 - 3:41 PM
1 New Orleans 1:15 PM Flight #660 Continuing to Las Vegas	2 Baltimore/Washington 3:45 PM Flight #236 Continuing to Indianapolis and Phoenix	3 San Antonio 4:25 PM Flight #422 Continuing to Atlanta	4 Houston (Hobby) 4:30 PM Flight #41	5 Albuquerque 6:00 PM Flight #323 Continuing to Oakland	
On Time - Boarding: 4min 680 we're about to start boarding. UP NEXT: Flight #4146 to Midland/...	Gate Closing Skip the coffee. Your gate is closing. UP NEXT: Flight #4789 to Denver...	On Time - Boarding: 14min We're on time for departure. UP NEXT: Flight #1576 to Lubbock	On Time - Boarding: 19min We're on time for departure. UP NEXT: Flight #47 to Houston (Hobby)	On Time - Boarding: 1h 54m Let's go to Albuquerque UP NEXT: Flight #814 to Midland/Odessa	
6 El Paso 5:00 PM Flight #312 Continuing to Los Angeles	7 Amarillo 4:30 PM Flight #229	8 Little Rock 5:50 PM Flight #475 Continuing to St. Louis	9 Houston (Hobby) 4:00 PM Flight #33	10 El Paso 3:20 PM Flight #423 Continuing to Phoenix New Time: 3:40 PM	
On Time - Boarding: 1h 39m Let's go to El Paso UP NEXT: Flight #2226 to Denver	On Time - Boarding: 19min Grab a bite and head towards your gate. UP NEXT: Flight #1611 to Chicago...	Boarding Now Cheers to Group C. Let's board. UP NEXT: Flight #1239 to Oklahoma City	Boarding Now Bravo! Time for Group B to board. UP NEXT: Flight #2234 to Baltimore...	Gate Closing Doors are about to close. You can do it. UP NEXT: Flight #88 to New Orleans	

Finding your way is about to get a lot easier

We're testing new signage to help improve your airport experience. Let us know what you think by visiting us at SWASigns.com

Southwest

Gate Signage

Customers can sit back and relax at a less crowded gate, or a coffee shop, while keeping an eye on their gate from a distance. Our goal is to give customers and employees a way to see and understand the status of their gate from a distance, using a clearly defined color-coding system.

“The colors—yellow for boarding, for example—make it easy to see the boarding process. And since they’re so bright, you can see status when you’re checking out at Starbucks and know whether you have time to relax or if you need to run!”

-Southwest customer from testing



Gate Area Display

Overhead space, connecting flights, boarding time, flight capacity. All the most useful information is now centrally located in the gate area. Our goal is to answer customers' most commonly asked questions so that we can reduce lines at customer service desks and allow our employees to focus on more meaningful interactions.

"My number one concern when getting off my flight is where is my connection and how quickly do I need to be there. This would be extremely helpful in solving that problem, especially when I am in an unfamiliar airport."

-Southwest customer from testing



1

New Orleans

> Continuing to Las Vegas



Boarding Now

Group A, now boarding. Aww yeah.

Jetway Threshold

Am I at the right gate? Where is my plane? Is group B boarding yet? Signs above the jetway help give customers confidence. Our goal is to clearly identify the flight associated with each gate and show our customers where it is along the journey.

"Such an information push! I love the transparency of the new signs. It's so refreshing to see an airline push more information to the customers rather than run and hide like everyone else. Thank you again for creating these awesome signs. I really hope to see them roll out everywhere."

-Southwest customer from testing



Employee High Five

Great customer service experience? A quick high-five lets customers show how much they care. (Because a little LUV can go a long way.) Our goal is to provide our customers with a greater understanding of the Employees that support their travel and then give them a chance to thank them down on the tarmac.

"If I were an employee I'd really appreciate this. If I were looking for a job at Southwest, seeing that the company cares about the employee would be a hook."

