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Taking your airline to new heights



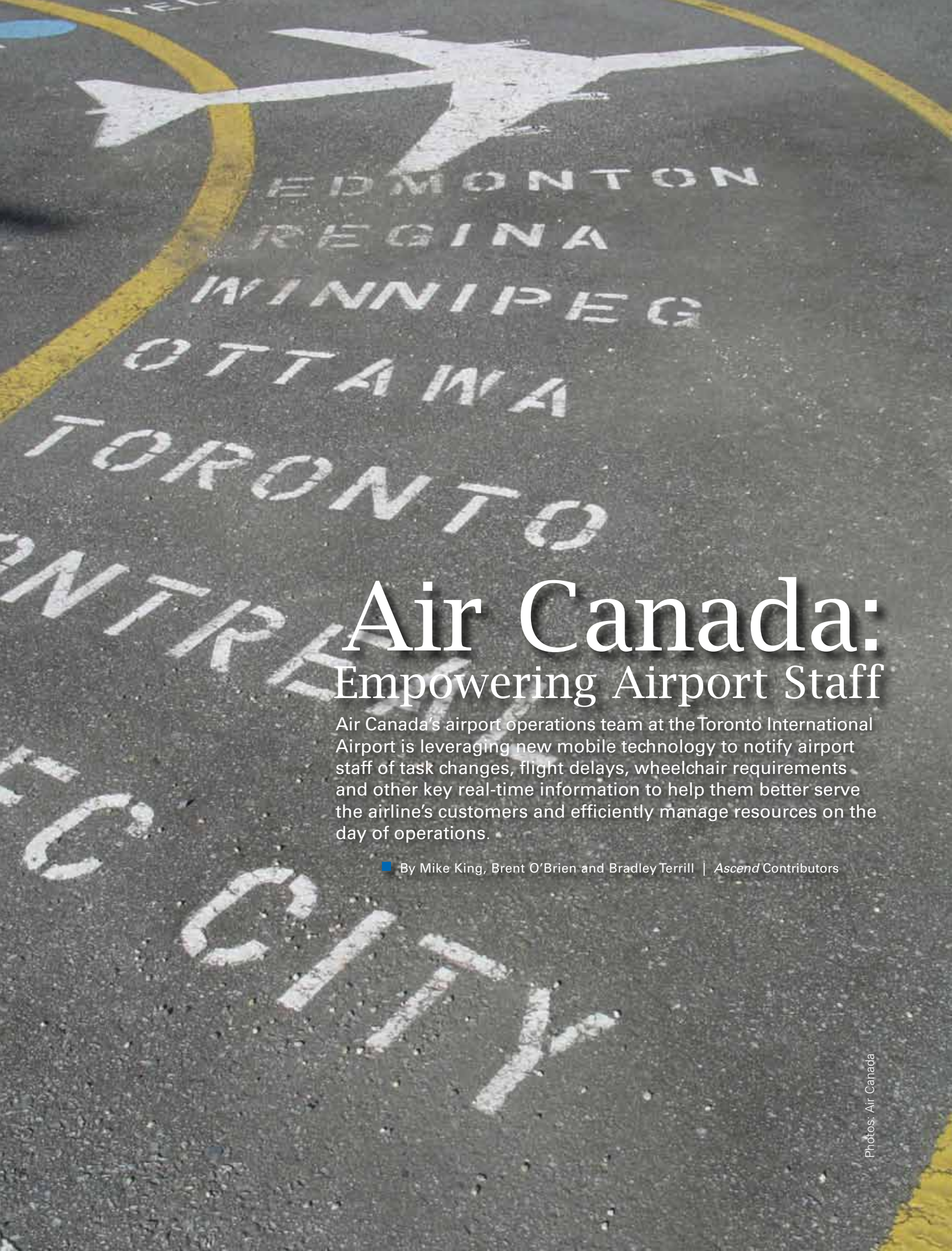
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Air Canada: Empowering Airport Staff

Air Canada's airport operations team at the Toronto International Airport is leveraging new mobile technology to notify airport staff of task changes, flight delays, wheelchair requirements and other key real-time information to help them better serve the airline's customers and efficiently manage resources on the day of operations.

■ By Mike King, Brent O'Brien and Bradley Terrill | *Ascend* Contributors

Air Canada's Ground Task mobile devices, powered by *Sabre Airline Solutions*® and IBM, provide bi-directional communication capabilities for staff members at the ramp or in the cabin to notify their scheduling teams when their assignments are received and when they begin or complete servicing an aircraft.

"Prior to the launch of our Ground Task mobile devices, our airport staff had limited capabilities for being notified of new assignments and tracking schedule changes, particularly for irregular operations," said Jason Stein, manager of resource planning for Air Canada. "Communications were handled via radio. We have seen a big improvement in our ability to respond to operational changes and reductions in the amount of admin time needed to manage our staff."

In 2007, Air Canada's airport resource management team had a vision of empowering its airport staff with more real-time information at their fingertips, but they did not have the supporting systems to make their vision a reality.

"Our goal was to provide better service to our customers, improve the quality of work life for our airport staff and create efficiencies in our airport operations," said Enzo Molino, Air Canada's director of resource planning.

