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Editor's Comments

Sustainable Fuel, Alternative Vision

Chances are you're reading this at the NBAA-BACE show, online just before, or in hard copy or digital form after the October event has finished – which probably means you missed a great time.

This year it's the turn of Las Vegas to host and at least some of the jets travelling to Nevada will do so on sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), thanks to Avfuel and FBO Avflight at Salina Regional Airport, Kansas.

Aircraft transiting through the FBO to NBAA-BACE will have access to SAF from 17 October and by the beginning of the month, Dassault, Embraer, Textron and several private operators had pledged to stop by for a top-up. It's worth noting that Gulfstream is already a major user of SAF, for its demonstration and some other flights.

The industry is realising ever more urgently that it must become sustainable if it is to have a future. Private aviation accounts for only a tiny proportion of the small contribution that aviation as a whole makes to global CO₂ emissions. It ought not be too great a challenge to offset it.

Sustainable fuel is an important component in the solution, but only that. It's still expensive and difficult to find, and even then there's barely sufficient for a few jets to fly into Las Vegas. It is not the answer to a sustainable future. The answer is in SAF, alternative power and propulsion sources, offsetting and more. Or not flying at all.

The business and executive aviation industry builds and operates phenomenal technologies. Its capabilities enable global enterprise, directly and indirectly supporting jobs, families and the children of the next generation, everywhere. A high-tech, innovative industry, oughtn't it be able to get its house in order?

That's the future.

But sustainable aviation does nothing to solve the problems of global warming that irrefutably face us all. It merely stops making the problem worse.

The damage is already done.

A high-tech, innovative industry driven by people of passion and having got its house in order, quickly, ought then to look at the existing problem and consider what can we do to help reverse the crisis we took a small hand in creating?

And let's not consider the tiny proportion of the small amount of CO₂ that business flying created. Let's simply apply some of the industry's brilliance to how we might slow and, perhaps eventually, reverse the damage already done.

It might help preserve our way of life for our children and theirs. It might also demonstrate to people everywhere that this is an industry of brilliance, a global facilitator with world-wide responsibilities, generating innovative technologies that benefit all, rather than luxurious transport for a privileged few.



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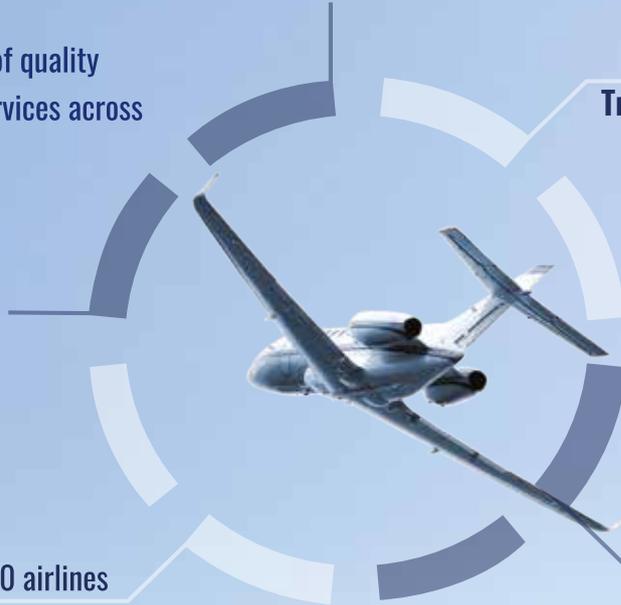
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Iridium Certus NEXT Generation L-band

As Mike Hooper, Director, Iridium Aviation Line of Business explains, after a US\$3 billion investment in **L-band satellites and supporting infrastructure**, Iridium Certus is set to revolutionise cost-effective broadband connectivity

The realisation of Ka-band connectivity wowed the market with opportunities for live streaming, video conferencing and unlimited surfing over multiple devices. Yet at the same time, L-band offers very real possibilities for customers wanting broadband voice, email, data and cockpit connectivity, especially through the technologies exemplified by Iridium in its NEXT satellite constellation and Certus service.

Mike Hooper, Director, Iridium Aviation Line of Business, confirms that after a final successful Iridium NEXT launch early this year, the company's satellite constellation has been completely refreshed, including a number of spares. "It's operating today, supporting our legacy customers and some of the Certus opportunities in our other markets." With a major presence in land and maritime communications, aviation, including commercial airlines and business aircraft, is just one segment of Iridium's market.

Coming to aviation soon, the Certus broadband service is applicable across the Iridium network. Exploiting the NEXT constellation to the full, it's an L-band product employing smaller antennas and associated hardware, which is good news

for weight-conscious aircraft owners and those flying smaller machines, where broadband might previously have been an unrealistic proposal.

"We're maintaining legacy services for our existing customers, primarily voice and data, but with Certus we're moving towards services employing new waveforms enabling high data rate IP connections. We've launched Certus services into land and maritime; aviation certification takes a little longer, but our aviation programmes are into their end phases."

Speak to any of the connectivity players or read their marketing material and you'll realise their product is the 'best solution' available. At least by their own reckoning. So why ought buyers consider Certus?

"Looking to the future, Iridium Certus will give bizjet operators extended choice – previously, there's been a limited choice between very expensive equipment and services. Plus, if they look at Iridium as a portfolio of products, there will still be legacy products providing basic voice and data services, supporting phone calls or basic email and text messaging, at a very low entry-level price and very competitive service costs.

But step up to a Certus terminal, which will be very competitive and economical from the hardware and service pricing standpoints, and we'll offer a bigger portfolio. Customers looking at L-band connectivity and wanting higher data rates were previously obliged to go to a competitor; now they'll have choice, through Certus.

"And from a network point of view, since we're everywhere, an Iridium-equipped aircraft will be able to connect to the server whether it's over the US, Africa or the Poles. Our service isn't geography limited. Because we use a LEO [low earth orbit, pronounce 'Leo'] our antennas are also smaller and we're very excited about the low latency we're seeing in our future IP-based connectivity.

"People will be comparing Certus to the equivalent competitor offering, based on cost per megabyte and equipment cost. We'll win, because our LEO-network technology is simpler. Our partners are seeing the same; together we've identified a particular hunger in the bizjet market and our partners are looking forward to satisfying it."

Hooper says that considering the industry as a whole, through business aircraft to the

Iridium NEXT L-band satellite

airlines, rotorcraft and general aviation, Iridium is the largest supplier of connectivity products. “We’re a default, providing the core or backbone, but if you look at the cabin, at passenger requirements, we’ll be offering a better opportunity with Certus.”

L-band Future

The industry has become used to an easy assumption that Ka-band is best, Ku-band a useful second option, and L-band primarily for navigation, aircraft surveillance/air traffic and safety systems. As Hooper explains, the reality is that Iridium founded its business on L-band and, through the NEXT constellation, L-band is very much its future. “Certus will win new customers and enable us to do everything we already do on our existing platforms so much better. And that’s everything from higher data rates, through lower latency, to interfacing through IP connections to a wide variety of on-board systems.”

Operators with Iridium hardware already installed should rest assured that it will continue to work even after Certus comes online for aviation customers. “They won’t need to do anything to keep their legacy services working. The NEXT satellites have multiple waveforms, including legacy

waveforms for voice and data, with the addition of new waveforms providing the basis of the IP services that bring the higher data rates.

“Should an operator with a legacy device want to move to the higher data rate waveforms that Certus provides, then hardware and antenna changes are required, because a different, steered antenna and transceiver design is needed. Unfortunately, we can’t wave a wand that takes legacy voice and data service and magically turns it into a higher data rate platform. I wish it were true, but the physics just doesn’t work that way.”

Switching to an IP-based service means Iridium is making far more efficient use of frequencies it already owned. Describing the change candidly, Hooper reckons: “The NEXT satellites are bringing Iridium into a much more modern architecture that interfaces with the technologies in use today – our previous, legacy satellites were developed and launched in the 1990s. In fact, the original Iridium satellites were developed before the internet was available and, therefore, long before smartphones appeared. The shift from analogue to digital happened in that time frame, technology moved on massively.



Mike Hooper,
Director, Iridium Aviation Line of Business.

“But that’s the challenge in the satellite industry. You’re locking technology into a satellite that may have been designed six or seven years ago by the time it’s launched. You try to future-proof it, but it’s impossible to keep pace with technology development, especially when the asset has a lifespan of ten or 15 years. Developing and launching a satellite network is actually relatively easy, managing it over time is where the real challenge comes in and that’s something we became expert in with our previous network.”

Sixty-six satellites comprise the operational NEXT constellation, cross-linked to transfer data and voice across the network. Nine additional satellites are regarded as ‘spare’. “We keep them in our storage orbit, below the operational orbit. They’re ready to play a role in network management, to move into operational orbit if needs be. We also have six spares on the ground, kept in long-term storage and available to launch if required. Keeping these spares available is part of our core business continuity plan – we hope we never need them, but they’re important to ensuring long-term network integrity.

“The cross-links in our network are unique. They allow our satellites to ‘talk’ to each other and enable every satellite to ‘talk’ to the ground, managing the data routing. Each satellite also overlaps the coverage of its neighbours, providing complete coverage around the globe. No other L-band satellite operator offers the same type of cross-link global network, and our management and routing techniques are unique. Really, only Iridium is one network. Other L-band provision is through three separate individual networks that operate independently. Transitioning from one to another involves disconnecting from one satellite and ground station and connecting to the next, with no continuity between them.”

Well Grounded

Just as operators moving from legacy Iridium services to Certus require new hardware, so Iridium has needed to upgrade and expand its ground infrastructure. “It accounts for a big part of the \$3 billion investment we’ve

No other L-band satellite operator offers the same type of cross-link global network, and our management and routing techniques are unique. Really, only Iridium is one network

MIKE HOOPER

made in the NEXT constellation and Certus. We’ve installed new routers, gateways, controllers and interfaces, in a complete update that enabled us to take on the newest and most efficient systems. Again, we were replacing systems first developed and installed in the 1990s. We couldn’t replace much of it previously because the ground systems needed to remain compatible with the 1990s-era satellites we had in orbit, to ensure network continuity.”

Looking further ahead, Iridium owns the waveforms, satellites and ground infrastructure at the heart of its offering. NEXT and Certus have prepared it to deliver gold-standard L-band connectivity into the 2030s, but Hooper reveals that thoughts have already turned to the technologies needed for the 2040s.

Iridium’s existing customer base will likely need none of this to convince them of the

quality of its service. But Hooper and his team also have sights set on a raft of new Certus customers, connecting their cabins and cockpits with an efficiency previously impossible. But what will Certus mean to a device-wielding bizjet passenger?

“They’ll be able to support high-quality voice and email communication, any type of web browser interface, social media and online shopping. We don’t expect they’ll be streaming five movies simultaneously to five different users, that’s not the role Iridium is looking to play. We can support streaming, but it’s really a Ka/Ku function. Iridium’s right fit is where passengers want to keep up with email and social media and make calls efficiently. Certus for bizjets is all about keeping passengers connected with simultaneous voice and data, while ensuring the pilots have all the communications tools they need for safe and efficient flying.”

