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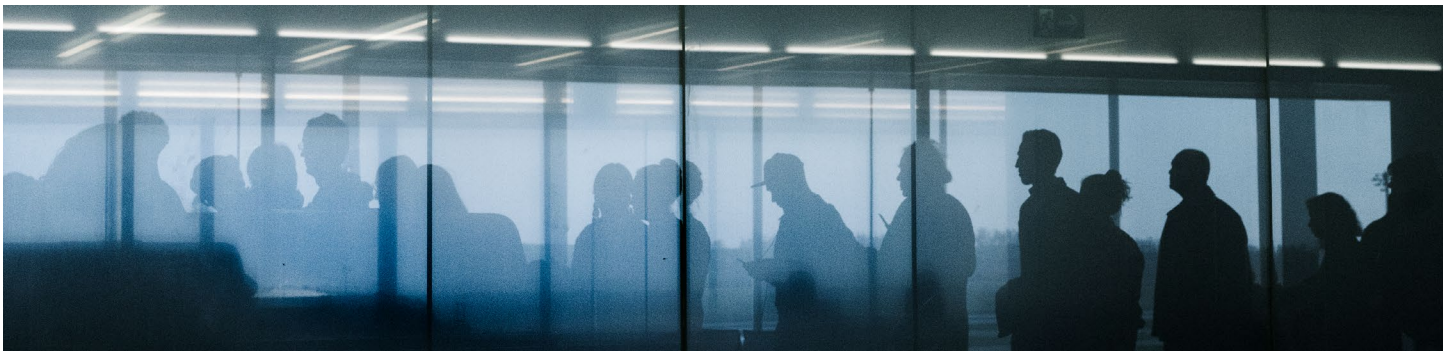
How Co-managed IT Services Solve Airport IT Complexity and Cybersecurity Challenges

A New Tech Management Model for Airports

Today's airports and marine ports are confronting two industry-altering forces. One is a radically reshaped technology landscape driven by sophisticated "bad actors" that include AI, robotics, 5G and edge computing, and the Internet of Things. A second force is a quickly evolving consumer ecosystem propelled by demand for radical personalized experiences, frictionless journeys, omni-channel engagement, sustainability and wellness, localization, and aesthetic appeal. Together, these forces are precipitating a seismic shift in the management of port operational performance and efficiency.



Airports and marine ports operate highly complex technology systems around the clock, coordinating hundreds or thousands of tasks daily for travelers, staff and vendors. Flawless technology performance as well as personalized conveniences are baseline expectations. Customers want the seamless performance and connectivity they are used to in their everyday lives as they travel — and airports, airlines and retailers want them to have it. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officials need scanners and databases to be able to inspect passengers and bags flawlessly, airliners need to receive gate assignments instantly, baggage handlers must coordinate luggage delivery immediately, and travelers have to check in for their flights and get flight updates without missing a beat.

At the same time, the aviation industry is undergoing a profound transformation with a new focus on growing revenue and improving convenience amid an increasingly consumer landscape of hyper-personalized services.

Technology is the driver of this transformation and is reshaping the traveler experience with an array of new offerings that are transforming airports from transit hubs to dynamic commercial and service-oriented destinations, with more and more enhanced options for check-in, flight update status monitoring, travel planning, in-airport shopping and other customized features.

But in this fast-moving and highly connected environment, one risk is paramount: The challenges of airports' IT complexity and cyber risk are growing and evolving every day.

Simply put, one IT malfunction or security breach now has the potential for devastating and cascading effects across an entire airport.

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A New Technology Management Model: Co-managed Services Partnerships

The two challenges of rising demand for higher technology performance and more innovative personal conveniences have challenged many airports to be able to handle their technology environment independently. With rising IT infrastructure costs, complex airport systems and increased cybersecurity risks, airports need skilled specialists who are costly and often only needed part-time. A new technology model is helping airports address these issues while lowering costs, improving efficiency and performance, as well as enhancing experiences for customers, employees and vendors.

Co-managed IT services partnerships bring together both in-house and outside teams of expert talent, a track record of industry experience, and state-of-the-art technology to allow airports to succeed in a new world of IT complexity and cyberthreat. To guide airports in moving to this model, technology and advisory solutions firm MGT has developed a custom-tailored suite of co-managed services specifically for airports. These offerings include partnerships for cybersecurity, network infrastructure, communications, and cloud and data centers at just the right time.

This white paper explains the origin of the demands driving co-managed services partnerships today, examines the capabilities that managed services providers now offer airports and aviation authorities through partnerships, and covers the range of co-managed services available through a partnership with MGT Managed Solutions.

A New Wave of Emerging Airport Technology Challenges

Soaring costs, deepening complexity, and rising security risks have coalesced to create a profoundly transformed technology landscape of new and urgent challenges for airports.

Among the most serious risks and needs that airports and aviation authorities are facing:

- **Cyber Risk -** Cyberattacks on airport IT can cause widespread disruption and present extremely appealing opportunities to bad actors. Ransomware attacks have the potential to halt operations, delay passenger and baggage screening, and cause public panic, increasing the likelihood of ransom payments being made and media attention being garnered. Data breaches can expose sensitive flight and operational information as well as traveler details. And disruptions to critical infrastructure at airports can cause chaos with schedules and delay travelers. For these reasons and more, ironclad cybersecurity is more crucial than ever for airports.

- **Multiple Endpoints -** Airports rely heavily on third-party vendors, from retail tenants to ground handlers, who often require network access. Having strict controls and visibility into these access points is crucial for preventing third-party relationships from becoming backdoor vulnerabilities, but many airports still operate with limited cybersecurity staff and technology controls.

