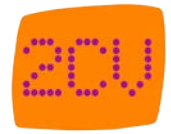# Good Service Trial

Debrief report
June 2016

Background

Following on from research conducted to understand how best to update London Underground's customer service information standards to reduce customer pain points[1], LU have developed new service update messages that they are trialing across 10 stations (Major/Busy & Quiet Stations) on the Metropolitan Line. The trial staff will not make the standard "Good Service" announcements, but will give more local / relevant information. The approach for stations are as follows:

1. At **Major / Busy stations**: cutting all stand alone Good Service messages; retaining visual information on good service; urgent messages remain

2. At **Quiet stations**: removing stand alone Good Service messages; where there are no urgent status updates, replacing the message with a new message, personalised as much as possible to fit the station

Research was required to evaluate the effectiveness of the new announcements and whether there is any negative customer impact and how to mitigate this.

Objectives

Business objective

- To ensure the new service updates are customer-focused, optimise customer satisfaction and contribute towards positive reputational impact for LU and TfL

Research objectives

- To understand the views of staff and customers to the trial messaging. Detailed objectives include exploring:
  - To what extent staff have changed the way they deliver service update messages (this will also be partly evaluated by mystery shopping monitoring)
  - Whether staff have understood the briefing, and the rationale for the changes to the way messages are delivered
  - Whether staff find it feasible (easy and intuitive) to tailor messages, or if guidance or support in helping them decide what to say is needed from LU
  - How customers react to and interpret the new messages
  - Whether customers have noticed any change in message content, language and tone and to what extent they have impacted on:
    - Their journey experiences

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[1] Good Service, 2CV Research, July 2015

- ▪ Their perceptions of the LU brand and TfL's reputation

Approach

8 x 2 hour observation and intercept and sessions split across the trial stations (Major/Busy and Quiet) to:

- Evaluate awareness of the new messaging and to what extent customers have been affected
- Explore staff responses towards the new messages and any challenges faced in implementing them

| Session	Station	Time	Date	Station
1	Major/Busy	Morning peak	10/06/16	Wembley Park
2	Major/Busy	Day non peak	06/06/16	Baker St
3	Major/Busy	Evening peak	06/06/16	King's Cross
4	Major/Busy	Weekend	05/06/16	Uxbridge
5	Quiet	Morning peak	06/06/16	Amersham
6	Quiet	Day non peak	06/06/16	Eastcote
7	Quiet	Evening peak	08/06/16	Chalfont and Latimer
8	Quiet	Weekend	05/06/16	Ickenham
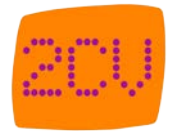
Key headlines

- Responses to the new messaging varies considerably depending on whether staff and customers are based in a major or quiet station
- In major stations the response is consistently positive;
  - Staff are aware of the changes, understand the briefing, support the rationale and feel happy implementing the new messages
  - Customers are unaware of the changes but are positive about the new messages once informed
- In quiet stations the response is more mixed;
  - Staff have lower levels of awareness and are less positive about the changes, equally they are less consistent in implementing them. Personalisation of messages in particular is felt to make staff's jobs more complicated.
  - Customers are unaware of the changes, and have a mixed response to the new messages once informed
- Moving forwards, we suggest keeping the current protocols in major stations and increasing the guidance and support given to staff in quiet stations, particularly around tailoring and personalisation of messages

Findings

Staff response to new messages

- Staff in major and quiet stations differed considerably in their response to the changes in announcements
- **In major stations**, the response to changes from staff was consistent and positive
  - Staff are aware of the changes to announcements
    - We spoke largely to station supervisors and Control Room staff, who tended to be very familiar with their station, the everyday operations involved and the local area
    - They were comfortable with and understood the changes and the rationale for the changes, and felt this had been communicated clearly and simply
  - Staff are implementing the changes
    - They have removed all Good Service Updates, apart from some staff on some very short announcements, where they felt Good
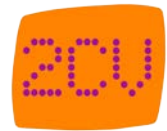
Service Update was needed at the end to balance out the announcement (e.g. at King's Cross)