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Excellence Done Better

Already recognised for the excellence of its aftermarket service and support, Bombardier Business Aircraft is aiming to do even better, **through expansion and digital transformation**, as Jean-Christophe 'JC' Gallagher, Vice-President and General Manager Customer Experience, reveals

Bombardier Business Aircraft boasts one of the industry's more complete aircraft line-ups, from the six-passenger, 2,000nm-range Learjet 75 Liberty, through the nine-passenger, 3,200nm Challenger 350 to the game-changing 19-passenger, 7,700nm Global 7500. Between them, they include engines from General Electric, Honeywell and Rolls-Royce, and employ avionics components and suites from a variety of suppliers, generating a potentially complex support proposition even without considering customer choices in cabin finish and equipment.

There's no doubt Bombardier builds a quality jet, but even the most reliable aircraft face issues from time to time, at which point it is the speed and efficiency of response from the manufacturer's customer support organisation that's important. Considered among the best in the industry, Bombardier Business Aircraft's customer support network falls under Jean-Christophe 'JC' Gallagher, Vice-President and General Manager Customer Experience.

"We're committed to creating the best service experience possible for our customers," he says, "and it's all based on how quickly and efficiently we can meet – and exceed – their every need. It's also about creating a comprehensive, state-of-the-art, highly responsive global customer service network that delivers on our service commitments."

Given Bombardier's reputation, Gallagher's job ought perhaps to be simple, but it could be argued that when one is already at the top, the only place to go is down. Standing still is therefore not what his team is doing. He explains that not only is a major transformation and expansion under way, but a digital revolution is coming too. "We're in the midst of a significant global



Many Bombardier customers subscribe to hourly maintenance programmes covering scheduled and unscheduled events



The fleet of 30 Mobile Response Team vehicles is equipped to support the entire Bombardier Business Aircraft portfolio

aftermarket transformation, enhancing our service footprint with the addition of new super service centres in Miami-Dade County, Florida and Singapore. We're also adding new line maintenance stations [LMSs] in strategic locations around the world, and enhancing our Mobile Response Network, with new Mobile Response Trucks in Europe

and the US, as well as adding a designated Mobile Response Aircraft – a Challenger 300 – in Frankfurt, Germany. Many more key projects still in the works will build on this infrastructure expansion. We're also offering customers a growing inventory of products and services – including a comprehensive parts price-matching programme.

“Delivering on this commitment starts from the top, with all our Customer Experience leaders. I’m actively involved too, ensuring we’re taking the right steps to meet customer needs. An excellent example is through our unique Service Touchpoint survey, which allows us to track the visibility of a customer’s aircraft at our Service Centers, to see how we perform.

“When customers take their aircraft to our facilities, they receive a short touchpoint survey on their personal device, quickly highlighting how their service is going. By clicking on the survey interface on their smartphone they can evaluate the progress of their service procedure. If, on the off chance, there’s an issue, I’ll personally be informed within 24 hours.”

All of which is impressive, but Bombardier’s support network also relies on multiple authorised service centres, where it has less direct control over customer interaction. But Gallagher has every faith in the partner team. “We can’t provide customers with the best aftermarket experience alone. So, we work



Jean-Christophe 'JC' Gallagher, Vice-President and General Manager Customer Experience, Bombardier Business Aircraft



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Supporting the 7500

With its Global 7500, Bombardier introduced a high-performance jet capable of spanning half the world in a single mission. Such outstanding capability requires equally impressive support, right out of the box. Gallagher explains: "We're executing on a complete entry-into-service [EIS] plan for training the Mobile Response Team [MRT] technicians on our trucks and aircraft, the line maintenance stations

and our Business Aviation Services [BAS] facilities around the world."

And should an operator require Global 7500 parts, Gallagher notes: "A comprehensive minimum equipment list [MMEL] is established during an aircraft's certification, and parts/systems that are not deferrable are provisioned accordingly and placed at strategic global locations. This enables us to have parts on hand for all aircraft in all stages of development."

The reassurance of a comprehensive support offering is an important factor in a customer's buying decision and Gallagher says Bombardier's sales directors routinely share the benefits of complementing aircraft ownership with Bombardier Service Programs designed to provide protection, predictability and confidence in having an aircraft maintained by OEM-trained technicians using OEM parts. Of the support

and service options Bombardier offers, new aircraft customers most commonly purchase Smart Parts coverage, including interior and landing gear protection. Many complement Smart Parts with hourly programmes designed to cover scheduled and unscheduled maintenance. "We're actively creating new products and services to enhance customers' aftermarket service options further, with several new announcements coming soon," he reveals.

"I'm very pleased to announce that the next step in our strategic aftermarket transformation is a digital revolution that will deliver products and services to take the customer service experience to new levels. We're working hard to develop more innovative connectivity solutions, enhancements in cabin refurbishment, paint solutions and avionics to find even more efficient ways to better connect our aircraft, enhance sales and parts



distribution processes, and improve operational efficiency.”

Legacy Solutions

Such is the legacy of business aircraft development and production behind Bombardier’s current success that numerous Learjets and Challengers, built long before the company added the types as brands, remain in daily service. Can operators of these older aircraft really expect Bombardier to apply its service network to their needs, just as it does to its latest models? Gallagher believes so.

“We take immense pride in supporting our legacy customers, with dedicated programmes in place covering pre-owned aircraft up to 25 years in operation. These are specific to where the aircraft is in its life cycle, and provide peace of mind equal to a new aircraft programme. We also have a very comprehensive parts programme – with

full price matching – featuring 24/7 online parts ordering via laptop, desktop or mobile device, real-time pricing, an easy checkout process, status and waybill tracking, and Smart Parts adjudication at checkout.

“Other benefits include a comprehensive satisfaction guarantee, two-year spare parts warranty and refundable labour and shipping charges if the Bombardier-recommended part does not solve the issue or is received defective.”

Real-world Challenge

Gallagher describes an impressive level of global support, but EVA wanted to see how it might work against common issues that could easily ground an aircraft for days should prompt, expert intervention prove impossible. In the first instance, Gallagher was presented with an imaginary Global 6000, AOG at Dunedin Airport, New Zealand, with a cracked windshield following a bird strike.

“Bombardier is always highly attentive to customer concerns and we respond immediately to situations like this. In this scenario, the customer would place a call with the Customer Response Center [CRC], which is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. It would dispatch a Mobile Response Team from Singapore or the nearby ASF in Sydney, Australia, while the required parts were shipped to the site. Depending on the urgency, the CRC might also deploy an MRT aircraft to further expedite parts and/or technicians to accelerate the aircraft’s return to service. We also have six regional parts depots around the world, including one in Sydney, which would be more than capable of helping this Global 6000 customer.”

That’s the Global taken care of... What about something less straightforward? An imaginary Challenger 601 lands at Aberdeen Airport, Scotland, after the crew noticed a vibration in flight. Who do they call? How will Bombardier help? Can they expect the

same level of service as the Global 6000 crew at Dunedin?

“We’re committed to ensuring customers receive the best service possible across all our platforms. In this scenario, the customer places a call to the CRC in Montreal, where we have all the expertise necessary – Customer Liaison Pilots [CLPs], engineering, technical representatives, parts services and AOG coordination – to work closely with them on defining a solution. The Customer Experience Team will then plan to address the issue in accordance with the customer’s individual requirements. Bombardier has a parts distribution hub in Frankfurt, ready to serve the needs of its European customers.”

Bring Your Jet Home

Bombardier has more than 100 locations around the world ready to support its customers, helping them bring their jet home in case of an issue. Among them are nine Service Centers, eight line maintenance stations and 30 Mobile Response Team vehicles, equipped to support the Learjet, Challenger and Global models. The OEM also operates a pair of dedicated customer support aircraft, a Learjet 45 based in Chicago and a Challenger 300 aircraft stationed in Frankfurt.

Customers have access to 39 ASFs, while all Bombardier’s customer service entities are connected to its 24/7 CRC and Customer Support Team. Altogether, it draws upon the expertise of approximately 1,000 technicians, ready to provide service anytime, anywhere.

Yet Bombardier remains determined to expand its offer. Gallagher notes: “To better serve our customers and encourage them to ‘Bring Your Jet Home’, we are undergoing a major transformation that will see us add important customer service facilities, products and services over the coming months and years.” It looks a lot like excellence, but done better.



Left: Bombardier began work on its Opa Locka Service Center in 2018 and expects to open the facility next year

Far left: Major expansion is underway in Singapore

Pond Dipping

ARGUS-provided TRAQPak data for transatlantic business aviation flights between North America and Europe comparing 2008/2009 and 2018/19 suggest stabilisation, but the **industry must evolve for a successful, sustainable future**

One difficult decade ago, business aviation was reeling in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. ARGUS TRAQPak data shows that compared to an already wobbly January 2008, 2009 flights between North America and Europe in the same month were down 23%. Look

at June, the busiest flying month and the reduction was just 12%, while December, the slowest month for flights, shows just 3% fewer trips in 2009. In terms of flying, the industry was perhaps not reeling as much as memory would have us believe.

ARGUS TRAQPak Data: North America to Europe
January 2008 to December 2009

2008		2009		
Month	Flights	Hours	Flights	Hours
January	807	5,045.44	619	4,090.82
February	724	4,678.54	476	3,260.75
March	682	4,538.28	576	3,830.12
April	716	4,921.90	608	4,038.17
May	994	6,700.95	827	5,341.53
June	1,107	7,374.28	979	6,293.15
July	875	5,840.45	724	4,696.57
August	709	4,624.15	656	4,216.82
September	941	5,974.83	852	5,539.09
October	789	5,027.46	803	5,149.03
November	670	4,385.80	639	4,028.53
December	538	3,490.25	521	3,456.69
Total	9,552	62,602.33	8,280	53,941.27

ARGUS TRAQPak Data: North America to Europe
January 2018 to December 2019

2018		2019		
Month	Flights	Hours	Flights	Hours
January	663	4,617.87	587	4,138.50
February	501	3,504.87	569	4,072.92
March	680	4,840.83	707	4,915.27
April	737	5,158.02	676	4,712.55
May	957	6,706.22	987	7,007.79
June	1,241	8,895.44	1,277	9,151.68
Total to June	4,779	33,723.25	4,803	33,998.71
July	946	6,688.14		
August	829	5,724.49		
September	1,016	6,902.07		
October	932	6,250.07		
November	741	5,162.49		
December	572	3,900.10		
Total	9,815	68,350.61		

Leap forward ten years and market health in 2018/19 depends on point of view. Compared to 2008, business aircraft traffic from North America to Europe was down every month until May. But June marked a 12% increase on 2008, with superior figures for the remainder of the year. Data for 2019 was available to June at the time of writing and showed a small uptick for the month compared to 2018 and 170 more flights overall than 2018. Meanwhile, January to May 2019 perhaps reflect global

uncertainty, with figures fluctuating month-to-month compared to 2018, but generally up on 2009 and down on 2008, although the annual total for 2018 was up on 2008.

