

## Columbus Airport IT group accelerates development projects, streamlines processes

*The Columbus Regional Airport Authority leverages Platform Lab to expedite development projects and improve overall quality*



Aaron Hibbard, senior infrastructure engineer at the Columbus Regional Airport Authority (CRAA) has his hands full. CRAA oversees the operations of Port Columbus International Airport, Rickenbacker Airport and Bolton Field Airport. Managing the IT infrastructure for these three airports, responsible collectively for \$2.7 billion in annual economic activity and 30,000 Central Ohio jobs, is akin to managing a small city. From a technology aspect, the infrastructure is segmented

into four separate production environments that manage public safety, utilities management, environmental protection concerns and parking management systems. Additionally, CRAA utilizes a pre-production environment for integration testing of all systems. Of course, this is expected from one of the fastest growing international airports in the Midwest.

As CRAA continues to grow and evolve, numerous new IT projects place demands on their technology capabilities. At the beginning of 2010, CRAA was faced with the issue of having more projects in the queue than their infrastructure allowed. Hibbard did not worry though, as he has the support of Platform Lab, the nation's only nonprofit IT test lab. Platform Lab provides the on-demand infrastructure Hibbard's team uses to support CRAA's development and validation efforts.

"Working with Platform Lab we are able to move development projects forward more quickly while minimizing risk without implementing new hardware," Hibbard said. With close to 90 servers deployed in Platform Lab's private cloud, minimizing risk to the system is the top priority but saving time, money and maintenance costs



in hardware and bandwidth runs a close second.

Hibbard came to Platform Lab the same way most members of the Central-Ohio IT community make business connections: word of mouth.

“Somebody knew somebody who knew Steve,” Hibbard said referencing Steve Gruetter, Platform Lab’s director. TechColumbus and the Ohio Supercomputer Center founded Platform Lab in 2001. Since that time, Platform Lab has become a leading provider of custom IT environments for projects and testing. While their leading line of business is website load testing, many firms find a variety of ways to utilize this non-profit resource.

Platform Lab is able to facilitate the innovation happening every day at organizations such as the CRAA. “We use Platform Lab a little differently than many others do. We are not doing load testing. We are doing software and preproduction development testing,” Hibbard explained. “We still maintain and upgrade the servers so for us Platform Lab is more like a leased data center.” CRAA does not need to have the physical infrastructure in-house to support its development volume; Platform Lab provides a real-time solution to support CRAA on a project-by-project or day-to-day basis.



Platform Lab accelerates his development efforts as it alleviates his development woes. “Platform Lab is easy to work with. They know our environment by heart. I don’t have to explain it every time. It’s painless, that’s the big thing,” Hibbard said. Gruetter adds, “As Port Columbus is often the first representation of central Ohio to the national business and technology communities, we are proud that CRAA takes the time and effort to validate their solutions at Platform Lab. As a member of this community I am thankful that CRAA cares about quality and process to the degree that they do.”