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# Off to a flying start

Delivering a multi-million-pound contract is always going to be a challenge. In a frank and honest conversation Executive Director for IT and Networks, Joe Hemming shares how those challenges are redefining the bond between client and customer.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority, domestic terminal passenger traffic in June this year exceeded 1.5 million passengers for the London area airports alone.

Combine that with the figures from all remaining UK airports and the total amounts to a staggering 3.8 million passengers recorded as travelling the UK's domestic airspace throughout the month of June.

There's no doubt about it, the UK's aviation industry is big business. Whether we're frequent flyers who travel the UK on those essential business trips, or if we're jetting off on a long-overdue break for rest and recreation, rarely do we stop to ponder how the business of maintaining the UK's air traffic is conducted.

In 2017, Capita was awarded a contract by National Air Traffic Services (NATS) to provide network connectivity to UK air traffic control services, which handles 2.4 million flights and 250 million passengers every year.

Worth an estimated £15 million over a seven-year period, Capita will provide NATS with critical national infrastructure through Wide Area Network connectivity to support

their new IP-based voice services.

It's a dramatic transformation of critical IT infrastructure and an integral part of NATS' commitment towards SESAR (Single European Sky ATM Research) which aims to enhance European airspace performance by increasing capacity, improving safety and reducing the industry's impact on the environment.

Joe Hemming, Executive Director for Capita IT and Networks, makes it very clear that the prestigious project and his team's relationship with NATS is of paramount importance to Capita.

"From my point of view, NATS is a customer that is very keen about working with partners, not just suppliers. Air traffic control is a highly important service, it needs to be secure, and there's a lot of pressure around that. You can't get it wrong."

It's a sobering point and its importance is strikingly emphasized. "As a trusted provider of managed networks and data connectivity to the UK's top private and public sector organisations, I'm acutely aware of the enormity of what we're delivering and its impact on NATS' critical infrastructure," Joe



Joe Hemming

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project managers and infrastructure architects.

As with any giant of the aerospace industry, NATS stems from a culture of scientific intellect and surgical precision, and their systematic approach has provided Capita with an opportunity to re-examine its own way of working.

"Having NATS as a customer forces us as an organisation to think bigger and work better. NATS is one of those customers that challenges you every single day and, when you are constantly evaluating your processes, when you are constantly scrutinising every decision and every move, then you begin to discover areas where you can improve and things that you can do better."

"For me, it's all about continuous improvement – NATS give us the opportunity to test ourselves and to improve our performance on a daily basis."

Evidently, working on such a transformational project has had quite a metamorphic effect on Joe and his team, and he's refreshingly matter-of-fact about the benefits of having such a challenging customer. "You need to adapt, you need to change, and ultimately, you become better," he says.

With the NATS project due to go live in 2020, how is Capita progressing thus far? "What's important is that we are not the only partner in delivering the transformation and critical infrastructure," says Joe. "There are many other partners involved and the work that we do has an impact on the other partners, and vice versa."

"The project plan has critical milestones that need to be achieved and we are on track to deliver our work." ■

continues. "If you get it wrong with the air traffic control service, people could ultimately die, so NATS understand the importance of having a very open and honest relationship and dialogue with their partners."

The significance of Capita's relationship with NATS is profound and Joe is unabashed at highlighting the challenge of maintaining accountability with such an important customer.

"The relationship has to be open and honest. It's challenging sometimes because, as a customer, they can be very demanding, but the reason why they have such high standards is because the infrastructure is so critical. The outcome affects peoples' lives quite dramatically."

As any number of managing directors and executives will profess, the pressure of delivering a service and maintaining a strong and lasting relationship with such understandably demanding customers is a challenge in itself, but there's an infectious energy that surrounds Joe, and his passion for the NATS project is clearly palpable.

"NATS is an esteemed customer for Capita, its role in the development of the UK's air traffic is changing the face of air travel for millions of passengers. It's a fantastic service and we're extremely proud to be playing a role in the progressive change that NATS is bringing to the UK's aerospace industry."

The project, by its very nature, is technically complex and there's no shying away from the intricacies of the technical and logistical challenges facing Capita's dedicated team of