Some in the industry have suggested that the boom years prior to 2008 provide an unsustainable industry view and we should expect a new norm as the market stabilises. Speak to charter brokers, operators and folk selling used and new inventory and they'll all

say the market is 'soft' or difficult, but might it actually be moving into a new normality?

The ARGUS TRAQpak data comparing the same years in the opposite direction, from Europe to North America, tell a similar story but, remarkably, with exactly the same number of flights in 2018 as there were in 2008. Flights to June are up this year compared to 2018, suggesting the eastbound transatlantic market may be expanding.

ARGUS TRAQpak Data: Europe to North America

January 2008 to December 2009

2008			2009	
Month	Flights	Hours	Flights	Hours
January	762	6,509.05	526	4,652.01
February	738	6,234.82	510	4,468.13
March	687	5,819.22	534	4,723.54
April	747	6,361.60	581	4,959.75
May	952	8,144.89	773	6,707.62
June	1,079	9,668.30	848	7,338.36
July	977	8,701.47	742	6,602.89
August	747	6,794.71	609	5,682.53
September	830	7,464.19	757	6,511.89
October	780	6,962.99	819	7,163.53
November	684	6,047.45	649	5,846.74
December	530	4,741.00	511	4,391.61
Total	9,513	83,449.69	7,859	69,048.60

ARGUS TRAQpak Data: Europe to North America

January 2018 to December 2019

2018			2019	
Month	Flights	Hours	Flights	Hours
January	561	4,547.72	568	4,567.56
February	434	3,653.26	552	4,360.05
March	709	5,316.86	675	5,236.30
April	662	5,166.64	668	5,026.20
May	875	6,705.82	853	6,169.62
June	1,092	8,120.27	1,123	8,334.30
Total to June	4,333	33,510.57	4,439	33,694.03
July	1,044	7,891.68		
August	794	6,098.69		
September	970	7,330.39		
October	1,005	7,791.01		
November	755	5,892.89		
December	612	4,630.56		
Total	9,513	73,145.79		

The data show a continued appetite for flights, with good reason to be optimistic, but change, perhaps uncomfortable change, may be around the corner. Customers are becoming more likely to charter when they fly, rather than owning an aircraft, but there are multiple charter models, many delivering comparable products, ultimately through the same portals, and it's difficult to imagine all of them surviving.

Meanwhile, the OEMs are competing for sales in often congested market segments and innovation seems likely the only way to win sales. Just as consolidation in the charter

market seems possible, so it may not come as a surprise among the OEMs, although the equation based on aftersales support, technical innovation, investment, new models and used stock is rather more complex.

Perhaps most important of all, the industry needs to work on its further responsibility not only for a sustainable future, but also for offsetting damage already done. Even a stable market is only sustainable so long as people choose to fly. There is ample justification for private aviation, yet the industry fails to communicate its activity to the public at

large and could, through its technological excellence, begin speaking to the world about sustainable flight, instead of looking inward at its own environmental impact.

Tomorrow's passengers are more likely to charter, and they'll be from a different generation. They'll look to environmentally responsible companies for their flying needs, chartering from responsible operators flying aircraft built by energy-conscious, carbon-offsetting OEMs. On that basis alone, it would be interesting to glance into the crystal ball of 2028/29's ARGUS TRAQpak data.

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Caring In Colour

Sherwin-Williams launched a new colour range at NBAA-BACE 2018, based on two years' research. It's been well accepted, but represents only a fraction of the customer support the company offers, as Global Marketing Manager Julie Voisin explains



Julie Voisin, Global Marketing Manager, Sherwin-Williams Aerospace Coatings

Julie Voisin, Global Marketing Manager at Sherwin-Williams Aerospace Coatings, often spends time with airline customers, discussing fleetwide livery changes, special finishes and colours matched to carefully designed brands. Behind her there's a tried and trusted product, backed up by teams of technical experts. It's their role to train MRO paint specialists, engage with design departments and provide advice on every aspect of employing Sherwin-Williams' products, right down to optimising spray gun pressures.

Given her worldwide aerospace remit, business and VIP aviation also falls under Voisin's gaze. It's a market she regards as extremely important; at Sherwin-Williams it attracts not only the same levels of customer support as the airlines, but far greater involvement at the individual customer and, even, project level. It's an impressive fact, especially considering the differences in scale between, say, a fleet of widebody airliners and a Citation XLS.

"The support is more intensive," she says, "because the quality and service required

by business and VVIP jet customers is even higher than that demanded by the airlines. It would not be uncharacteristic for us to sign a non-disclosure agreement for a project for a high-profile client, perhaps for a BBJ operator, or celebrity or government customer."

Voisin believes the best position is when the company is brought in early on a project, perhaps as much as two years before the completed aircraft is rolled out. She says Sherwin-Williams works with individuals and organisations throughout the process, from the owner, through designers to the painters at the MRO facility. "We're usually involved in colour creation and we can even have people on-site during the application. Sometimes we get involved just a week before completion, but we prefer to work ahead as much as possible."

A good deal of understanding, not only of the product, but also its behaviour under different conditions, is also required. Voisin explains there's variation in painting facilities around the world, with some more technologically advanced than others. Customer's naturally expect that a coating will go on just as well in the heat and humidity of Singapore as it might on a winter's day in Duluth, Minnesota. In fact, Sherwin-Williams has products specially formulated to cope in hot, humid conditions, but it takes expertise to recognise those conditions and identify the optimal solution.

Remarkably, there's potentially a stage of Sherwin-Williams involvement long before

an aircraft is even painted, since the company is keen to work with MRO's building or extending their paint shop facilities, offering advice on environmental control, equipment and the latest technologies. "When someone tells us they're building or expanding, we can bring paint shop experts and paint booth companies in, working with them to design their optimal situation. And once the paint shop's in business, we'd want to continue our consultation through a few completed planes, just to be sure they were getting the best results possible."

Customer Definition

Voisin frequently speaks about paint shops, operators, owners, designers and OEMs, referring to all as 'customers'. It's therefore not immediately obvious who the customer really is. "All of them," she says. "We work at all levels. If the owner wants our product, the MRO needs to be able to use it. If the designer isn't aware of us or can't get the colours they need, they won't select us for the drawings. And the OEM plays a part too, when it presents customers with colour options for new aircraft. There are lots of decision makers in the process and we have to have relations with all of them,

ensuring they know about our products and services."

It remains true that the majority of business and VVIP aircraft schemes are anonymously conservative, perhaps with the addition only of a personal stripe or other modest device. But there are those who choose to make a statement with their aircraft, or rate anonymity at the airfield less highly. Voisin has equal time for both

requirements, and the quality products to ensure a fine finish regardless of colour. "Whatever the design, customers expect a mirror-like finish that's durable and going to last." But there's no doubting the more exotic schemes are more fun.

For those looking for something more expressive, Sherwin-Williams has a wide range of colour and special finish options. Voisin explains: "We consulted and visited

JULIE VOISIN

We have a colour selector book containing chips of opaques, metallics and micas in 333 colours, plus a further set of interior colours





JULIE VOISIN

The best advertising we can do is to provide the finish for a great-looking aircraft

with designers worldwide on interior and exterior colour trends and where they were going. The result is a carefully defined selection specific to the aircraft market. Sometimes, more colours isn't necessarily better when owners are trying to choose, so we picked the colours and types of colour that we know will look good on an aircraft. And then we're ready to custom create anything required beyond those defined colours.

"We made the decision by asking designers what colours they were working with, what they liked, what they didn't and what they wished we had. We took that input and used it to analyse the colours we were offering, then went back out and asked for opinions. So, when we printed our latest colour book, ready for NBAA-BACE 2018, we didn't just print all the colours we'd been using for the past 20 years, we issued a new set based on two years' research and analysis.

"We have a colour selector book containing chips of opaques, metallics and micas in 333 colours, plus a further set of interior colours.

Then there's a fan deck of the same finishes and colours in larger chips that customers can use to see colours side-by-side. It's been very well received and fun to see what people are doing with the new colours – we've had designers say they used a new colour, it looked great on the aircraft and they're going to recommend it again."

Gold Standard

Colour and finish aside, sometimes a customer will request a scheme so unusual or dramatic that paint shops will come direct to Sherwin-Williams for advice. Thanks to the non-disclosure agreements she's signed, Voisin struggles to provide examples, but acknowledges a request to include 24-carat gold in a finish, bringing in special pigment to meet a VVIP customer's colour match needs, and even to considering a scheme that was to include gold leaf.

"We're seeing a trend now for semi-gloss and flat paints. They're appearing in the motor industry, especially on high-level sports vehicles, but there are possible durability issues in aerospace applications.

Sometimes people acknowledge our concerns but go with what they want anyway, while others will reach a compromise for durability's sake."

It has been said in these pages before that the business and VIP aviation industry is a small, global community. Connections are made and frequently maintained for decades and Voisin says news on Sherwin-Williams products, and tips and techniques, get around the industry quickly, passed from shop to shop. For a global marketing manager, it means word of mouth actually plays an important role, although Voisin and her team are also busy attending shows, NBAA-BACE 2019 among them, and engaging through posting white papers and editorial, engaging in industry sponsorships and social media. But, she believes: "The best advertising we can do is to provide the finish for a great-looking aircraft. The owner will tell others about it and which MRO they used, and that ultimately leads back to Sherwin-Williams and our carefully defined business and VIP colours."

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Luxaviation Helicopters Charter Alliance: Local Knowledge, Globally Applied

Luxaviation Helicopters has founded the Luxaviation Helicopters Charter Alliance, **applying its standards of customer service and safety to operators globally.** CEO Charlotte Pedersen explains the concept

Back in 2017, Luxaviation created Luxaviation Helicopters as a global VIP helicopter management company. With rotary-wing veteran Charlotte Pedersen as CEO, the organisation brought the customer service and quality synonymous with the Luxaviation brand to the VIP helicopter world. From the outset, Pedersen also had a focus on safety, training and consultation. Operated by a well-trained professional crew, the modern helicopter is an immensely safe means of transport, regardless of operating environment – Luxaviation Helicopters recognises that its customers may want to fly to and from yachts, away from established airfield facilities and at short notice. Its training courses and operational ethos facilitate all those demands.

Now that ethos is spreading beyond Luxaviation Helicopters' managed fleet, with its Charter Alliance, a collective of global helicopter charter operators united by their adherence to Luxaviation's strict operating policies. By mid-August 2019, the Alliance included French company Azur Hélicoptère, HeliFlite in the US, the UK's Starspeed, PhilJets in the Philippines, Heli Austria, Italy's Hoverfly and ExecuJet's helicopter fleet in Mexico and South Africa. Speaking to EVA late in July, Pedersen revealed she expected to announce further sign-ups soon, as well as explaining more about the organisation.

"We hadn't fully defined our interest when we first looked to establish Luxaviation Helicopters, so we did a global market search to identify the world helicopter fleet, define where the aircraft were located and learn what it was they were doing. There's no commercial report available, so it was a difficult task that eventually led us to focus on the VIP market.