- **Regulatory Compliance -** Compliance with the latest Transportation Security Administration (TSA) requirements is imperative for ensuring safety and security, but TSA requirements are often a source of confusion that leave many airports struggling to keep up with the intricacies of security protocols and frequent updates. Among the TSA's stringent technology requirements are policies and procedures that cover these scenarios: preventing unauthorized access to critical cyber systems; ensuring operational systems can continue to operate safely even if an IT system is compromised; and applying regular security patches and updates to reduce the risk of exploitation of unpatched systems. Correct compliance with the these technology regulations increasingly requires specialized expertise and experience.

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- **Technology Expertise -** The aviation industry's workforce and talent needs are changing fast, driven by new technology, changing demographics and evolving competition. Demand for expertise in systems integration, cybersecurity and data analytics is a new priority as the industry adopts new technologies. The industry needs to re-wire its talent with new skills that align with the demands of a tech-driven future.

- **Resource Constraints -** As quasi-government entities, many airports operate with limited resources, making it challenging to implement comprehensive cybersecurity measures. Staffing constraints further complicate their security posture, forcing them to restrict efforts across landside and airside assets. Engaging an outside team to support can solve both expertise and staffing concerns.

- **New Revenue Streams -** With airplane costs rising and competition increasing, airports and airlines are looking to develop new revenue streams to offset higher costs and lessen reliance on traditional income sources. Potential new revenue sources include unlocking timely flight deals and upgrades, expanding in-airport retail opportunities, and using data-driven insights to shape more personalized and targeted consumer offers. All of these require a robust, versatile, secure technology core to power this reinvention and integrate the power of cloud, data and AI to create new capabilities and growth opportunities.

- **Enhanced Traveler Experience -** Airports and airlines are also intensifying their focus on deploying technology, including AI, AR and VR, robotics and automation, to transform back-end operations and enhance the entire passenger experience at airports. These new technologies are being harnessed to enable new methods for flight check-in, flight searching and flight booking, as well as new ways to shop and get customer service. Airport IT infrastructure will serve as the foundational engine for this new traveler experience, and this technology requires a new level of power, versatility and security.

With the continuing rise in cost, complexity and risk of IT management being driven by these challenges, the move to a co-managed IT service partnership model has become increasingly practical. Managed service providers (MSPs) bring experts with a range of specialized expertise and leading-edge technology to proactively position an airport for long-term cost-efficiency and superior performance.

How Co-managed Services Partnerships Can Transform Cost-Efficiency and Performance

By outsourcing IT management and partnering with MSPs, airports and aviation authorities can realize a number of benefits, including higher cost savings, efficiency and security. Ultimately, these organizations can refocus on their core activities while ensuring their IT infrastructure is in expert hands.

Moreover, with the rise of AI and other advanced technologies and the demand for skill in deploying them, and the increasing intricacy of technology requirements for regulatory compliance and the demand for specialization of them, MSPs are continuing to bring more value to their IT services using ever-evolving processes and tools.

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Among some of the top-line advantages that co-managed services partnerships can deliver to airports:

- **24/7/365 Cybersecurity Coverage -** In today's digital landscape, cybersecurity is paramount. Cyberattacks are becoming increasingly sophisticated, and cybersecurity has moved from a moderate need to a top priority. An MSP's intricate cybersecurity and regulatory compliance knowledge are invaluable tools for mitigating an airport's risk. As the go-to experts in charge of an organization's managed IT support, MSPs stay up to date on the latest information, technologies, and processes to keep computer systems working efficiently and successfully, 24/7/365.
- **Reduced IT Cost -** Maintaining an in-house IT department is not only expensive, but hiring talent is difficult because of the wage gap between what airports are able to pay IT professionals versus what the private sector can offer.
- **Expert Knowledge -** Professionals stay up to date with the latest technological advancements and possess in-depth expertise in areas like the latest network technologies, industry-standard cybersecurity policies and industry compliance best practices.
- **Regulatory Compliance -** MSPs are experts in understanding the complexities of airport regulatory compliance, stay informed about the latest regulations, and can work with airports to implement the necessary steps to maintain compliance.
- **Talent Gap Bridge -** A third-party MSP can be an attractive, low-cost solution to bridge a talent gap.
- **Greater Reliability -** A third-party MSP can make services more dependable and help reduce system disruptions and downtime.
- **Higher Productivity -** Internal airport staff can be relieved from routine tasks that are outside of their areas of responsibility or expertise.
- **Scalability -** MSPs can allow airports to reap the benefits of IT support at a much lower cost than creating a comparable internal team.

The MGT Difference

With more than 50 years of experience, MGT is an expert and trusted partner in government technology and advisory services that can enable airports and aviation authorities to make the move to an MSP technology model with confidence.

MGT Managed Solutions is a suite specifically tailored to meet the IT technology demands of today's airports:

- Services are supported by the firm's 50-year-plus track record of working with hundreds of government organizations and commercial clients.
- The Managed Solutions team includes more than 350 seasoned engineers with firsthand experience in partnering with some of the largest government agencies and businesses in the U.S.
- MGT's suite of managed services is built on four core components that include cybersecurity, network infrastructure, communication, and cloud and data center solutions.

Be M-powered

MGT's Managed Solutions allow airports and aviation authorities to become "M-powered" by lowering IT costs, simplifying IT complexity and fortifying cybersecurity.

Learn more by visiting MGT's Managed Solutions for airports webpage, exploring our latest case studies below or by contacting us.

Case Studies

- Case Study: How the First U.S. State-Owned Airport is Proactively Defending Against Cyberattacks
- Boosting Maritime Cybersecurity and Compliance at U.S. Ports
- Enhancing Passenger Experience and Sustainability at Houston Airports
- Case Study: MGT Partners with Transportation Corridor Agencies to Protect Critical Infrastructure

For more information, visit **MGT.us** Managed Services

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