

# NEWS

## The conductor at the station

How digital signage at transport hubs saves the day for travelers

8 May 2026, Tobias Engl



There is one constant in everyday station life that every traveler knows: the moment when the display board reloads. Three seconds in which half the concourse holds its breath. And in the middle of it all is Ms. Hartmann.

Mrs. Hartmann is 64, travels with a hard-shell suitcase in anthracite and a handbag containing at least two pairs of glasses, an apple and a printed reservation. She is on her way to Hamburg for her godchild's wedding. She has planned an hour's changeover time. As we will see in a moment, she has three minutes.

Because her train from Nuremberg has arrived - travelers know the phrase by heart by now - "with an estimated delay of 47 minutes". Ms. Hartmann gets off, looks up and sees what a modern platform display can do when someone takes it seriously: not only the track and time, but also a small, friendly additional line in German, English and French: "Your connection to Hamburg-Altona leaves in 4 minutes from platform 14. East exit, then left."

Anyone who has ever tried to sprint across the central station with a hard-shell suitcase in anthracite knows that four minutes is a sporting figure. But they are, and this is the crucial difference, a *Specification*. Not a hope, not a gut feeling, not the study of a folding map from 2017, but concrete information, updated every second, which gives Ms. Hartmann the most important thing travelers need: Dignity.

So she turns left, the suitcase rolls sullenly behind her, and in the tunnel between the platforms something happens that twenty years ago would have required a conversation with three different railroad officials. Mrs. Hartmann looks at the wall. The wall tells her that platform 14 is still occupied, but that the connection will be held. She doesn't say it in capitals, she doesn't blink, she doesn't shout at anyone. It informs. And that calms a whole tunnel full of travelers who are all walking a little faster than necessary.

Halfway through, Ms. Hartmann passes the area of bakeries, bookshops and - something new since her last trip - a small lounge with seating. Above each store is a discreet screen that doesn't shout "SALE!!!" but soberly tells you whether there's any coffee left, when the pharmacy closes and which trolley indicator is out of order today. It's the difference between a station that wants to sell you something and a station that wants to sell you something *receives*.

An older group of travelers stops in front of an elevator, somewhat lost, at a loss for words in at least two languages. As they pass by, Mrs. Hartmann sees a screen on the elevator wall explaining first in German, then in English, then in Spanish: "Elevator to platform 14. If it is full, we recommend taking the stairs or escalator to the right." The tour group nods in sync, one of them says "Ah, *gracias*" to the wall. It's not the wall's fault, but it has done its job.

When she arrives at platform 14, Ms. Hartmann has fifty seconds to spare. She knows this precisely because a discreet countdown on the edge of the platform tells her. She also knows which carriage her reserved seat is in, because the carriage status indicator is no longer a DIN A2 poster in a glass box, but a screen that synchronizes with the arriving train. Car 26, front section of the train, door opens in front of her. Mrs. Hartmann gets in, sits down, exhales. The apple survives. The reservation wasn't even necessary.

As the train rolls out of the main station, something happens that doesn't appear in any station statistics and yet is the real prize: Ms. Hartmann has made it without having to ask anyone for help. Not because nobody helped. But because the station itself helped - via screens, at the right volume, in the right places, in the language that was needed at the time.

This is precisely the inconspicuous art of digital signage in transportation hubs. It's not about the biggest display panel, not about the brightest LED wall. It's about information in the right place at the right time: Connections, track changes, carriage status, directions, languages, service times, elevator status, in real time, coordinated across all screens. In the background, as quietly as a well-functioning station itself, software orchestrates the whole thing: Maintain content centrally, control thousands of screens synchronously, play out emergency announcements in seconds, vary languages depending on the time of day and target group - without anyone having to walk through the hall with a screwdriver.

At ScreenWay, we honestly just call it our job. Since 1998, we have been building digital signage solutions that don't call for themselves, but rather make the space in which they hang a little smarter. Train stations, airports, mobility hubs of all kinds - always with the idea that the traveler should not notice the screen at the end, but that he gets his connection.

Incidentally, Mrs. Hartmann arrives on time for the wedding. At the champagne reception, she will tell us that the train is no longer what it used to be - a bit unfair, we think. But she will also tell us that someone at the main station has been thinking along with us. She just doesn't know who.

And that too, in a very sober sense, is the best key figure that digital signage can deliver.

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*Find out more about how ScreenWay supports railroad stations, airports and mobility hubs with information, guidance and the travel experience at [screenway.com](https://www.screenway.com).*