Pedersen and Kurt Carlson,
HeliFlite CEO

"Looking at our research, we realised there were more than 5,000 helicopter companies around the world, but only the largest six or seven were familiar to me – Bristow, CHC and so on. Many of the others operated small fleets and offered charter, but were really only known in their local market. People travelling to their regions and looking to charter had no clue which companies they ought to work with, which offered high standards, because all that knowledge was local."

Global Visibility

The idea therefore emerged to connect helicopter companies offering best-in-class standards, making them, according to Pedersen, 'visible to customers globally'. The Charter Alliance that emerged sells charter through Luxaviation Helicopters, as well as referring customers to Alliance members, guaranteeing that operators meet Luxaviation's standards. Pedersen

describes the concept as similar to the airlines' Star Alliance or Oneworld alliance, "A collaboration of companies with the same high standards and interested in developing further charter business. They pay us a fee that's commensurate with their typically small size – we expect them to cover the cost if their membership brings them just two or three more charter flights per year."

Companies considered for the Charter Alliance already meet the standards of their local regulator, but their membership guarantees a level of oversight that perhaps goes above and beyond that which might be expected in their region, offering charter clients even greater reassurance when they buy.

Pedersen confirms: "National regulatory audits look at basic helicopter operation. They confirm aircraft are airworthy, the pilots trained, correctly licenced, and so

on. We also check all that, and apply our own standards for commercial operations, including minimum flight hours and required level of piloting experience. We check their insurance is at the correct level, conduct an aviation safety audit and expect them to undergo an additional audit outside that conducted by the aviation authority. We usually find they're already audited by several organisations – IS-BAH, Wyvern, etc – but we also ensure the helicopters they're offering for charter are in agreement with the contract the companies sign with us.”

Alongside these direct inspections and confirmations, Luxaviation Helicopters uses its network of industry contacts to gather intelligence on potential Charter Alliance members. “It’s important that we hear recommendations from people that don’t work for the company or for a competitor, but know the region. Several of the established fixed-wing companies take exactly the same approach in deciding which

operators to work with,” Pedersen says.

Safe Operations

Pedersen says charter customers choosing a Luxaviation Helicopters Charter Alliance member company have the reassurance that they’re booking with an expert local operator that has been audited by an external company; she plays down the significance the association with Luxaviation brings, but it’s obviously a significant factor for many potential clients. She reckons: “What we’re really doing is winning greater exposure for the members and promoting companies who strive for the highest industry safety standards.” Among the Charter Alliance companies, Starspeed is a Luxaviation Helicopters subsidiary, while there was also an existing working relationship with ExecuJet and its helicopter fleet in Mexico and South Africa, as well as HeliFlite and Azur Hélicoptère. By that reckoning, the benefits of the Luxaviation Helicopters Charter Alliance

have already reached three other companies, but Pedersen explains the process of adding members in earnest only began in March.

“In fact, Azur Hélicoptère was the first company to join. We were in a meeting last year and I said: ‘I have an idea...’ The CEO really liked it and we decided to try it out. Then I called HeliFlite and said: ‘I have an idea...’ I explained it might not bring them any extra clients at all, but they thought it was worth a try too. They provided feedback after last summer, showing a 20% increase in charter enquiries.” Pedersen says there’s no evidence to suggest this was a direct result of HeliFlite’s association with Luxaviation, but it seems a reasonable assumption.

More companies are expected to join the Alliance soon, with Pedersen noting its intention to avoid promoting competing operators. On the other hand, she’s already seen members in one part of the world recommending clients to geographically

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Charlotte Pedersen, CEO,
Luxaviation Helicopters

very separate operators that they would never have known about had they not both been in the Alliance – exhibiting how the best operators in each region can work hand in hand to provide customers with an outstanding worldwide service.

Where paperwork is in order, assembled and delivered to Luxaviation quickly, new members may be confirmed in just three or four weeks. For operators where regional safety standards are perhaps less rigorously enforced, Luxaviation Helicopters Charter Alliance membership is likely to help them stand out. As Pedersen notes, plenty of companies have been flying for many years with fleets of ten or fewer helicopters and their continued survival is in itself an indication of the quality of their operation, regardless of local standards. But, she reckons, they may well lack the budget, or perhaps the expertise, to market themselves. They may have a website in only their own language, or even no website at all, and that's where the Alliance pays real dividends, Luxaviation offering advice and help with marketing and websites. "We're helping with every aspect of helicopter operations," she says, "even going as far as inspecting an aircraft that an operator was looking to buy in another country."

Luxaviation is a large and well-established company with buying power considerably greater than that of a typical Helicopter Alliance member. These smaller organisations therefore benefit from access to top quality training at more affordable prices, and may find the door opening to insurance and other deals that might otherwise never be offered. "Many of them have been operating from the same small airport for decades though, and we may not be able to improve on the arrangements they have in place with their local suppliers, so it's important that we leave them to decide how best to satisfy their requirements. What we do really well and what we're seeing happen, is bringing like-minded operators together,



CHARLOTTE PEDERSEN

...we realised there were more than 5,000 helicopter companies around the world, but only the largest six or seven were familiar..."

so they can adopt good ideas that are already working in other areas."

Meanwhile, the helicopter remains by nature a local tool, less visible even at major trade shows, including NBAA-BACE and EBACE, than business jets or turboprops. That lack of visibility in part comes down to cost, where the proportion of an aircraft's value accounted for in

bringing it to the show and parking it is far greater for a helicopter than a jet. Nonetheless, Pedersen sees the OEMs making greater efforts to exhibit their helicopters, in part as interest grows in urban mobility vehicles, while the efforts of the Luxaviation Helicopter Charter Alliance, promoting outstanding, best-in-class, safe and efficient operations globally, have their own important role to play.



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A Better FBO Experience

A Better FBO Experience isn't just the tag line of Dallas Love Field-based Business Jet Center, **it is a promise to exceed customer expectations** at every interaction. In doing so, it also offers unique services at a first-class facility with a family-run feel, as Partner Mike Wright and Manager of Sales & Marketing Cat Wren explain

Independent FBOs are increasingly rare. Finding one established and still operated by the same family is even less common, and that makes Business Jet Center at Dallas Love Field particularly special. Bob Wright took ownership of a Falcon 20 in the late 1980s, and a growing passion for aviation launched him into business at Love Field,

where he began buying, selling and operating aircraft in 1993, as Business Jet Services.

Twenty-six years later and now working in the aircraft management, charter and maintenance markets as Business Jet Access, the family-owned and operated company remains based at Business Jet

Center, operating 14 turbine aircraft under the general management of Bob's grandson, Chris Wright.

Bob saw the opportunity for a full spectrum of aviation service offerings at Love Field, and when an FBO facility became available in the mid-1990s, he was immediately interested. His son and Business Jet Center partner, Mike Wright, tells the story: "He understood the need for FBOs to offer better quality services and when the property became available we responded to a public request for proposals, competing with many of the largest FBO chains of the time.

"We won the leasehold with the promise to rehabilitate the dilapidated facility. In 1997 it comprised 13 acres with nine ageing hangars, one of them attached to a small private terminal. Today, Business Jet Center is located on 33 acres with 15 hangars and has a well-known three-storey terminal. We are blessed to say 70 turbine aircraft call Business Jet Center home."

Dallas Love Field sits centrally in the southern-most tract of the Continental US, a strategically important position for business jet traffic, as Cat Wren, Manager of Sales & Marketing at Business Jet Center confirms. "We serve a lot of aircraft, but mostly smaller jets and many of our frequent visitors are from surrounding states, or Texas – we see plenty of traffic from San Antonio, Austin and Houston. They're generally making fuel stops or visiting Dallas on business. The Dallas metroplex also offers all types of sporting event, thanks in part to its high-capacity stadiums and arenas, plus we see plenty of big-name concerts too. Recently there's been an influx of people moving in from



Cat Wren, Manager of Sales & Marketing, Business Jet Center



Airside at Business Jet Center, Dallas Love Field

California, with an associated rise in large jet numbers, and we also see regular customers from California, Florida and New York.”

Family spirit remains a key ingredient, nurtured through a careful staff selection process. But it’s a two-way process, where the staff also influence the business, as Mike explains: “We look for new employees with a joyful attitude, for people who take pride in serving others. We can train the skills required for the job, but it’s difficult to ingrain a service attitude.

“As a family-owned business, we also have the freedom to make changes that benefit both our customers and employees. Most of the ideas for improvements come from our staff. Their involvement in the day-to-day management of Business Jet Center creates a culture of inclusiveness and makes it a fun place to work. We believe that if our employees routinely have a smile on their faces, then our customers will be happy too.”

Mike Wright chooses ‘joyous’ in his description of the company’s staff and a close look at the FBO reveals it’s not a word he uses lightly. The Business Jet Center offers everything one might expect of a modern FBO, plus a game room, free slushies and ice cream. There’s something very different going on.

Cat Wren clearly possesses the qualities required for a successful Business Jet Center career. She started out servicing aircraft on the ramp and says the Wright family are central to the FBO’s service offering and unique approach to customer satisfaction. “They’re humble people who truly care about their employees.

“We pride ourselves on delivering a better FBO experience and it starts with our people. From our CFO to line service moving aircraft, to the flight line agents greeting customers, it’s a team effort. Years ago, we began providing complimentary refreshments, cookies, granola bars and fruit, and then we



Chris Wright, General Manager Business Jet Access, seated, and Partner, Business Jet Center, Mike Wright

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MIKE WRIGHT

We look for new employees with a joyful attitude, for people who take pride in serving others

added ice cream. We planned to take it away in the winter, but it became our most popular refreshment, so we now provide it year round! We also have a Very Important Pet – VIP – area with grass and water for our most favourite four-legged passengers.”

Aside from the attractions of free ice cream, Business Jet Center promotes itself as a one-stop shop for crew, passengers and servicing. “Anything a customer needs, between Business Jet Center and Business Jet Access, we can make it happen. Charter, management, maintenance, acquisition, sales, FBO services,” Cat says, “we’ve got it all and, if we don’t, we have preferred vendors for whatever your heart can dream up and can have them onsite with the aircraft in 15 minutes or less.

“Another way we’re different is in our emphasis on creating a smooth experience for passengers and crew, instead of focusing on fee structures. Valet car service is on the house. When a customer needs a GPU it’s complimentary. If they take on fuel, we waive the facility fee and offer all other ancillary ramp services for no charge. We go above and beyond for each customer, and because of that the loyalty of our customer base is incredible.”

Crews travelling through Business Jet Center enjoy ‘snooze rooms’ and bathroom facilities, a flight planning room, the ‘fish room’, so-called for its relaxing atmosphere, with dim lighting and fish tanks, recreation areas and, of course, the ever popular game room. Hangar space, which is especially important when bad weather blows in, is also usually

available. In fact, with 300,000sqft of hangar and terminal space, Business Jet Center is among Love Field’s major players and Cat says more land has recently been awarded to place as many as seven more 40,000sqft hangars on the Business Jet Center leasehold.