- *"It makes our jobs so much easier not having to include Good Service – although I do sometimes when we have very short SUI, it's needed then just to balance out the message"* (King's Cross)

○ Staff are strongly in favour of the changes

- Staff felt that reducing the amount of information that they have to communicate is positive and makes their role easier

- Removing Good Service cuts the very long SUI messages (especially at King's Cross, where only have a certain amount of text they can communicate)

- Removing Good Service is also felt to declutter some of the information being pushed to customers, as it cuts some announcements. Although staff noted that there are still too many overlapping announcements and too much customer information

- Makes other staff's jobs easier e.g. platform announcements not being overridden as frequently with less important GS announcements

- Staff feel it is also positive for customers as it will now be easier to listen out for information that is actually important and useful for them

- *"It's good it's gone – it wasn't doing anything"* (Wembley Park)

- *"I don't mind having the Good Service message, but there's no point if there's loads of other stuff we have to communicate all the time, which is there is"* (King's Cross)

- *"It makes things easier without it – you don't have to edit the message, can just get rid of it, and you don't have to try to fit it in"* (King's Cross)

- *"It's a welcome innovation to staff here – it was an annoying background noise and it was cutting over announcers on the platform. Particularly as we've lots of on platform announcements on the Met Line"* (Baker Street)

- **In quiet stations**, the response to changes from staff was more mixed

○ Staff had mixed awareness of changes to announcements

- At quieter stations, we spoke largely to Customer Service Assistants (CSAs), who are on rotation across several stations, they therefore tended to be less familiar with the station they were in, the everyday operations involved there or the local area
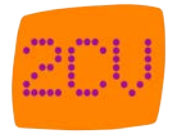
- Even where they were aware there is a trial, they were not necessarily familiar with alternative announcement options

- *"I knew there was a trial going on and I thought I'd seen an email, but I've never seen these message options before... oh look! I recognise this 'welcome' one as it's on rotation at this station!"* (Eastcote)

○ Staff are inconsistent in implementing the changes, even where they are aware of them

- Staff were less comfortable with the changes – although they understood the rationale when they read it, and they understood the removal of 'Good Service' messages, the personalisation of messages was less clear and not something they were confident in doing

- Staff often feel uncomfortable using the PA system and will simply use the 3-4 announcements that have already been pre-recorded and put on a cycle by other members of staff on previous shifts before them

- Staff often don't feel confident that they know the local area well enough to create their own announcements (as they are rotating between stations)

- Some staff find it hard to 'get out of the habit' of what they were doing previously e.g. at Amersham, are in the habit of tailoring SUI, so sometimes tailor it, and sometimes don't

- *"Sometimes I consciously stick to the old announcement if my supervisor is listening as I want to look like I'm doing my job properly!"* (Amersham)

○ Staff have a mixed response to the changes

- Some staff felt that the Good Service announcements were very relevant particularly due to lack of other sources of SUI, and so should not be removed e.g. at Eastcote

- Other staff felt that removal of Good Service announcements was positive, although they weren't convinced they should be replaced with 'less relevant' announcements such as 'Contactless'

- At stations such as Amersham where they only have 30 seconds to make an announcement removing unnecessary information such as Good Service messages was perceived positively

- Some staff felt that the tailoring of messages makes their job harder and more complicated
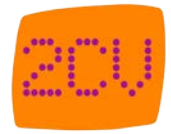
- Quite a few of the staff we spoke to did not find it feasible (easy and intuitive) to tailor messages, as they do not have enough knowledge of the PA system or the local area (due to moving between stations so often)

- Although they felt the briefing was straightforward, they wanted more guidance and support in helping them decide what to say and the process through which to say it and when – particularly for those not familiar with the local area

- *"I think it makes our jobs more complicated – we move stations all the time, so we don't have time to learn how to do this in each station, and we don't know the information for the local area"* (Eastcote)

Staff case study – Chalfont and Latimer

- Only one member of staff on duty, who had no idea about the trial, and seemed a bit bashful. He even called his colleague at the next station to see if she knew anything and she said she'd seen an email to say there would be a trial, but didn't know it was happening.

