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Q&A: London City Airport ICT director, Jason Bamforth

Airport IT chief swings the axe on underperforming IT outsourcer

Written by [Martin Courtney](#) [Computing](#), 25 Jan 2010



Bamforth: It was a bit of a mess when I got here

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In 2006, **London City Airport** (LCA) outsourced its IT operations to **SITA**, a global provider specialising in contracts to the air transport industry in a seven-year deal. That contract was cut short last year however, when newly appointed ICT director Jason Bamforth was called in to shake things up.

Bamforth promptly awarded a new five-year managed desktop and datacentre services contract to systems integrator **SCC** that incorporates standardised Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) support, and PC infrastructure maintenance including refreshes, upgrades and a scheduled migration from Windows XP to Windows 7.

Computing: Why were you brought in?

Bamforth: I was brought in to smooth things out at the airport and get IT back on track after years of bad management and underinvestment. It was a bit of a state when I got here, there were no ITIL measures and it was a mess.

We were about two years into an outsourcing contract but the incumbent [SITA] was not performing, and we exited that contract on a performance basis after we found it to be in breach, and came to an agreement.

It was quite apparent from the first day that [there were] failings within this company and I spent six months working with it to try and resolve these issues, but it could not meet my targets within the timeframe required.

C: Have you been able to identify clear cost savings from the SCC deal?

B: Absolutely and across the board. We have achieved built-in, annual cost savings of more than 10 per cent as well as a much improved service. We started with five onsite engineers from the previous outsourcer, for example, and we got that down to two which saved us £48,000 within the first six months.

Now we are moving on to some of the more technology-based cost savings. We have already virtualised our server estate, and are pushing forward with a desktop refresh where the purchasing power of SCC provides some really good deals with hardware manufacturers like HP, and [licensing deals] with Microsoft that will push through in the next six months or so.

C: What other upgrades have you implemented during your two-year tenure?

B: We have also set down a strategy to move to a virtual desktop environment, though not for every user – you will never get rid of power or laptop users, but lots can move to virtual desktops. We are also looking to move more core back-office functions, like Exchange and SharePoint, out into the SCC cloud which will reduce our administration costs because we can pay [for licensing] on a per-terabyte or per-user basis.

C: Are you confident you will get the right level of in-house support from an outsourced contract?

B: We have two onsite engineers that work from 8am until 6pm, but help is 24/7 and moves out to Romania between 7pm and 7am on a rota pattern, so we always have cover. The airport does shut down overnight because of environmental noise restrictions and for 24 hours from Saturday to Sunday lunchtime.

C: Did you need to update your LAN/WAN infrastructure to support ongoing operations?

B: We used to have BT looking after our networks but an investigation showed they were a mess – it [the network] was wildly configured and totally unstable. So we ended the BT contract and brought in Nortel specialist Connect Communications which has flattened the configuration and the network has been a lot more stable since.

Phase one was to get the [network] infrastructure right by replacing 10-year-old switches, all the copper with fibre and building resiliency into a separate production virtual local area networks (VLANs), one for the airport operational database (AODB) and another for the back office, PCs and servers. Another network to support IP-based CCTV is about to be implemented.

C: What other IT upgrades are currently planned for LCA?

B: Most of them have been hit already: barring updates the server virtualisation project is pretty much done; the copper, fibre and switching infrastructure to support the LAN is in place, with the CCTV network project well under way, and we are updating the AODB software at the moment. So by the middle of the year, all projects will be complete. We are also looking to roll out mobile devices for staff in baggage handling which should help speed up aircraft turnaround.

C: Doesn't that make you redundant?

B: It does put you out of a role. I was brought in for a two-year contract but I would like to see everything settled down and make sure that LCA has a good working relationship with SCC and the other partners I have brought in.