Community Connection

The Wrights and Business Jet Center staff also keenly support the local community. “As long-time Dallas residents, we’ve been fortunate with our success and take pride in giving back to the community through our non-profit company, Business Jet Cares,” Mike says. “We host an annual charity golf tournament that benefits veterans and their families.

Then, during Christmas, Business Jet Center and its tenants adopt local families in need, ensuring they receive presents under the tree, along with other essentials. Even more impressive is that all of these philanthropic ideas were created by our employees and their participation each year is incredible.” Cat adds: “Our Christmas To Remember programme helps families in need by our employees ‘adopting’ a family and buying them gifts. We’ve even gone out to family homes to do room makeovers where they can’t manage themselves. The owners here allow staff to take time out of their day-to-day job duties to pay back to the community.

“The non-profit all started in a budget meeting in 2012, where a colleague and I wanted to retool our annual customer and employee Christmas parties. Instead of one big holiday event each year, we started treating them all year long with cookouts, doughnut

breakfasts and food trucks. Not only did it raise our customer engagement by having multiple events, but it also saved us money in our overall budget. It was at that point we decided to take the surplus and increase our involvement in the local community.

“In short, our charity helps ‘kids, pets and vets’ as we like to say. We work closely with veteran charities and to date we’ve donated \$215,000, including contributions to Folds of Honor, which contributes scholarships to spouses and children of fallen veterans, and Patriot Paws, which raises puppies to provide canine companions to veterans at no cost.”

The Business Jet Center boasts a winning formula for staff and customers, and Mike is quick to note that growth in North Texas, “...has benefited us and continues to fuel the need for additional hangar space at Business Jet Center.” In July 2019, the Wrights opened their largest hangar/office facility, a new 49,000sqft space that is already fully leased. And that’s already not enough: “We’ve begun designing our next two hangar facilities,” he reveals.

Phillips 66

Business Jet Center carries Phillips 66 branding, in a bold move for a fiercely independent FBO. Cat Wren explains the association began some years ago and has endured thanks to the quality of the relationship. “We’re a high-demand FBO. During our peak seasons we’ll bring in as much as six truckloads of fuel per day and Phillips 66 has done well matching that demand,” she says.

“I think people are also attracted to the Phillips 66 brand and its card and reward programmes, and that, combined with our service standards, makes for a tempting proposition.” Business Jet Center was also re-awarded the CAA (Corporate Aircraft Association) contract rebid. Combining the benefits enjoyed by the 91 CAA card holders and its Phillips 66 relationship, Business Jet Center is able to offer just a little more discount to those select customers.

Diverse Solutions, Global Delivery

Providing global component support, logistics and AOG to the airline industry, UK-headquartered AJW Group is looking to **build its presence in the business and VIP aviation market** after recent deals with TAG Aviation and Bombardier. Boris Wolstenholme, AJW's Chief Strategy Officer, explains the company's capability and ambitions

Back in April, AJW Group announced signature of a pool access agreement supporting TAG Aviation's VIP Boeing 757. It brought a company more readily associated with the airline industry back onto the private aviation radar.

The TAG deal followed AJW's February 2018 cooperation with Bombardier Business Aircraft, in which it signed a long-term agreement to undertake all repair management for the OEM's rotatable inventory.

Both deals leverage the logistics and AOG expertise upon which AJW's airline customers have come to rely, but VIP and business aviation have very different requirements, with largely unscheduled flying over non-commercial routes. Boris Wolstenholme, AJW's Chief Strategy Officer, says: "We also have four ACJs under contract, with two operators, so the TAG 757 is not our first foray into private jet support. But it is a different marketplace to the airlines, albeit the fundamental issues are similar. The operator needs a supply chain logistics and supply solution."

In fact, the AJW/TAG Aviation agreement builds on an earlier arrangement where AJW supplied and replenished the 757's flyaway kit, a set of regularly required components and supplies that may be conveniently carried in the aircraft's hold, but might easily cause an AOG were they not immediately



Boris Wolstenholme, Chief Strategy Officer, AJW

BORIS WOLSTENHOLME

We're configured to focus the same expertise and capability on a fleet of one, with one-off or infrequent requirements, as we are on a fleet of hundreds

BORIS WOLSTENHOLME

We piece together the solution depending on the criticality of the demand and the aircraft location

available. Working closely with TAG's operations team, AJW defined the kit and has subsequently resupplied and evolved it.

Among its key commercial contracts, AJW provides deep support to easyJet's fleet from its leafy, West Sussex headquarters and a series of base stations. The latter system, though perfect for a hard-working airline with high aircraft utilisation rates, simply doesn't work for a VIP aircraft. "But our organisation is configured to be agile and very flexible. Commercial charter operators often ask us to quickly set up support solutions for remote bases. We develop logistics specifically for that location, move stock there and work with a network of international partners that we know we can rely on for local inventory support. It gives us a lot of robust capability.

"We also have our customer service organisations globally – in Singapore, Moscow, Shanghai and Montreal, as well as the UK. They can evolve very quickly, which means our account managers work with our customers to provide support in the same time zone as required, as well as benefiting from the linguistic capabilities that might be needed in different regions."

Unscheduled and Unforeseen

Most of the events AJW supports for



In April, AJW Group announced a pool access agreement supporting TAG Aviation's VIP Boeing 757



AJW's West Sussex HQ

its customers are what Wolstenholme describes as 'unscheduled, unforeseen, exceptional component failures', and there's very little difference between the logistics required to solve those on a commercial aircraft compared to a private jet. "The logistical solution is just more diverse. We piece together the solution depending on the criticality of the demand and the aircraft location.

"It could be anything from a standard overnight courier service, through to chartering an aircraft to meet an AOG. We work back from the questions: Where is the component needed and when is it needed

by? Is there a local solution? If not, what's the best logistic solution to get the part there on time, based on the components we have in our network? The challenges are usually around the framework surrounding that provision; it can't be done under a flight-hour contract as it would be for a commercial aircraft because the hours flown are so much lower and there's no planned utilisation."

Indeed, the majority of AJW's narrowbody airline customers fly between 2,000 and 3,500 hours per annum on each of their aircraft. The frequency of demand for a VIP aircraft flying 300 hours is proportionally less, but it's not a simple correlation. "It's

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AJW's West Sussex facility offers a bewildering array of components and logistics options

BORIS WOLSTENHOLME

We signed an 11-year contract with Bombardier, offering a rotatable component repair and exchange solution across the Challenger, Global and Learjet ranges; that's 27,000 component repairs per year

not a linear relationship with utilisation, but there is a proportionality. Comparing mature narrowbodies on these hours, for example, if there were 80 airframe rotatable failures per year on the airliner, we'd expect 20 to 30% of that on the VIP aircraft. We don't see any real difference in the type of component failure, but it still occurs at a meaningful frequency."

Ideally, AJW builds as accurate a picture of an aircraft's movements as it can, since prior knowledge of where it's likely to be and when can help in the event of an issue. Wolstenholme emphasises that clients are

not contractually obliged to provide such information, but notes: "We recommend they keep us informed if they want us to be prepared for component or maintenance requirements at their destinations. But there's usually no pattern to where they operate, so our focus is on building our network in different regions and ensuring our elite AOG teams, which operate 24/7, are fully briefed on the logistical solutions they're empowered to put together."

Business Jet Space

AJW's primary focus has always been on

its commercial business, but since the February 2018 signing with Bombardier, the VIP and business aviation market has become increasingly interesting. "We signed an 11-year contract with Bombardier, offering a rotatable component repair and exchange solution across the Challenger, Global and Learjet ranges; that's 27,000 component repairs per year. It means we work very closely with their AOG desk and that's given us further insight into the industry and the possibility for moving into the business jet space.

"And that's not only working with the operators, but also looking at how we can support the service and solutions providers. With that in mind and given the fact that we already support the ACJ, we'd very much welcome the BBJ. It represents a significant fleet and the concentrations of those aircraft in Asia, the Middle East, North America and Western Europe plays to our strengths."

Given the scope of its commercial support, moving into the market for VIP aircraft based on those airliner models is a relatively easy step for AJW. "We can support the component requirement, but need to put something in place for the specifics of buyer-furnished equipment, including galley systems and IFEC technology, which would be tailored. But every support operation faces those challenges and we already have robust logistics and MRO organisations in place, used to sourcing and implementing solutions all the time."

There seems a contradiction, however, between the vast scope of AJW's Bombardier and easyJet deals, and the type of one or two-aircraft VIP operation for which Wolstenholme says the company could offer a complete solution. How does an organisation capable of dealing with these huge requirements turn its focus to a single jet? "It's how we started," Wolstenholme says, "handling individual customers with small fleets or single aircraft. We're configured to focus the same expertise and capability on a fleet of one, with one-off or infrequent requirements, as we are on a fleet of hundreds."

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Service Without Compromise

Sikorsky takes a significant portion of the VVIP and head of state helicopter markets with its S-76 and S-92 models. Regional Vice President, Business Development, US & Canada, Jeanette Eaton describes its product line and global support network



A VIP S-76D cabin option

Sikorsky was among the early helicopter pioneers. The diminutive R-4 flew in prototype form in 1942 and soon entered service as the US military's first helicopter. An evolving series of primarily military rotorcraft followed, including the VH-3 presidential transport from the ubiquitous Sea King family line.

Commercial variants of Sikorsky's military designs became available almost from the outset, but during the 1970s the OEM began development of an all-new, twin-engined medium helicopter aimed directly at the civilian market. Optimised for utility and passenger transport missions with oil and gas, airline and corporate operators, the S-76 took its maiden flight in 1977 and reached its first customer in 1979. That

was 40 years ago and yet the S-76 remains as Sikorsky's corporate and VVIP medium helicopter offering.

In itself, that's perhaps not unusual. There are many examples of decades-old airframe designs still in production, today fashioned using the latest construction techniques and flying on modern engines and avionics systems. But those aircraft need to have been exceptional in the first instance and remain attractive to customers who weren't born when they first came to market. What's the key to the S-76's longevity?

Jeanette Eaton, Regional Vice President, Business Development, US & Canada at Sikorsky Aircraft reckons there are four vital ingredients to its success. "First, the

aircraft's exceptional safety record. Second is reliability and availability. Time is money for our VVIP customers. They want an aircraft that's there for them when they need it and S-76 availability is historically above 95%. Third, it's fast, with an extremely smooth, quiet ride. Passengers can enjoy a drink in the back of the S-76D while talking without having to raise their voices above the level of a typical conference room meeting, or take a call with similar ease." And fourth? "It just looks good!"

The S-76D is the current production model, with an integrated Thales glass cockpit including four-axis autopilot and other additional safety features, among them an enhanced ground proximity warning system, and a power limit indicator, all designed to enhance crew situational awareness while reducing workload. There are also enlarged windows and the advanced Pratt & Whitney Canada PW210S engines drive main and tail rotor blades manufactured from high-performance, flaw-tolerant composites.

Presented with the possibilities of a strong VIP market, Eaton says Sikorsky is also working hard to clear some of its used S-76C inventory. "We've converted several aircraft to VIP configuration and listed them on our website, offering them as new or pre-owned, with a new aircraft warranty and entitlements. We also produce engine upgrade packages for existing S-76C+ customers, including engines, wiring harnesses, inlet barrier filters and accessories to retrofit aircraft to S-76C++ standard." All of which means that while some of the oldest S-76A helicopters have been retired, the S-76C and S-76D have a strong future.

