

NEWS

From Check-In to Boarding

17 July 2026, Tobias Engl



Mr. Vogel wasn't familiar with the office. It was on the third floor of a building on the outskirts of downtown, behind a glass door that closed more quietly than he had expected. Inside, it was brighter than he'd imagined. Four doors, a hallway, no one to tell him where to go. He stopped, the appointment slip in his hand, and felt that familiar sense of being in the wrong place.

Then he saw the screen. It hung next to the counter, unobtrusive, in a muted green. "Please check in at the front desk," it said, and an arrow pointed to the left. Mr. Vogel went to the left. An employee took his card, typed something, and a number appeared on the screen. His number. 27.

He sat down. Others were waiting in front of him, each with a number, each quiet. The screen showed who was up and who was next. 24. Then nothing for a while. Then 25. Mr. Vogel stopped counting in his head, didn't ask, and didn't get up to look. He just looked at the screen and knew.

It used to be different. Back then, you'd ask at the counter how much longer it would take, and you'd get an answer that no one could keep. Back then, a nurse would call out a name across the room, and everyone would look up. Here, no one called out. The number was enough.

26. Mr. Vogel was already reaching for his jacket when he realized it wasn't his yet. A woman standing by the window got up and left. He leaned back. Meanwhile, there was no commercial playing on the screen, no loop showing distant beaches. What he saw had to do with him - his seat, his path, and soon his door.

Then there it was. 27, and next to it, small, the room: Room 3. No name, nothing the others needed to hear. Mr. Vogel stood up. He knew where to go. Down the hallway, the third door; he had already seen the way before he walked it.

When he went back outside later, he barely noticed the screen anymore. It had done what it was supposed to do and had never been in the way. A good place, he thought, as the glass door closed quietly behind him: one that guides you without you even noticing.

The screen that had guided him through the morning is operated by ScreenWay. Mr. Vogel will never come across that name. Nor does he need to.