

# A critical approach

Athens International Airport (AIA) is in the process of implementing a centralised information technology and telecommunications infrastructure. *Future Airport* talks to **Leonidas Daravelis**, director of IT, AIA, about the project and the benefits it will have for the airport and its passengers.

## **Future Airport: What is the ultimate goal for your IT and communications strategy at the airport?**

Leonidas Daravelis: The information technology and telecommunications business unit of AIA has a twin role in



AIA's IT and telecommunications business unit has a twin role.

its activities. It acts as a support unit, which is the expected role of a corporate IT, and as a business unit, which is not so common in airport IT. Consequently, our primary strategic goal is to sustain the high availability of critical airport systems and infrastructure, while the next goal is to export our knowledge/experience in the IT&T aviation market, create new business lines and new sources of revenues inside and outside airport premises.

“ Our primary strategic goal is to sustain the high availability of critical airport systems and infrastructure. ”

## **What are the most important tasks when integrating IT and communications into a centralised operations facility?**

It's all about people, processes and assets. Towards that end, we need common processes to cover the broad spectrum of IT, from customer care and service delivery to

## **Leonidas Daravelis**

Leonidas Daravelis is director of the IT and telecommunications business unit at Athens International Airport. He has over 20 years' experience in IT and telecommunications with leading Greek companies. He joined AIA in 1998, actively participated in the IT&T project management and contributed to the successful airport opening in March 2001.



project management and service-oriented architecture. As technology between IT and telecommunications is converged with high-speed, it is reasonable for AIA's IT business unit to embed a centralised infrastructure because this will enhance operational excellence and simultaneously create considerable cost savings. ▶

We also need one single entity for IT and telecommunications capable of taking the right decisions under a common concept. Finally, as technology progresses, we need one ruling core infrastructure of networks and applications.

deployment of new systems and services becomes easier. In turn, we observe enhanced use of all resources. People end up speaking the same language and understanding the same things.

we will be able to sustain operational excellence and provide information mobility. Benefits will include cost rationalisation, faster deployments on new systems and technology, as well as better control of technology, avoiding "island" development of stand-alone applications. Instead, a common development culture is applied with common application reflexes.

Passengers will see an improvement in their travelling experience, a faster dispatch of travelling tasks and will observe the same technological "look and feel". We can provide them with ease of communications and connectivity and lower costs.

“The benefits of a common infrastructure are simplified architecture, better and more resilient deployment and cost efficiency.”

**Why do you feel that a centralised facility for IT and communications is the right choice for the airport?**

Technologies are merging very quickly and the development of sophisticated integrated communications technology is imminent. The benefits of a common infrastructure are simplified architecture, better and more resilient deployment and cost efficiency. The management and administration is enhanced and

We see our costs rationalised through integration of technologies, but more importantly, a lot of synergies emerge between telecommunication and information technology leading to cost rationalisation and the creation of a common IT culture and mindset.

**Once this is achieved, what will be the biggest benefits for the airport and passengers?**

For the airport, this will mean that

**Is it possible to base the centralised operations facility on an existing infrastructure, or will you have to build a new systems architecture from scratch?**

We were lucky enough to start as a greenfield (a brand new airport)



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and proactive enough to implement a common infrastructure concept since the airport's construction period. This is a much difficult scenario for an existing airport that is gradually expanding (for example, building a new terminal or a cargo building). In this case, the legacy and the ageing is carried over and represents considerable obstacles in the unification of infrastructure and services.

#### **How long will the integration project take?**

A minimum of nine months.

#### **Who will be involved in planning and delivering the project? Will it be an internal effort, or will external advisors and vendors be heavily involved?**

The internal stakeholders must believe and support this project, which needs a strong dedication from the top management. In most cases, external assistance is required since the daily operations cannot be set at a second priority. Although the architecture must be vendor-free, the actual implementation will require the heavy involvement of the selected equipment vendors.

#### **Do you see other airports taking a similar approach to IT and communications? If so, which airports do you feel have achieved the best results?**

We have presented our case in many international airport/aviation conferences. There is strong interest in many of our experiences and achievements. However, big integration attempts have been realised mainly in brand new airports or large airports that have the budget and personnel to implement these kinds of projects. ■



There will be a faster dispatch of travelling tasks at AIA.



Passengers will see an improvement in their travelling experience.



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