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# Digital Transformation

## How AWS Helped Porter Airlines Take Off



porter

In the airline industry, there is no time for down time. But, Dan Donovan, Vice President, Technology at Porter Airlines, says he doesn't worry about the infrastructure behind his company's mission-critical applications. For the past five years, he's been relying on Amazon Web Services (AWS) to do that for him.

AWS provides the scalable and highly available cloud computing solutions that Porter needs to handle any amount of traffic on its public-facing web site and to manage its massive data sets. For Donovan and his IT team, this means that, with Amazon looking after their data centre, they can focus their efforts on Porter's signature customer experience.

### **Innovation in the Cloud**

When Donovan joined Porter Airlines in 2008, he set up a software development team to build critical business applications, including an operations dashboard to efficiently manage aircraft and crews, and streamline the departure process. That's important because even a small delay can cause ripples throughout the system, resulting in substantial costs. Donovan and his team applied this same can-do attitude to improving Porter's public-facing website. The airline needed a better solution to manage the extremely variable demands on the website.

"We needed to be able to respond instantly to fluctuating load demands on our public site. Previously, we had to pay for and constantly operate enough servers to meet peak demand requirements. AWS came in and we were able to create a scalable cloud-based safety net. Regardless of whether a marketing promotion sends a million people to our site, or a storm hits and the site is inundated with customers looking for possible cancellations and rescheduled flights – we're covered."



AWS provided a cloud-based web hosting solution for Porter that was flexible, extremely scalable, and low-cost. The elastic cloud-based infrastructure met the specific needs of the fluctuating load demands on the Porter website and allowed the airline to deliver the best possible user experience for its customers. Automatic and continuous back-ups provide Porter with assurance of data stability and safety.



### **Responsive Service**

Winning consistent raves from travellers for its convenient Toronto location, luxurious lounges, slick design sensibility and complimentary on-board beer and wine, Porter is always looking to enrich the experience of its customers with features and services that make what could be a mere transactional experience, more of a relationship.

When Apple Passbook (now known as Wallet) was introduced to the market in 2012, Porter immediately knew its customers would appreciate the convenience of a mobile app for tickets

and boarding passes. When Donovan first approached AWS with the question about how Apple Passbook could be deployed for Porter, the answer wasn't immediately apparent.

"The Passbook was on the AWS roadmap but not for another three to four months. In an already competitive industry, three to four months is just not fast enough. AWS realized this and within three weeks, not months, Porter was one of the first airlines in Canada to launch Passbook for our customers. This kind of alignment between our two businesses on the importance of customer needs is what defines our relationship with AWS."

### Amazon Redshift: The Next Generation

That relationship has cemented with the introduction of Amazon Redshift, Amazon's data warehouse service in the cloud.

"There were so many things that we could start doing because of Amazon Redshift. In a traditional environment, it was just so difficult to get projects off the ground. The introduction of Redshift allowed us to move forward with some of the initiatives we had originally deemed too time intensive and costly."

Redshift is the fast, fully-managed and completely cost-effective data warehousing solution Porter needed. Common and labour intensive tasks including managing, monitoring and scaling a data warehouse are easily automated by AWS. It simplifies data replication, saving significant costs. Without having to maintain a multitude of servers, Porter can stream "hundreds of terabytes on the platform and not worry about it." This allows Donovan and his team to focus on using the data to make better decisions, rather than on the mechanics of storing it.

### Reaching Cruising Altitude

2016 marks the 10-year anniversary for both Porter Airlines and Amazon Web Services. With a debut route between Toronto and Ottawa, Porter now flies to 23 destinations in Canada and the U.S. The airline is considered among the best globally, has travelled more than 240 million kilometers and has carried almost 18 million passengers since first flight. Ten years since its debut, AWS continues to be ranked as the premier cloud-based solution for many of the world's leading companies.

Together, the two companies share a commitment to their customers based on speed, convenience and service. But one of the most important commonalities is their dedication to the safety and

security of customers. AWS has taken tremendous strides to prevent data theft and loss, and Porter places complete trust of their data with the leading provider of IaaS.

"Amazon solved a lot of our problems around scale. Specifically, with our data, AWS answered the questions we used to have to figure out ourselves – like how do we scale our massive data store, how do we access it quickly, how do we keep it secure – and they gave us the solution needed. So, we now have the time, freedom and confidence to concentrate on how to make our passengers' experiences better. Using AWS is one of the main ways we do this."





## Conclusion

In an industry that is so heavily dependent on technology, cost and customer focus are key factors for success. By working with AWS, Donovan says that Porter has been able to stay lean, and keep costs to a minimum while, at the same time, introducing new innovations. The team at Porter has remained steadfast in their dedication to one metric by which they judge their business – passenger experience. Porter Airlines vies in such a fiercely competitive industry by harnessing the technology of AWS and using it to devote their saved resources of time and money to continuously improving the experience they deliver. Together with AWS, Porter is locked in for a safe and pleasant flight.