Working together, Air Canada and *Sabre Airline Solutions* saw an opportunity to leverage the open-system capabilities in the *Sabre*® *AirCentre*™ *Airport solution* to interface with the new mobile application that Air Canada envisioned.

"We selected *Sabre Airline Solutions* as a partner because it offered an end-to-end airport resource management solution with proven integration to other mobile applications," Molino said. "We had a vision to take mobile technology to new levels at our hub airports, and *Sabre Airline Solutions* provided the core system for generating and receiving messages to and from our mobile application."

In early 2008, Air Canada and *Sabre Airline Solutions* set aggressive goals for launching the carrier's Ground Task mobile application and the *Sabre*® *AirCentre*™ *Staff Manager* real-time resource management solution at Air Canada's largest hub operation located at the Toronto International Airport. The launch was scheduled to be completed in nine months and required several project tracks and multiple vendors to achieve a successful release.

Air Canada worked with its partner, IBM, to develop the Ground Task application. The other critical tracks included building and testing all of the carrier's business rules in *Staff Manager* and integrating *Staff Manager* with its real-time flight feed plus the Ground Task application.



Air Canada resource planning analysts, leads and frontline employees in Toronto can effectively communicate in real time with the use of the carrier's Ground Task and *Staff Manager* solutions. The new technology supports above-the-wing and cabin workgroups and offers a robust, modern method of communicating vital flight and task updates such as gate, equipment and load changes.



Using new mobile technology, Air Canada agents can alert airport staff of duty changes, flight delays, wheelchair requirements and other key real-time information to enable them to better serve the airline's customers and effectively handle resources on the day of operations.

"We knew our timelines were aggressive," said Sophie Georgakakos, senior director of airports resource planning for Air Canada. "But we had confidence in our joint project teams, and we were eager to begin realizing the benefits of the new automation."

Today, the Ground Task and *Staff Manager* solutions are in full swing at Air Canada's Toronto above-the-wing and

cabin workgroups, providing a powerful new means of communication between resource planning, leads and frontline employees. Important flight and task updates — such as gate, equipment and load changes — are instantly and automatically communicated without the use of phones or radio.

A free-flow text component enables planners to use *Staff Manager* as an

instant messaging tool, sending personalized notes to an individual employee or team or to all employees working a particular flight. Meanwhile, the mobile device users can acknowledge tasks, react to new task detail in real time and gain instant visibility on key task details such as other team members who are assigned to the same flight and/or task.

As one would expect with a complex real-time solution, implementation at a major hub airport operation was no easy task and only came together through careful orchestration among all parties.

"We couldn't have asked for a better business partner than Air Canada," said Bradley Terrill, project manager for *Sabre AirCentre Airport*. "The Air Canada project team and airport staff alike made this successful implementation possible by establishing a clear and collective vision, driving the necessary change management and maintaining focus to completion."

What started out as a cool idea a short time ago is now the driving force behind real-time operations management at Air Canada's largest hub. The successful implementation of *Ground Task* and *Staff Manager* at Toronto International Airport generated interest from the other large Air Canada airport operations. This interest and the experience of the Air Canada Toronto project team will enable a fast roll out and adoption of *Staff Manager* at Montreal International Airport, Calgary International Airport and Vancouver International Airport.

"We have been able to leverage our *Staff Manager* implementation experience in Toronto to put together a skilled team that has been successful in launching *Staff Manager* at our other hub airports in less than 30 days per airport," said Stein. "One of the benefits of launching *Staff Manager* has been the implementation of more consistent standards across our hub airports."

Air Canada recently added *Ground Task* mobile devices for its Montreal cabins group and plans to roll out *Ground Task* to its other hub airports by year's end.

Air Canada is not resting on its laurels after the successful launch of *Ground Task* and *Staff Manager*.

"We see additional opportunities for optimizing our resource planning and rostering as we implement *Sabre® AirCentre™ Staff Planner* and *Sabre® AirCentre™ Roster Maker* this summer," said Georgakakos. "The *Sabre® AirCentre™ Staff Admin* Employee Self Service module will also enable our airport staff to go online for self-service shift bidding and trading."

Air Canada expects to realize several major benefits from the combined *Ground*




Air Canada employed advanced technology to empower its airport staff with greater real-time information through better communications via mobile devices. Its objective was to enhance customer service, improve the quality of work life for airport staff and develop efficiencies in airport operations.

Task and *Sabre AirCentre Airport* solution, including:

- Reduced fuel burn (gate holds, appropriate water levels),
- Reduced number of passengers arriving without bags,
- Reduced overtime,
- Improved historic information to better plan operations using *Staff Planner*,
- Improved customer service (especially for passengers requiring assistance),
- Improved irregular operations handling.

"Optimizing our planning and rostering, self-service bidding and trading, and real-time resource management were key drivers to our decision to implement the *Sabre AirCentre Airport* solution, but we also

wanted access to the metrics and reporting available from having an end-to-end solution," said Nick Careen, vice president of airports for Air Canada. "Increased visibility into operational and resource metrics will enable Air Canada to improve customer service and better manage our costs." 

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