- He has just been using the messages sent to them each month and they are on an auto cue if he decides to switch them on (plays a cycle of messages) - he tried to show them to me and said "I'm not very good at this, sorry". He doesn't seem that engaged with announcements and is happy with the messages that play as part of this cycle (included contactless, good service etc)

- Whilst there, I only heard three announcements, two of which were "there's a good service on all lines"!

Staff case study – Amersham

- One member of staff, who wasn't aware of proposed change but is 'all for it', 'couldn't agree more'

- Thinks there is far too much extraneous information being presented to customers and that they are getting data fatigue. Some customers have fed this back to him. Also thinks that customers don't want/need to hear LU service updates out in Amersham – it's too far out from central London so not relevant
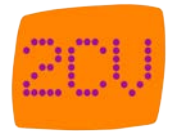
Staff case study – Ickenham

- The member of staff who was supervising wasn't aware of the new service announcements and they didn't appear to have been implemented at the station.

- There was a pre-recorded service announcement that played every 10 minutes or so, which said 'Customer Service update: apart from scheduled engineering works, there is a good service on all other LU lines'.

- He thinks that the change would be difficult to implement because staff are not regularly rota-ed at one station which means information isn't always passed on. However, he thinks it's a good idea as GSU aren't always accurate and customers get annoyed

Customer response to new messages

- None of the customers we spoke to had any awareness of changes to messages in any of the stations, or felt very strongly either way about new messages

- However when probed, customers in major and quieter stations had some different responses to the new messages

- **In major stations,** the overall response from customers was that removal of Good Service messages was positive, as they were not providing urgent information and there was already a lot of other, more important information that customers needed to take in e.g. delays

    o *"Getting rid of Good Service is much better – you don't want to hear that there's a good service as it's not always true. I'm much more inclined to listen if it's just relevant info – cut out all the tosh and background noise"* (Uxbridge)

    o *"You only need to hear when it's bad"* (King's Cross)

    o *"I tend to tune out of status updates as it's not always clear/accurate. Thinks it's a good idea to 'cut the waffle'… the impact would be that customers would listen more to announcements as they wouldn't have irrelevant information"* (Wembley Park)

    o *"I hadn't really noticed they'd stopped to be honest. They should only say something when there's something to say. I'll assume all's good until I hear otherwise"* (Baker Street)
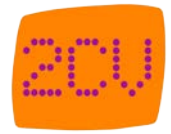
- **In quiet stations,** customers had a more mixed reaction; some felt the removal of the Good Service message was inconsequential, however others felt that it was the most important 'non-urgent' message available in quieter stations and should not be removed
    - As seen in previous research - as quieter stations often have less visible SUI, customers rely more heavily on the audio SUI, including Good Service announcements [2]
    - *"You should keep that Good Service message every 10 minutes, as that is the information you actually want – not that other stuff about events and so on"* (Eastcote)
    - *"It would be ok if they cut Good Service updates, as it doesn't make much difference, although it can be reassuring"* (Ickenham)
- Customers at quiet stations felt that the Good Service message and 'Positive general messaging' were most useful and positive, whereas the other 'tailored' messages were deemed relatively inconsequential (although better than nothing)
    - **Good Service** is the preferred message as it deemed the most important and useful
    - **General positive messaging** - welcome messaging is appreciated for making the station more warm and inviting and TfL for feeling caring
    - **Route planning and staff availability** was deemed relatively caring, if relevant to the customer
    - **Events and crowd flow messaging** were deemed slightly annoying by some customers but better than nothing
    - Contactless messaging was considered quite annoying and without purpose

Moving forwards

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[2] Good Service, 2CV Research, July 2015
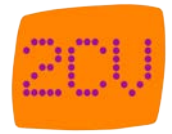
- **In the major/busy stations**
  - Keep new messaging
  - Keep current briefing documents

- **In the quiet stations**
  - Start sending reminders of the changes, to help staff break old habits, and to ensure staff who are moving between stations see them
  - Start providing more guidance and support on how to tailor messages e.g. examples for each station
  - Start providing more guidance and support on how to use the PA systems in each station and how to alternate messages
  - Start implementing more 'general positive messaging' in quiet stations, as this has a clear positive impact