To date, Sikorsky has delivered in excess of 180 VIP-configured S-76s and Eaton says the VIP mission accounts for more than 20% of the worldwide fleet. The type provides head-of-state transportation for ten countries and among its VVIP clients, the British Royal Household has employed the S-76 since the 1990s.

S-92

Perhaps more familiar in the offshore support role, the S-92 provides the basis for Sikorsky's second and much larger VIP helicopter. Delivered from 2004 as a competitor to aircraft including the Super

Puma (today the Airbus Helicopters H225), the S-92 has also found a niche in the head-of-state market; as the VH-92, it will replace the US Marine Corp VH-3 fleet. The aircraft's large cabin facilitates a variety of customer options. Eaton says it's an exceptional machine, but then she would. Instead of expounding its virtues, she simply passes on feedback from an operator:

'Wow, we never knew a helicopter could be like this.' That's typical of comments we hear when VVIP customers first meet the S-92. This particular statement came from a very high-profile Hollywood star who'd had plenty of opportunities to be amazed during his long and illustrious career.

We've learned that the full advantages of flying in the VIP S-92 need to be experienced to be understood; just talking about it never really does it justice. We are often late taking off, not because the aircraft is

delayed, but because it takes so long for passengers to take selfies of themselves and their guest(s) boarding this remarkable machine. They love the whole experience.

Most VIP helicopters are ultimately limited by one or more unavoidable compromises. They often don't have much leg room or space between the seats, so passengers rarely wish to travel longer than one hour. Very few helicopters have useful luggage space, and very few billionaires travel light. Most helicopters are severely limited on fuel if you have to use short-field or vertical profiles, limiting either the journey or the number of passengers carried. None of these limitations applies to the S-92. And there is only one helicopter with a toilet fitted – the S-92. In a remote field, or after a long day at the horse races, this 'luxury' is often a necessity and a significant comfort and source of relief.

We've had the privilege of operating in the VVIP market for more than 40 years, and to have flown in excess of 20 different helicopter types in more than 65 countries. After all that time and experience, we have to say that in many respects the opportunity to operate the S-92 for the last five years has been the pinnacle of our story. As an operating company, we've seen that the S-92 offers so many unique advantages as an onshore VIP transport and we've seen those advantages appreciated by customers of all types. We believe this potential just needs to reach a tipping point in order for the S-92 to become an even more successful aircraft in the market; our next challenge, in partnership with Sikorsky, is to drive towards that tipping point of success and wider adoption.

And therein lies the rub. Sikorsky's massive military success is continuing with the latest evolutions of the H-53

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and H-60, while its dramatic S-97 Raider technology demonstrator has the potential to revolutionise helicopter design. Its S-76 and S-92 are also highly regarded in the commercial and government VVIP markets, but the OEM isn't the first, probably not even the second that springs to mind when considering the corporate and VIP helicopter market as a whole.

"It's important to keep in mind that since we don't play in the light helicopter game, only in the medium and heavy, we have less volume of commercial business strictly in terms of units," Eaton explains. "However, when you consider the investments associated with developing and maintaining medium and heavy helicopters and supporting them out in the world, we are as strong, if not stronger, than anyone, as evidenced by the recently announced S-92A+/B and the seven different S-76 models developed through the years."

Explaining the S-92A+ and S-92B models announced at HAI Heli-Expo in March this year, Eaton says: "These fleet upgrades will include the introduction of a new Phase IV main gearbox with an architecture that plays a huge role in reducing operating costs, while bringing a ten-fold improvement in safety. We're also launching the first commercial application of technology demonstrated in our MATRIX programme. Phase one brings advanced computing power to the platform as part of an infrastructure enabling additional future products that will shape the way we fly for the next 30 years. The S-92B will become the new production aircraft, and the S-92A+ is produced from a kit for upgrading fielded aircraft to a similar configuration." The S-92B will also feature 20% larger cabin windows and other cabin and role improvements.

Even as the upgraded S-92 promises to bring new customers into the fold and the S-76D continues quietly and discretely to satisfy the needs of its VIP clientele, Sikorsky has a robust customer support structure in place. Helicopters are complex machines subject to rigours fixed-wing aircraft seldom, if ever face, and even the most reliable will need fixing from time to time.

S-76 support is perhaps complicated by the primary variants employing different engine



Jeanette Eaton, VP Global Business, Commercial Systems and Services at Sikorsky Aircraft. Her appreciation of the S-76D is more than a sales pitch – she also pilots the aircraft

JEANETTE EATON

Passengers can enjoy a drink in the back of the S-76D while talking without having to raise their voices above the level of a typical conference room meeting, or take a call with similar ease.

types and avionics suites, but Eaton says even the legacy fleet is subject to the same standard of care. "We support all S-76 and S-92 customers with our 24/7/365 Customer Care Center, in Trumbull, Connecticut, four Forward Stocking Locations (FSLs) and an increasing number of deployed Field Service Representatives across the globe. We also continue to authorise Sikorsky Customer Support Centers, 20 of which are in operation.

"Our Customer Care Center has consistently resolved aircraft-on-ground events in less than 24 hours over the past two years and continues to do so. Our four strategically-located FSLs house critical components and parts closer to the customers who are most likely to need them at a moment's notice and, in some cases, parts have been delivered in less than an hour.

"We've also increased our focus on sustainment support, with our Fleet Management Center. Co-located at the Customer Care Center, the team monitors component removal rates, when and why particular parts need to be replaced, and how long it takes to replace them. Then they use predictive analytics to develop proactive solutions for scheduled fleet maintenance, reducing the number of AOG events and increasing fleet availability levels."

Eaton concludes: "These resources enable Sikorsky to provide timely, responsive support that keeps our customers flying and brings them home everywhere, every time," an assurance that probably goes a long way to explaining why they bought a Sikorsky product in the first place.



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Time To Deliver

SmartSky Networks' innovative air-to-ground connectivity solution has taken almost a decade to create. Next year, when its first customers go online, President and Director Ryan Stone says **the reality of ground experience in the air will finally have arrived**

Founded in 2011, SmartSky Networks expects to begin delivery of its unique air-to-ground (ATG) connectivity to airline and business aviation customers very soon. It's been a long haul, marked by significant progress and regular news releases as milestones are reached.

On 30 July 2019, for example, the company announced it had: "...received its 130th patent supporting the development of its advanced air-to-ground network. Titled, *Architecture for Simultaneous Spectrum Usage by Air-to-Ground and Terrestrial Networks*, SmartSky's latest patent is part of an exclusive rights portfolio at the core of its unique and innovative ATG technology." SmartSky isn't simply developing a communications system, it's reinventing the connectivity wheel.

Looking back on almost a decade of development work, SmartSky Networks President and Director Ryan Stone says: "They've been an inspiring few years as we took on what started

out as a daunting challenge. We divided it into milestones, with the belief that if we proved something that wasn't known before at one step, then we got to go to the next. At times it was frustrating. A lot of what was believed about air-to-ground connectivity was wrong because the wrong technology base was being applied; it wasn't that air-to-ground was slow, just that the limited air-to-ground spectrum was slow.

"What we were doing was making the most capital-efficient aviation communications network that has ever been seen. It wasn't expensive, but compared to a business that isn't deploying a nationwide network, our investment seems like a lot of money – several hundred million dollars is not a lot in our space, especially if you consider the cost of launching and operating a single satellite, which might represent a half-billion dollar investment. What we're doing is very different. We've set the bar high and we've worked hard to achieve it."



Ryan Stone, President and Director, SmartSky Networks

“We’ve done a number of customer demonstrations on our Citation XLS and with our launch airline, JSX, on a regional jet, and those have shown the experience available from our connectivity is head and shoulders above anything else on the market – it delivers the experience we expect on the ground.”

Interestingly, just as SmartSky is no regular connectivity provider, so JSX is an unusual airline. Operating a fleet of 30-seat Embraer ERJ135s configured to a standard close to business class, the carrier offers daily ‘hop-on’ services, primarily between California cities, but soon extending into Arizona, Nevada and Washington. Its customers enjoy rapid boarding and comfortable lounges but, Stone explains, “The one gap was a really robust internet connection in the air. Now the first JSX aircraft is being outfitted with our equipment.” The airline’s website notes: “...coming in 2020 – free high-speed WiFi on board”.

The wait is almost over. SmartSky will soon prove that the performance wowing customers and journalists on demonstration flights translates into a similarly impressive product in daily use. “Our focus now is on rolling the network out across the US and optimising the experience so that people can do everything they do on the ground in the air, without changing their behaviour. We’ve also been working on STCs with our partner companies and right now those potentially cover 10,000 ‘tails’, either with STCs complete or under way. In just a few months, we’ll be in a really different place,” Stone says.

Winning A Market

Depending on your point of view, ‘just a few months’ is nothing in terms of aerospace development and regulation, but a lifetime if you want SmartSky delivering on your Learjet. What will Stone be telling potential customers visiting the company’s NBAA-BACE booth? “They should talk to whichever of our partners has or is developing the STC for their aircraft, and get their install scheduled. We’ll ask when maintenance is due so the install can be done at the same time as the annual check.” If that shop visit and install fell in April 2020, for example, how long would the customer need to wait before getting online? “They’ll be enjoying it from Day One,” Stone declares.

So, SmartSky connectivity for business aviation customers is imminent, at which point the industry will be testing the company’s claim for delivering the ground experience in the air. It’s a claim made many times by the major connectivity players in recent years and one upon which a minority is now beginning to satisfy. Is SmartSky’s promise marketing spin? Or will it genuinely deliver?

Stone doesn’t hesitate. “Yes, we really will deliver. Those claims are part of the reason we started the company. We were consistently disappointed by the incumbent systems, where the marketing didn’t match the experience. What people are finding on our demos is that the experience matches the expectation. That’s what our customers will find.

“But saying it will match the experience on the ground doesn’t mean much unless you provide examples, describe what it will match. So, if you use VPN on the ground, you’ll be able to do it in the air. If you access the Cloud for your corporate computing, you’ll be able to do it in the air, whether you’re downloading or uploading files – we’ve had someone upload 800Mb to the Cloud during a demo flight, while other people were also using devices and a Fortnite game was going on. And, on a business jet, people will be video conferencing and ‘Webexing’ too.”



RYAN STONE

...we created the technology to reuse the terrestrial spectrum in the air...

Most readers aged over 30 likely rolled their eyes at mention of Fortnite, but the mass multiplayer battle royale game could be a standard industry test for latency, the time taken for a signal to travel from its origination point in the aircraft, to the internet, and back.

Stone explains: "Latency can't be avoided, it's a result of the physics. But we have an inherent advantage of about a half second because we're sending signals only to a tower on the ground and back, rather than to a satellite. On top of that, the architecture and 5G technology of our system optimises the service, further minimising latency." It's an important component in SmartSky's compelling experience.

