



The Benefits of Cloud Computing for an Airport Operator

By Tom Strange, SDG President & CEO

There is certainly a lot of talk about “cloud computing” these days. I was asked to speak about cloud computing at the recent *Airports Council International North America Business Information Technologies* conference in Phoenix in May. Based on the positive response, I thought it would make a good topic for this issue of the newsletter.

So what is it anyway? In a nutshell, cloud computing is a way for a user to have on-demand network (Internet) access to a shared pool of computing resources (servers, storage, applications, etc.) that can be rapidly provided with minimal management effort. Some of the more common examples of cloud computing are provided by companies such as Salesforce.com, Google Applications, etc.

Our own CapitalVision® solution is a cloud based solution. Our airport clients only need a computer with a browser and access to the Internet. The CapitalVision solution and the related data is actually stored and managed on servers in a secure data center. As additional resources are required, they are made available with little or no involvement from the airport.

Regardless of the solution provided, the benefits of cloud computing to the airport operator are numerous. The major advantages are lower initial capital costs, lower lifecycle costs, and a lower environmental impact. From a capital cost perspective, with many cloud solutions, the solution provider provides all of the elements needed to operate the solution. The hardware, the operating system, and the database environment are all provided. The airport does not have to purchase any of those items and bear the capital cost of procuring hardware and obtaining software licenses.

From an operating cost perspective, the airport does not have to bear the expense of performing the daily administration of the servers, applying software patches, keeping up with support and maintenance contracts from various vendors. All of these functions are performed by the solution provider eliminating the need for extra staff at the airport with those specific technical skills and capabilities. Another major benefit of cloud based solutions is that the airport only has to purchase the amount that it needs for as long as it needs it. In the case of the SDG CapitalVision solution, an airport may require a greater number of users during a heavy construction period, and can then reduce the number of users as a program moves into the closeout phase.

Finally, from an environmental perspective, because cloud based solutions typically use pooled hardware resources; there is less energy consumption which helps reduce carbon emissions. Additionally, through the use of shared resources, e-waste can be reduced by a substantial margin.

Whether the needed applications are traditional business applications and email or more robust solutions such as CapitalVision, the reliability, scalability, and economic factors certainly make cloud computing a very strong consideration.