# Hacking solutions for the future of air cargo

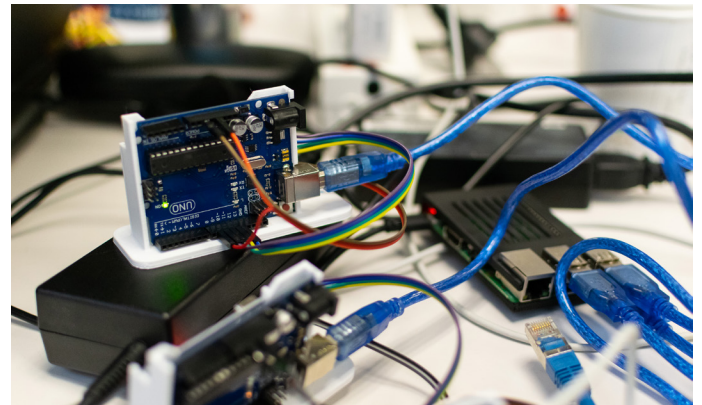*Steve Hill, Principal Industry Consultant*

*During 14-16 September 2018, IATA launched its first ever Digital Cargo Hackathon in Geneva, based on its AIR (Airline Industry Retailing) Passenger Hackathon format. CHAMP participated in this unique cargo event, aimed at bringing new ideas, thoughts and innovation to the wider air cargo community and helping "hack" solutions for the future.*

AIR Hackathons have already been successfully run around the globe where participants use APIs made available during the event such as to access SITA's New Distribution Capability (NDC) platform. The Hackathon also brings opportunities for companies to 'challenge' participants with their APIs bringing a competitive edge to the event with prizes for the best innovative apps.

The Digital Cargo Hackathon was run in conjunction with the passenger AIR event requiring participants to build and code an app based on the APIs provided where the process consists of 3 phases.

1. Ideation: Discuss, feedback, adjust ideas
2. Hackathon: 28 hours coding – the apps created can and must only be coded in this time frame
3. Online Incubation: Winners will participate in a 6-week incubation period that will consist of an education module and progress milestones.

In all, there were 6 cargo participants using APIs exposed by the 'challengers' including an API to IATA's ONE Record platform.



## The Competition

The atmosphere in the room was 'digitally-charged' as the teams used their ingenuity and inventiveness to develop innovative apps in a 'time-boxed' environment.

The 5-person CHAMP Team (called CHAMP Guild) comprised of innovation, business, design, and technology experts from Luxembourg and London who worked tirelessly over the 28 hours 'hack' to produce a remarkable app which used RFID technology to track packages from the Shipper through the transport chain. After a grueling period of almost non-stop coding, the judges evaluated each app as demonstrated to the entire audience comprising both AIR and Digital Cargo participants.
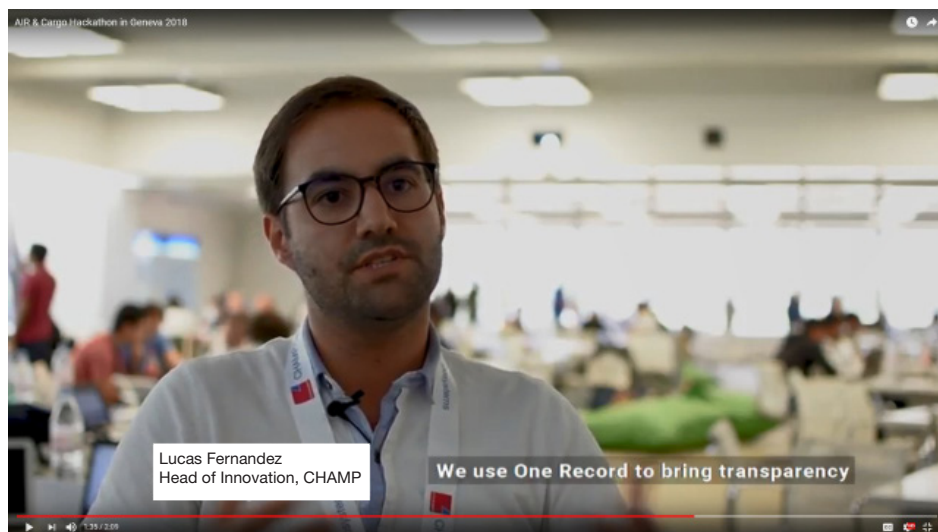


*CHAMP Guild busy at work!*

The CHAMP app was built almost entirely during the Hackathon in the IATA office in Geneva. The live demo included some physical props such as models of the tracked 'Logistics Objects' comprising packages, the ULD used for transport, a truck and plane all being read 'live' by RFID readers. Some CHAMP props used were even printed on site using a 3D printer which was a first for any Hackathon event generating a lot of interest.

The challenge was open to anyone to join as a participant but unlike the passenger NDC Hackathon teams, only corporates took part in the Cargo ONE Record challenge. While it sounds interesting for students, businesses, and startups to take part in such an event, how does it help air cargo?
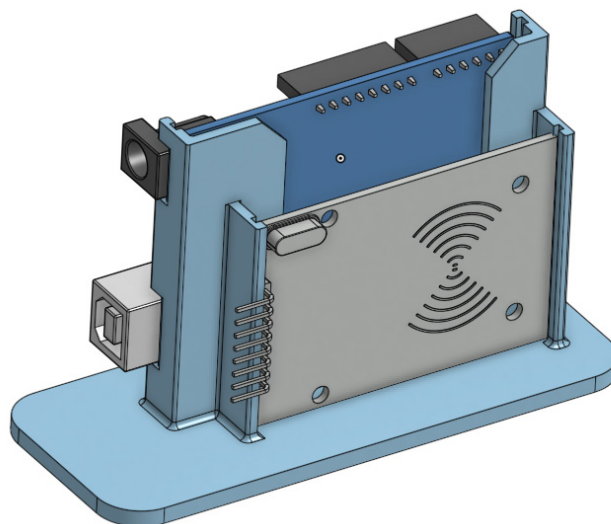
## Opening the doors for the next generation

Well, technology in air cargo is not designed in a vacuum. Similarly, APIs are not designed to work in a bubble either. It allows solutions of many flavors to talk to one another seamlessly – pulling on the strengths of the data/information of its many sources. Customers are free to choose what is right for them!



*IATA Hackathon Video*

However, more importantly, the Hackathon opens doors to a new generation of designers and developers. It allows students and startups, and established businesses alike to bring fresh ideas to the table, emphasizing creativity and ingenuity – something sorely needed in air cargo. There were some very interesting ideas coming from the NDC developers which were quite enlightening!

For CHAMP, it brings an opportunity for us to show our ingenuity and inventiveness to the industry when



*CHAMP's Design - RFID Reader Sensor*

faced with a 'timeboxed' challenge, and take part in what, when compared to the success of the AIR Hackathons, promises to be a new era of innovation for air cargo.

Other developer participants included Lufthansa, Air Canada, Unisys and Cargoport, with VCargo emerging as the eventual ONE Record winners.

While there was only one winning team, just taking part means that we are all 'winners' to try and break the mold and work differently. CHAMP proudly took part in this event and looks foward to supporting future hackathons featuring this fresh approach to digitally accelerate the air cargo business.

Our thanks go out to IATA for organizing the Hackathon and very well done to everyone involved!