The US has a well-established incumbent in the air-to-ground space, already serving

customers in the airline and business aviation markets. SmartSky is taking on that trusted player in the quest for business and it needs to offer a genuine alternative.

"It won't be easy, but our focus has been on providing the one thing missing from the industry – a compelling user experience. We believe that if we do that well, when people start using the network things will naturally happen. I liken it to the terrestrial environment in the late 1990s, where a large incumbent had a majority of the dial-up service. When broadband was created it transformed the industry and the mix of players. We're in this to improve the calibre of experience. We think competition is a good thing and the market is large enough to support multiple players, even without taking share away from the incumbent."

SmartSky has impressed customers with demonstrations aboard its Citation XLS

SmartSky is virtually awash with patents – 130 issued and 91 pending by mid-August – such is the scope of its technology. And it's still working to improve, even as it gets closer to 'switching on' its service. Is there an argument for sitting back, happy to be delivering what was promised? "Kodak did that with the digital camera," Stone says. "They decided their film business was good enough and didn't really invest in their digital camera unit, even though they had one. It caused the company's downfall. You can't ever get complacent in a technology business. And, pushing the envelope is one of our three core values."

But if the company had been less ambitious, perhaps settling for a product that was simply better, rather than revolutionary, might it have come to market and begun making money sooner? "No." Stone is emphatic. "Strangely, the whole market has been working against a very significant constraint – spectrum availability. The incumbent air-to-ground player paid \$40 million for the only 4MHz of spectrum available in the US. We're using 60MHz, so even if that spectrum had been available, at that rate we'd have had to spend around \$600 million, just for the real estate.

"Instead, we created the technology to reuse the terrestrial spectrum in the air, without the ground disrupting us, while ensuring we didn't cause harmful interference to the ground. Solving those challenges wasn't trivial, but if you ignore the marketing, all the incumbents were delivering a dial-up or slightly faster service and I don't think the market needed another similar solution. We began by solving the spectrum issue, then developed our beam-forming technology. In order to deliver the experience people wanted in the air, the experience that had been promised for so long, without them having to change their habits when they got on the airplane, we had to be innovative."

SmartSky Networks does appear to have reinvented the connectivity wheel. After nine years of intensive work, its innovation is finally reaching fruition. The time for demonstration is over. The time to deliver has arrived.



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Foam for the Future

Zotefoams' ZOTEK F product is already used in aerospace, but now the company is **exploring its wider application** in VIP cabins. James Bridges, Director of HPP Products at Zotefoams, explains

While new materials frequently make their way into executive and VIP aircraft cabins, they're often finishes for cabinets or floors, or seat and divan coverings. The stringent fire, smoke and toxicity requirements that necessarily regulate the industry mean the basic materials of cabin structure, seat carcass, wall panels and ducts, generally change little.

For those very good reasons, plus the long lead times for entering new systems and, indeed, entire aircraft into service, the industry tends to walk a difficult line between high-tech advance and conservatism. But then there are those rare occasions when something so different comes along it has the power to stop the industry in its tracks, through a step change in possibilities.

Croydon, UK-based Zotefoams appears to have just such a product. It's a foam with mind-blowing capabilities. And it really has to be handled to be believed. Holding a confusingly lightweight, embossed, beautifully coloured seat panel in the hand, twisting it to the limit of one's strength, then watching as it springs perfectly back into shape baffles as much as it delights. The possibilities of Zotefoams' technology are really beyond words, but James Bridges, Director of High-Performance Plastics (HPP) Products at the company, gives it a try.

A producer of closed-cell polyethylene (PE), polyvinylidene difluoride (PVDF) and nylon polyamide (PA) foams for demanding industrial applications, Zotefoams realised that the unique properties of PVDF foams provide a sophisticated, lightweight, fire resistant solution for aviation interior technology, reducing weight while exceeding industry standards.



Potential airline application of MGRSoftWall trim panels, employing ZOTEK F as their primary material

Founded as a manufacturer of expanded rubber products in the 1920s, Zotefoams' forerunner supplied aviation-grade foamed rubber from the 1930s. During the 1970s, the portfolio became polyolefin-based, since the future lay in the more specialised and sophisticated properties afforded by plastics. During the 1990s, Zotefoams investigated and developed a range of high-performance foams produced from engineering polymers.

Key to the performance and success of these foams is a unique manufacturing process using only pure nitrogen for expansion. It's inherently environmentally friendly and certainly far more so than the widespread method of expanding foams chemically. Nitrogen is also chemically inert, an important factor where flame retardancy is a critical requirement.

Manufacture is through a three-stage process, including a high-pressure dose of pure nitrogen. The nitrogen-charged slabs of newly produced material are loaded into a low-pressure autoclave and heated above their softening temperature, allowing controlled expansion of the nitrogen and uniform physical foaming. Most foams are chemically blown, the plastic heated and mixed with a blowing agent to produce expansion. This is more difficult to control than physical expansion and can result in non-uniform density and product properties that vary with direction. The chemical blowing agent is also released over time, producing odour and potential fogging.

Among Zotefoams' most successful products, ZOTEK F offers a host of beneficial characteristics for aviation interior

technology. A PVDF foam, it's an inherently flame-retardant material that releases very little heat and only small quantities of smoke on combustion. Nitrogen expansion ensures it has a uniform cell structure, for the same properties in all directions.

ZOTEK F's physical performance means it is compatible with a wide range of forming methods, allowing the production of complex shapes for applications requiring high durability. The material has become increasingly popular as carpet underlay for example, its closed cell structure ensuring high thermal and acoustic insulation values, excellent resistance to impact and long-term durability to crush. Since it's a closed cell foam, ZOTEK F does not absorb water; as an underlay, it doesn't collect water that might otherwise cause corrosion.

Used this way, ZOTEK F also offers huge weight savings; as much as 1.25kg/m². Putting this into perspective, Zotefoams' data suggests a 100kg weight reduction is the equivalent of a US\$25 million saving in fuel costs over the life of an aircraft. For a twin-aisle business jet, the weight saving could be as much as 200kg.

Lighter, Quieter Air

Moreover, many aviation OEMs have adopted ZOTEK F for environmental control system (ECS) ducting, thanks in part to its light weight, but also for its noise attenuating and cost saving benefits. ZOTEK F ducts are installed as finished components, integrating the pipe and insulation functions, and reducing the need for multiple materials. Modular ZOTEK F duct systems are now available for VIP aircraft, simplifying and expediting the modification process, as well as for system upgrades on older aircraft.

ZOTEK F is also the only foam compatible with bake moulding, an increasingly popular manufacturing method for components requiring high durability. These include armrests; features such as grooves can easily be added to accommodate stitch lines for a high-quality seam.

Zotefoams already works closely with MGR Foamtex, Europe's leading manufacturer of advanced passenger upholstery systems

for premium cabin seating. The company provides innovative designs to airlines and manufacturers, among them the world's first easily removable padded vertical surface covering, known as MGRSoftWall. ZOTEK F is the material of choice in the soft-touch SoftWall trim panels. Installed on the seat shells in business and first-class seating areas, the panels are trimmed with the airline's chosen fabric, enhancing the luxury customer experience through soft finish and noise reduction. Individual panels are very easily removed and replaced, helping airlines keep cabins looking fresh and new, and potentially simplifying rebranding efforts.

Compared with other foams, PVDF offers excellent chemical resistance, even to aviation fluids and chemicals. It's also biologically inert, making it resistant to mould and bacteria. With no flammable agents added during manufacture, ZOTEK F is inherently non-flammable, so it naturally achieves aviation flammability standards, including those established by the major OEMs, meeting BMS 8-371D and AIMS04-14-009 thanks to its low heat release performance and fire, smoke and toxicity properties. Since it adds very little to the overall combustibility of soft-touch interior fittings, ZOTEK F also allows a wider variety of materials to be employed.

ZOTEK F offers a range of irresistible features in an almost blank canvas for executive and VIP cabin designers to explore. Uniquely capable, it is perfectly suited to a spectrum of obvious cabin applications, but at the same time offers potential for functionality and design yet to be realised.



Soft-touch ZOTEK F seat components



ECS components in ZOTEK F. The duct sections can be twisted and crushed in the hand, properties that potentially ease installation, especially where access to tight spaces or positioning around existing structures is necessary



Seat cushion section in ZOTEK F

JAMES BRIDGES

“...many aviation OEMs have adopted ZOTEK F for environmental control system ducting, thanks in part to its light weight, but also for its noise attenuating and cost saving benefits”

Scheduling the Future

“When I was a young captain at a new and growing flight department, I heard complaints from pilots about how they couldn’t see their schedules. Most smaller flight departments didn’t have software because it was expensive and difficult to learn. Also, none of the software was web based, so it only worked on local computers once it had been downloaded. I believed a website would make more sense, especially since the internet had really started to grow and had already proven reliable.”

Charter Matrix was the immediate result of Terry Cooper’s thought process, initially as an online air charter marketplace, but later evolving to become the company responsible for the revolutionary AirplaneManager. He’d created his own system and after a couple of corporate pilots saw it on his laptop and requested copies, he combined his flying experience with a passion for web development.

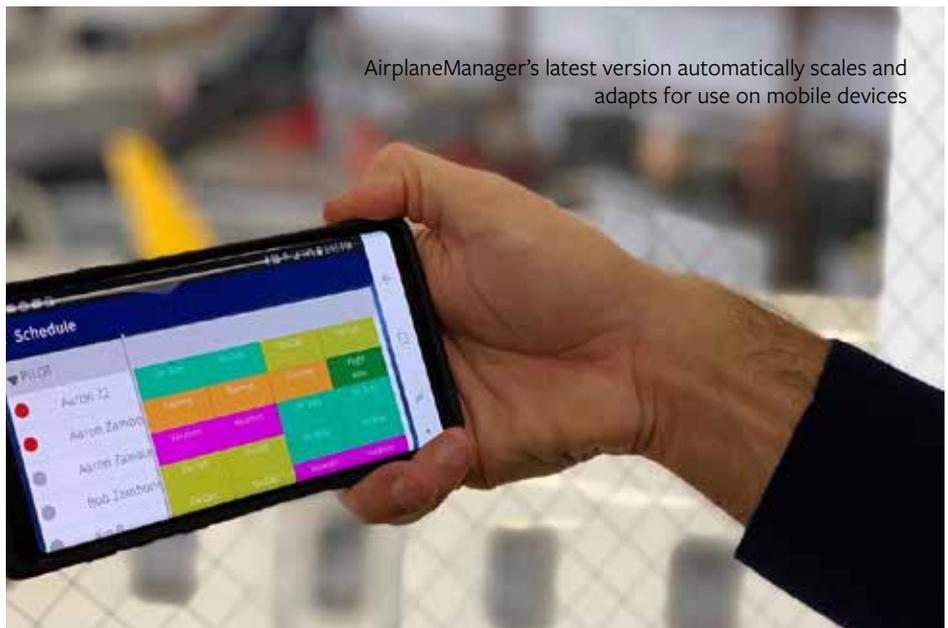
Charter Matrix was established in 2005 and Cooper remains as president, most recently overseeing the latest iteration of AirplaneManager.com, which satisfies just about every scheduling need a flight department could have. AirplaneManager emerged in 2009, with the aim of: “...allowing companies to send data in real time to help facilitate fuel, air charter, FBO, ground transportation and other services via online flight scheduling software.

