

Location

St. Paul, MN

Needs

Meet Transportation Security Agency (TSA) requirements for storage units that can only be opened by the person who rented it

Applications

Physical Access

DigitalPersona Products

U.are.U® Integrator Platinum SDK

Overview

Smarte Carte, Inc., is the leading concessionaire of baggage cart, locker, and stroller services at over 1000 airports, train stations, bus terminals, shopping centers, and entertainment facilities around the world.

Their Smarte Locke rental system has incorporated DigitalPersona's fingerprint recognition technology to fulfill compliance with the FAA and TSA requirements for a "single-user" system.



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Smarte Carte

DigitalPersona Unlocks U.S. Airport Market for Smarte Carte

The terrorist attacks in September 2001 affected every company in the travel industry, but now the leader in locker and cart rental systems is rekindling its U.S. airport locker business by incorporating DigitalPersona's fingerprint authentication technology.

Founded in 1967, Smarte Carte, Inc., is the leading concessionaire of baggage cart, locker, and stroller services at over 1000 airports, train stations, bus terminals, shopping centers, and entertainment facilities around the world. The St. Paul, Minnesota-based company provides not only cart, locker and stroller systems, but is supported by nearly 1000 field employees to maintain and operate those systems.

Locked Out

Smarte Carte's locker rental business at 42 U.S. airports represented some \$4 million in annual sales. The company's Smarte Locke® electronic locker system had featured a central touch-screen rental station where customers chose a locker number, paid the rental fee, and then received a ticket with an unlock code. Customers would simply store their items and close the locker door to secure it, and then use the unlock code to open the locker when they returned.

However, Smarte Carte's U.S. airport locker sales disappeared after 9/11, when the FAA closed all locker facilities at U.S. airports. Even though Smarte Carte's lockers were located inside security checkpoints at U.S. facilities, the immediate FAA concern was that an airport worker could rent a locker, put a weapon in it, and then give the locker's code to a ticketed traveler who could pick it up before boarding a flight.

In order to consider re-opening airport locker systems, the newly formed Transportation Security Agency (TSA) required that the lockers have a "single-user" mechanism by which the locker could only be opened by the person who rented it, thereby eliminating the risk of giving access to the locker to another party.

Finding a Solution

As the dominant locker company in U.S. airports, Smarte Carte went to work with the TSA to qualify a solution that met the agency's requirements. "We looked at bar codes and other identity systems, but they didn't have the same level of security and non-transferability as biometrics," says Keith Amdahl, Smarte Carte's director of engineering.

Having focused on biometric solutions, the company quickly eliminated retinal scanning, voice recognition, and handprints as too costly or difficult to deploy. Amdahl's engineering team evaluated products from more than half a dozen vendors of biometric fingerprint recognition systems, and chose DigitalPersona's U.are.U 4000 sensor. "We chose DigitalPersona's technology because they had the most accurate recognition system and their solution was the easiest to integrate with our existing rental station hardware and software," says Bob Veitch, Systems Designer/Programmer at Smarte Carte.

Over a six-month integration phase, Smarte Carte's team worked to enhance the security of its Smarte Locke locker rental system by incorporating DigitalPersona's fingerprint recognition technology as the access "key" for lockers. "It was a very smooth process," says Veitch. "DigitalPersona's support people were very easy to work with, and the software integration only required us to add a couple of new screens to our touch-screen application."

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Smarte Carte, cont'd

In September 2002, Smarte Carte and the TSA began a five-month test of the new biometric lockers at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. With the new biometric Smarte Locke system, locker customers register their fingerprint during the rental process, and then use their fingerprint, in addition to their unlock code, to re-open the locker when they return.

Re-Opening the Market

The TSA deemed the Minneapolis test a success and relaxed their restriction on lockers at airports in February 2003, giving Smarte Carte the green light to work with local TSA representatives at each airport to begin re-opening its locker facilities.

Since each U.S. airport is governed by the FAA and TSA as well as by local government agencies, it will take time to negotiate deployment and re-opening of the advanced locker rental system across the country. However, adding DigitalPersona's technology to its locker systems has worked very well so far, and has produced a number of ancillary benefits for Smarte Carte.

Expanding Biometric Deployments

The deployment of DigitalPersona's biometric solution also promises to increase Smarte Carte's sales to amusement parks and other high-traffic facilities where managers are concerned with security and where keys or tickets with unlock codes can be a problem. "At waterparks or amusement parks with water rides, for example, it is difficult for locker customers to keep track of a key or paper ticket while they are swimming or on a water ride," says Tammi Phippen, Smarte Carte's manager of marketing communications. "In the past, facilities that have the traditional keyed mechanical lockers have tried to put keys on wristbands, but then the keys were damaging pool linings and water slides. Electronic lockers could provide a ticket with an unlock code or allow the customer to make up and memorize their own code, but tickets could be lost and memorized codes could be forgotten, and then the customer would have to call our customer service to get the door opened. You can't lose a fingerprint, so we've eliminated that issue completely, making the process more convenient for the customer."

The company currently has concessions with Universal Studios, Six Flags, and other large amusement park chains, for example, and is currently testing its upgraded locker equipment with DigitalPersona's U.are.U system at Universal Studios in Florida.

"Our whole business is unattended vending," says Phippen. "DigitalPersona's biometric solutions make the process more secure and convenient, which not only puts us back into an important market, but also offers new benefits for all of our facility customers and end users."



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