

CASE STUDY | Customer service around the clock. Self-Service Terminals enhance customer experience at Austrian Post



Since the end of 2012, the Austrian Post has improved its customer experience by the use of self-service terminals. The user-friendly terminals are developed and manufactured by the Austrian POS-IT-Service provider Inform. Central to the SB-terminals, with touchscreen and cashless payment option, are highly efficient printers from Citizen which print and dispense postage stamps, registered letters, payment receipts and package labels.

The trend towards self-service shopping hasn't gone unnoticed by the Austrian Post. Many customers now want to send or collect letters and parcels outside the traditional opening times, so the organization decided to address this need. "We set ourselves the goal of enabling customers to process letters and packages via self-service," says Peter Obermayr, Head of Branch Support at the Austrian Post.

Providing an excellent customer experience is of paramount importance for Austria's leading logistics and postal service provider. With the introduction of self-service terminals able to print package labels and stamps, providing means for posting letters and parcels in branch stores, Peter Obermayr is confident that Austrian Post has met the needs of its customers.

The Austrian Post's first step was to introduce the "post-drop-off-box," a



concept similar to the packing stations spread across Germany. Users can mail prepaid packages, parcels and registered mail at any time in the post-drop-off-box. 107 stores have now been equipped with these boxes.

The second step consisted of a self-service option for mailing parcels and registered mail and buying stamps. For this purpose, 500 branches jointly operated with banks that have a 24-hour-accessible foyer, offering self-service zones at night.

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"The performance of the self-service terminals significantly optimizes our customer service,"

Peter Obermayr says.

"On busy days, we are now able to reduce waiting times for customers at the counters through self-service. And at times when the stores are closed, customers can buy stamps and send parcels seven days a week around the clock in stores with foyer and self-service facilities."



After short and intensive period of market research, and a bid which included detailed specifications for products, printing procedures, security features, bar code and payment options, **Austrian Post** decided to introduce the POS-IT-service from **Inform**, including Citizen Printers. **Inform**, the engineering company, won out ahead of other bidders because its solution perfectly fulfils the requirements of the **Austrian Post**, ensuring both ease of use and reliability. After a successful test with two pilot systems, the real-time operation started on **November 15, 2012** at the **branch store number 1236 in Vienna**.

The menu navigation of the system, via touch screen, is as easy as using a shopping basket in a web-shop. The customer selects whether he wants to send a parcel or buy stamps on screen. For sending a parcel, the customer has to specify dimensions and destination address, then receives the price information. *“The user interface is intuitive and easy to understand,”* confirms **Peter Obermayr**.

For printing postage stamps, package labels and receipts, each self-service terminal is equipped with four printers from Citizen. The first is a **CL-S621** thermal transfer printer that prints postage stamps. *“The stamps are already on a roll and the printer adds the value, then cuts and ejects the stamp,”* explains **Román Aresté**, Regional Sales Manager at **Citizen**. *“It is important that a printed postage stamp lasts as long as a standard postage stamp. Therefore one relies on thermal transfer,”* he adds.

The second and third printers in use are compact **CL-S400DT** printers. One is used for printing labels for registered mail and the other prints shipping labels. Customers can take the required labels from a dispenser at the self-service terminal.

The fourth printer inside the self-service terminal is the **CT-S651** that prints receipts. *“The receipt printer is a classic POS printer and it is fast and reliable. With its front output, it is ideally suited for the self-service terminal,”* emphasizes **Román Aresté**.

*“We decided on **Citizen** as the supplier of the printers in the self-service terminals, because **Citizen** offers a one-stop solution,”* explains **Peter Schmidt**, Managing Director of **Inform**. *“**Citizen** is one of the few manufacturers that provides both label printers and thermal transfer printers so we can purchase everything from a single source via the distributor **Jarltech**.”*

The self-service terminals accept payment via credit cards, Maestro, debit card and quick or cash card. *“Cash is not an issue for customers,”* states **Peter Obermayr**. *“However, we are excited about payment with NFC and we are going to implement this payment option in future.”*

Customers have embraced the self-service terminals. *“It is similar to the airport,”* says **Peter Obermayr**. *“In the beginning, machines had to be explained but now customers have got used to it. Our self-service terminals are easier and reduce customer waiting times.”*

Staff are similarly positive about the terminals. *“Our staff can focus on giving customers advice,”* reports **Peter Obermayr**. *“The refilling of print media, paper rolls, labels and ribbons is simple and requires little staff training.”*

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Further rolling out of the scheme will progress quickly. Until now **93 units** have been deployed and by the end of 2013 self-service terminals will available at **200 locations** throughout Austria. Based on the success of the project **Peter Obermayr** draws a positive conclusion: *"I would recommend the solution to anyone."*

Featuring printers:

CITIZEN CL-S621



The desktop printer that makes life easy:

- Front exit,
- Variable paper width,
- Fast print out,
- Large media capacity,
- Front Loading Rewinder,
- Low space requirement.

CITIZEN CL-S400DT



Compact energy efficient ticket label printer:

- Front exit,
- Variable paper width,
- Fast print out,
- 2-colour LCD display,
- Versatile media support,
- Low space requirement.

CITIZEN CT-S651



Fast, powerful POS printer with front exit:

- Front exit,
- Fast print out of receipts,
- Flexible cutting,
- Easy notification,
- Paper thickness up to 0.150 mm,
- Low space requirement,
- Exchangeable interface slot.

About Citizen Systems Europe

Citizen Systems Europe operates from locations throughout Europe covering the EMEA region. It offers a wide range of printers for industrial, retail, healthcare and mobile applications specializing in label, barcode, portable, point-of-sale and dye-sublimation photo printers. In each case, the company's products are sold and supported by a network of specialized partners.

Citizen Systems Europe is a wholly owned subsidiary of Citizen Systems Japan and part of the Citizen group of companies, a global organization that manufactures products ranging from its world-famous Eco-Drive watches, calculators, mini-printers and industrial printing systems to machine tools, quartz oscillators, LEDs and other electronic components.

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About Austrian Post / Österreichische Post AG

Austrian Post is the nationwide leading mail and logistics service provider. The main business areas include the delivery of letters, direct mail, print media and packages. The branch network of Austrian Post is one of the largest retail networks in the country and offers its customers throughout Austria-quality products and services in the postal, banking and telecommunications.
www.post.at

About Inform

Inform GmbH, based in Vienna is POS- IT service provider and specialized in POS services since its foundation in 1983. The company manufactures self-service technologies for letter and parcel transport companies and institutions with high self-service requirements and has 14,000 own self-service checkout systems in use. An extensive partner network enables the company to perform services for more than 7,000 customers in 11 countries.
www.Inform.at