

McGraw: Building a better platform

CHAD ERIC WATT INTERVIEWS
BOB MCGRAW

Profile: Bob McGraw, CEO, RealSims

Lowdown: Simulation industry veteran Bob McGraw established Real-Sims, LLC this past April.

The company designed and is marketing a general purpose re-configurable simulator that could be set up for training aircrews, sailors and soldiers for diverse interactive tasks associated with a wide range of vehicles and operator consoles. Called the FastTrac Reconfigurable Simulator™, the system can be set up to be used as a helicopter and then reset for use as a fast jet or even a ground vehicle. RealSims is aiming to satisfy the military's requirement for a Deployable, Vehicle Independent, Low cost simulator and establish middle ground between million-dollar single-purpose simulators and software-based desktop simulators.

Q- When did you first hear about reconfigurable trainers?

A- Seven or eight years ago it really started to take hold in the industry. But I think the interpretation of reconfigurability is different in different people's minds. I think of it in terms of a standardized platform with unlimited flexibility. So if you want to go with a rotary wing application then switch to a fixed wing application, a hum-vee, or ship console the base platform should be the most prevalent part of the system and should not change. It should give you that level of flexibility... without having to change the back-end legacy systems at all. Your computer systems can remain intact with just software modifications.

Q- Was it more difficult to build the physical side or integrate the data to a reconfigurable system?



A- We integrate best of breed databases and run-time environments. There are a number of excellent software products from micro to high end based. The challenge of reconfigurability from the hardware side is how do you build in the physical dimensions of the platform to emulate the real vehicle. Our patent pending grid mounting system allows you to reposition components/consoles on the platform deck to get them in the exact position for the aircraft or vehicle with respect to the pilot or operator.

Q- Where does this fit in the simulation market?

A- FasTrac fits into the mid and low end (Microsim) end of the spectrum. We're trying to close that gap between the high end and the mid fidelity range of the industry. Our goal is establish an affordable price point for Part Task and Procedures Training. At the low end of the market (Microsim), there's a lot of room to put trainees into quality configured trainers for \$30 - 50,000, and mid fidelity systems with excellent display systems from \$70 - \$250,000.

Q- Five years from now, where do you hope to see your system?

A- I hope to see them in military schoolhouses and training facilities, deployed aboard ships and in ready rooms on aircraft carriers. Also, I envision FasTrac will become very prevalent as an operator console for non autonomous armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's) and pilot-less aircraft.

Q- What's the system you're delivering to the Navy?

A- We recently received a contract to deliver one of our FasTrac reconfigurable trainers to the Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Command here in Orlando. The Navy developed a low cost MicroSim based distributed training application where ship's crew, air crews and ground force can train in a common virtual environment. We worked with the Navy engineers to modify and enhance our FasTrac product to meet their deployment needs for a modular trainer that is easy to set up and can take on the persona of any rotary, fixed wing or ground vehicle.