

**WHERE TOURISM BRAND  
DELIVERY TAKES OFF: LISTENING  
TO THE LEADERS**

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25.2048° N, 55.2708° E

For just one single set of coordinates on the map, the numbers they represent are simply staggering. Over 190,000 people travelling in, out and through on over 980 flights every single day. In quick chase, over 156,000 pieces of luggage carried, feeding into three terminals, supported by a workforce of over 90,000 working to ensure safe, swift passage of over 70 million customers flying in from over 270 destinations on over 140 airlines yielding a total of over 357,339 aircraft movements in 2014 all brought together by one code: DXB.

Year on year, the numbers continue to rise, dizzyingly: passengers, cargo, global ranking, investment, records. At present, the number of people travelling through this single point of the aviation globe is 38 times the actual number of people that live in its location. And this number is only set to rise.

Remarkably, the only number showing no sign of increase is the pulse of the man at the centre of it all, the CEO of DXB, Paul Griffiths.

A man of exceptional talent, tenacity, and vision, Griffiths has been at the helm of DXB, and Dubai Airports Corporation per se, since 2007. An artist in the fields of aviation and music, with a mind and nervous system wired for high precision and performance, he becomes animated in an almost childlike manner when speaking of DXB. Listening to him speak of the make up his airport world, it can seem as though he is sharing details about a huge, personal toy collection, each beautiful piece a source of pride and delight. One can be forgiven for forgetting that the descriptions of aircraft and supporting infrastructure are in fact life size, life changing pieces of a masterplan that fuels the future development and wellbeing of Dubai, and the region.

Having become the number one airport worldwide for passenger traffic, and a new global hub, DXB has established itself as a force reshaping the air traffic map of globalization. Travel and trade, today and in the future, have DXB as part of their DNA.

### SERVICING SKY-HIGH PERFORMANCE

As impressive and inspiring as DXB may be (as is its sibling DWC), for Griffiths it's never been about the infrastructure – it's about the impact. As stated by Griffiths:

*“It's easy to look at Dubai International and just see all of the airline activity and all that takes places within the concourses. What is often overlooked is that Dubai International is the employer of over 19% of the workforce in Dubai. We have over 90,000 people working at the airport every day from an array of cultures and nationalities. Today, Dubai International makes a contribution of over \$22 Billion to the economy of Dubai.”*

Clearly, airport operations are a vital part of the way in which the Emirate views its greater growth in the future. Continuous investment is, therefore, a growth imperative. This can become a unique challenge, however, investment into capacity building - both new builds and improvements of existing infrastructure - must take place while trying to maintain business as usual.

Never has this been more tensely experienced that in 2014 when an 80-day runway closure period was required for upgrades essential to increasing capacity as the airport looks to welcoming over 103 million passengers per annum by 2020, the year of Dubai's hosting of EXPO. The runway works were part of a greater \$7.8 billion SP2020 masterplan, and had the entire DXB workforce focused on ensuring that passengers and performance did not feel any of DXB's growing pains. With a 90,000 team of DXB employees clear of the essential temporary reengineering of passenger and cargo movements, and acutely aware of their respective responsibilities within the 80 day period, be they direct or indirect, DXB was on alert. Under-delivery of the airport experience was not an option, neither were delays in runway works.

As stated by Griffiths:

*“Our planning and preparations over the past year not only ensured that the impact on passengers during the 80-day period was minimal but that we were able to resume full operations and accommodate increased traffic at the end of the programme without a hitch,”*

Confident in DXB’s ability to deliver on time, on budget, and with a team on the ready for whatever challenges may occur across the passenger and aircraft experience, DXB turned their runway challenge reality into a second series of the dramatic reality TV series, *“Ultimate Airport Dubai”*.

It was first produced in 2013 and gave viewers a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes look across all areas of landside and airside operations at DXB. Offering unprecedented access to audiences, the programme went, often dangerously, deep within the inner workings of the airport, revealing moments of both exceptional performance, and exceptional panic. In the first series, the building and opening of the new passenger terminal was the source of high exposure and drama. Rarely has the world been given such a close look behind the velvet curtain of Dubai’s great vision and mammoth efforts to deliver.

In Season 2 of the series, the anticipation, inspiration and often anxiety of Dubai International is captured, with particular focus on the runway closures and their resulting impact. Not to mention, the real risks of delay.

### THE REALITY OF LIVING THE BRAND

For Griffiths, bringing the cameras backstage was all part of sharing insights into what DXB, and Brand Dubai, represent – courageous vision brought to life through unprecedented commitment to past, present, people and place. Interestingly, the cost of the *“Ultimate Airport Dubai”* production was not viewed to be about commerce – it was all about reputation.

In the same spirit, Griffiths views DXB as not just a reflection of one of the world’s finest airports, but of Brand Dubai and its all-important first and last impressions. These impressions must transcend excellence in airport infrastructure, as well as known stereotypes of destination Dubai.

Reason being, in addition to DXB being a carefully engineered fusion of airport and aircraft, it is also carefully curated as a coming together of Dubai’s modernity, rich history, and timeless culture.

*“What people expect to find is glitz and glamour, but actually what we work to showcase is the cultural values that are true to the UAE. We have brought elements of local colour, celebration and atmosphere into Dubai International to embody the culture of hospitality of the UAE. We try to keep a high level of human content in a facility trying to achieve maximum operating efficiency. This makes for a much more enjoyable airport experience, whether passengers are arriving into Dubai, departing or transferring through.”*

On top of this all, DXB, through its close relationship with DTCM (Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing), acts as a stage for in-destination marketing initiatives that have been developed to further enhance the visit of those passengers arriving into Dubai, and entice those travelling through to stay and play next time.

All in all, on-screen or on the ground, DXB’s role is that of a vital force for growth of the Emirate’s profile, productivity, and praise-worthy performance. For Griffiths, the CEO of DXB, the real potential of Dubai International is only just taking off. Stay tuned.