-Southwest customer from testing

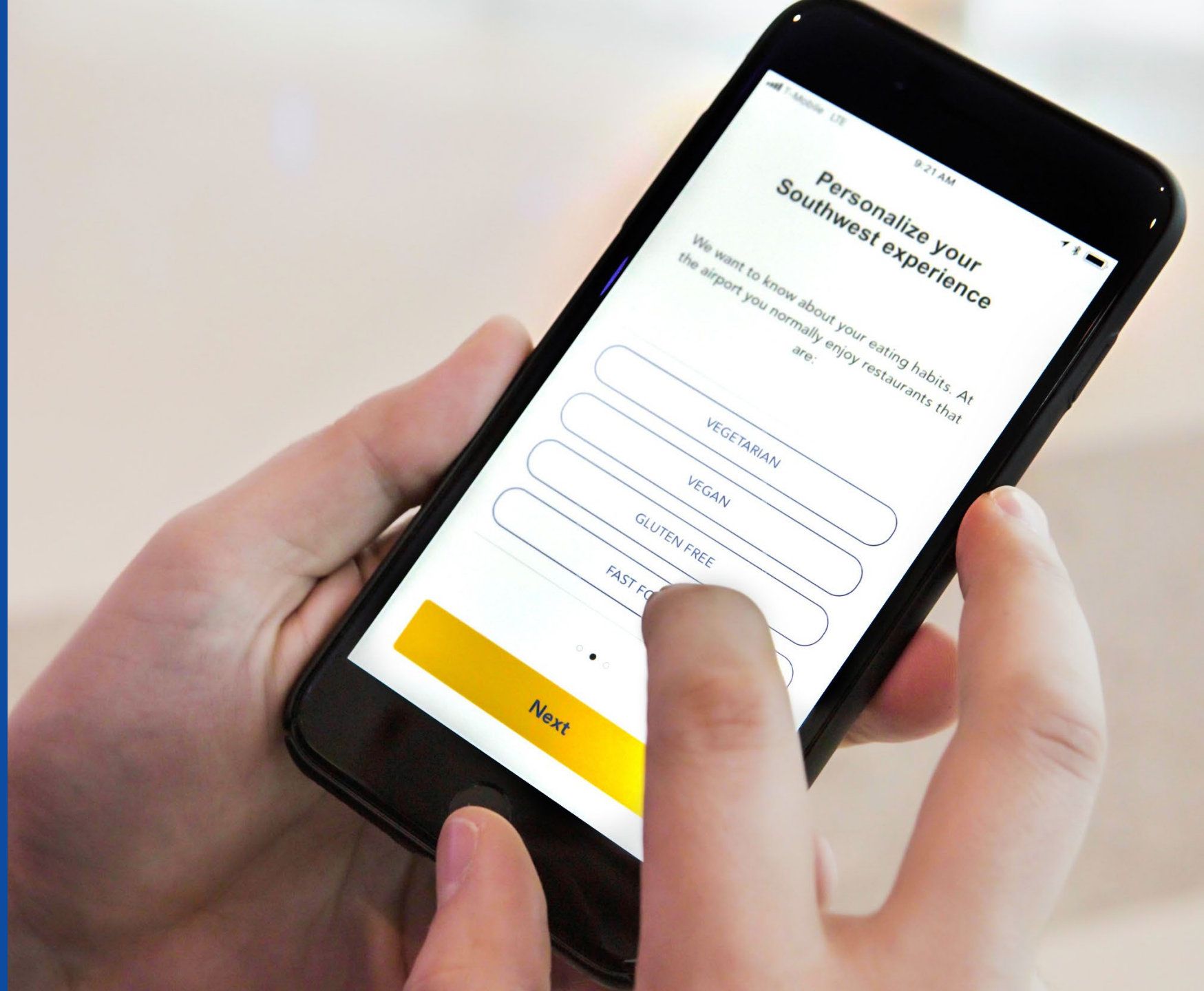


Wayfinding Mobile App

Our prototype app gives customers a personal travel assistant in the palm of their hand, helping them get from home to their destination and everything in between.

"If I could get a notification when I arrive at an airport with an accurate estimated wait time for security, that would bring peace of mind."

-Southwest customer from testing



In-Airport Testing and Results

We spent seven weeks testing this new experience live in Dallas Love Field—with over 300,000 passengers. The added information improved the overall usability of the airport and the digital signage dramatically helped those with visual impairments. Employees liked it so much, that they asked to extend the pilot through the busy Thanksgiving holiday. Southwest is planning pilot deployments of the entire system in three stations by the end of 2018.

Did the new signs make it easier to navigate the airport?

Yes—96%

No—4%

How useful was the information on the new signs?



Gate Closing

Skip the coffee.
Your gate is closing.