“We were born out of the charter market, but I quickly realised that corporate flight departments loved how simple and easy our system was compared to the legacy software systems. Our goal has always been to keep it simple and maintain a flow to its use that makes sense for the flight,” Cooper explains.

By 2011, AirplaneManager was fully functional and rapidly becoming an industry standard, a fact recognised in 2015, when service providers – FBOs, fuel companies, charter brokers – began accessing the site to interact with flight departments. What began as a scheduling tool rapidly became an online community too.

Cooper’s enthusiasm for the product is expected, but it’s reassuring to hear those

Terry Cooper produced his first business aviation software in 2005, subsequently creating the AirplaneManager flight scheduling system. Now he’s **celebrating the release of AirplaneManager’s latest version**, introducing a raft of new, mobile-friendly capability



AirplaneManager’s latest version automatically scales and adapts for use on mobile devices

on the front line being equally keen. Now Director of Flight Operations at Skechers, Shane L. Carlson says: “I was formerly chief pilot of a Part 135 operation where, over a 17-year period, we went from a whiteboard to a spreadsheet and, ultimately, to using Flight Operations System [FOS]. So, I’ve seen and used no-tech, low-tech, and too much tech – I had to keep an FOS specialist on staff just to manage the platform’s complexities.

“I believe AirplaneManger represents the perfect balance of features and capability, and ease of use for managers, pilots, flight attendants and even our principals. In addition, having them answer my calls when I have a question or problem is really valuable.”

Scott Rodgers, Aviation Department Manager and Chief Pilot at Dippin’ Dots, says: “For many years we used our own aviation department management program, developed in-house for tracking aircraft times, flight department and trip expenses,

aircraft and pilot currencies, and many other data points. When it needed significant upgrade, we began searching for a reasonably priced vendor-provided solution. We knew exactly what we wanted and tried several online aircraft management platforms, but they didn’t flow, were too clunky, or just not intuitive enough... then we found AirplaneManager.

“No reasonably priced online aircraft and flight department management and scheduling program will meet all the needs of every flight department, but AirplaneManager comes closer to meeting our needs than any comparable online platform at the price point.

“Although AirplaneManager is a solid management and scheduling platform for the price, from our perspective its greatest assets are the developer’s never-ending drive to search for ways to improve upon what is already a great platform, along with their excellent customer service and fast response



Terry Cooper ready to fly the company Aerostar 601TP. He asks: “How many other flight scheduling software producers have an experienced corporate pilot at their head?” Cooper is also rated on the G200 and G450

to user needs and questions, something that is often lost in today’s corporate world.”

When Not To Be A Website

Cooper enthuses: “Our new system is a ‘progressive web app’, employing the most modern code available. The site knows when to be a website and when to be an app on a tablet or phone, its smart code scales for all modern devices. We offer an air charter module that shares its foundation with the corporate software. The system can track all staff, passengers, and aircraft, through forward-thinking features we believe are the most modern in the industry.”

He calls the 2008-developed AirplaneManager the ‘legacy’ system but notes that it’s still running. “We plan to transfer all users over to the new version this fall. It is still more modern than most of the software systems out there, but we pride ourselves on being first in the industry, that’s why we made the new progressive web app to replace the legacy system. It gives us so many more options.”

The revised system does everything the previous version did, but better, adding new capability and retaining features that evolved since AirplaneManager’s 2011 full-service debut, including the preferred FBO directory. “We created it out of demand,” Cooper recalls. “Our members are many and with numbers comes the need to offer programmes to fit their needs. FBOs want our members’ business and we are the primary way our members select airports and FBOs.

“Now we’ve established a formal programme enabling FBOs to offer our members a fuel discount in order to earn their business. We only allow one preferred FBO per airport; it has become very successful and is growing weekly. We recently added Clay Lacy at Van Nuys and Meridian at Teterboro, for example.”

AirplaneManager’s customers are typically charter companies and corporate flight departments, with Cisco and Bridgestone, as well as Skechers and Dippin’ Dots among

them. Cooper says: “We work with many fuel and other companies too, including EVO Fuels, 1800WXBrief, FlightAware and FlightBridge.” It really is difficult to keep up but according to the website, early in September AirplaneManager was serving 489 flight departments and 1,612 aircraft with 10,112 active users.

Security, as well as the appropriateness of accessible data, is a cornerstone of AirplaneManager, especially with customers accessing it through desktop, laptop and mobile device. Cooper says security is achieved through a ‘very stable and logical method’. In terms of controlling access, “Customers give their staff individual logins, each login with specific security applied. Pilots, for example, can only do or see pilot-related tasks.”

Broadband Future

The availability and reliability of internet connection was among Cooper’s motivations for establishing Charter Matrix almost a decade and a half ago. Now, at last, broadband connectivity is available not only to flight departments but, increasingly, to their aircraft crews and passengers.

“It’s a dream come true for us,” Cooper exclaims. “We knew this day would come. We also knew a system like ours could facilitate so many services, including fuel, FBOs, flight planning and handling. Internet in the jets is allowing our system to connect to the airplane. The owner will use it like we use Uber now.

“The future is very big for scheduling software and we’re making it simpler day by day. It’s more mobile friendly than ever before and at the same time becoming commonplace for all flight departments. Internet on the aircraft opens up new areas for our system, too. We now allow pilots to file and amend their flight plans directly inside the app. They can also order fuel, message FBOs and submit international trip planning requests directly to EVO’s ops centre. Meanwhile, owners and executive assistants are getting much more involved with AirplaneManager and this is opening up many more new options to explore.

“Anything is possible and at the NBAA show we’ll be showing off our future!”

Quality, Clarity & Trust...

Jet 8's **jet advisory service is all about trusted relationships.** As managing partner and business aircraft sales expert Adrien Chazottes reveals, that can mean telling prospective customers they shouldn't buy an aircraft at all

Headquartered in Hong Kong and with five mainland China offices, the Dragon General Aviation (DGA) Group is a significant regional force in the business and VIP aviation industry. Founded by local pioneer Diana Chou, DGA operates three companies, L'VOYAGE, providing aircraft charter, VIP travel and lifestyle solutions; Aerochine, the official Bell representative in China, Hong Kong and Macau, offering helicopter sales, support and MRO; and Jet 8, a jet advisory service provider.

At first glance, Jet 8 looks like a broker, but it's actually much more. Dealing with clients globally, but primarily buying from or selling into the Far Eastern market, Jet 8 works with customers to facilitate the purchase and/or sales process, advising on aircraft types, finance and insurance, then remaining on hand to dispense advice and support even after the deal is done.

Chou established Jet 8 with managing partner Adrien Chazottes in July 2018. Like Chou, Chazottes has a history and continuing connection with Bombardier, having in the past held positions in sales with the OEM and VistaJet. Today, primarily working to serve Jet 8's customers in South East Asia, he remains expert in the Challenger and Global series, but works across the full spectrum of business aviation. Although Jet 8 shares DGA's Hong Kong HQ, it also maintains offices in Beijing and Shanghai.



Adrien Chazottes, Managing Partner, Jet 8

ADRIEN CHAZOTTES

It's important for us to be there at the right time, providing the correct advice, rather than just pursuing a deal

Its website notes Jet 8 first as an 'Aircraft Advisory', before mentioning 'Acquisitions' and then 'Sales'. Placing advice before sales, Chazottes says he and his team occasionally find themselves advising against a deal. "We base the business on relationships and trust. Pretty much all our clients return to us, first for unbiased advice and second to buy or sell an airplane. I believe they come back because they trust us and value our advice.

"When we advise a client we're able to take the emotional attachment to the asset out of the equation. We don't fall in love with the metal, so it's easy for us to suggest a client waits for more favourable market conditions before purchasing, or holds on to their aircraft for a few more months before upgrading.

"The emotional aspect of the decision remains the client's privilege; we're there to offer unbiased advice. It often happens that

we put a dollar value on two-year old option 'B', which we think represents better value than new option 'A', but if the client prefers 'A', then that's the correct decision for them."

Transaction Journey

Whichever option a client goes for, Jet 8 accompanies them on their transaction journey. "It depends on the complexity of the buyer and seller. Some have fleets, with flight departments and everything set up; in which case we might focus on getting the right airplane at the right price, or selling at the correct price. But if we have someone new to airplane ownership, we like to start by offering charter services through L'VOYAGE, so they can sample the private jet experience.

"Then we'll advise on which platform is best for them and take a look at the market. We'll discuss market trends and the locations of the most suitable aircraft for them. Next

comes a deep dive, where we identify a couple of options and explain why we think they're most suitable. Following that, we'll do a valuation and once we've reached an agreement, we'll 'shoot for the airplane', go out and negotiate for its purchase. At that stage we'll advise on legal aspects, insurance, financing and operations, helping them evaluate providers rather than supplying those services ourselves. Our strength is in identifying and acquiring the best-fit airplane; there are professional people we've worked with in the past who can help with everything else. So, we hold the client's hand until the airplane is delivered, but they'll often still call with questions, helping keep the relationship fresh."

Offering customers new to private aviation charter through L'VOYAGE could be a useful tactic in terms of enamouring them with the possibilities of bizjet flying, but doesn't always promote sales. On the contrary. For some potential owners, the L'VOYAGE experience proves only that charter is the ideal solution to their needs and they ought not purchase a jet. "If a client bought an airplane they didn't really need, it would become an issue very quickly. It's important for us to be there at the right time, providing the correct advice, rather than just pursuing a deal.

"We had a client keen to buy a jet and have fun for 12 months. I advised against it, because just the acquisition and resale process is a big commitment and it made no economic sense. So we said he should buy a block of 100 hours instead. The cost was comparable, but without the process."

Team Effort

Chazottes seldom uses 'I' as he enthuses over Jet 8, preferring 'we'. The company's core team of four is augmented on a consultant basis as required. Two staff work in China. Chazottes explains: "It's key, because the market is huge, but they also help us overcome language or cultural barriers. We need local people in Beijing and Shanghai who completely understand how to work with and be close to our customers. I take care of Southeast Asia and, if we have a specific requirement, technical inspections for example, we'll use external partners that we work with on a regular basis.



Diana Chou and Adrien Chazottes, Jet 8 partners

"Between us, Diana and I have sold around 130 airplanes and behind most there is a new owner. So we had relationships with all these people, a customer base to service, but we needed a team of people we knew and had worked with before. So we chose carefully, opting for quality over quantity."

While Chazottes was formerly Bombardier's regional sales director in Singapore, Chou was the company's original authorised dealer for the Chinese market. The majority of their combined 130 aircraft sales are therefore of Challengers and Globals, but Jet 8's remit extends to all types. "We have very specific knowledge of the Bombardier product, but we make a point of being unbiased when we assess an aircraft for a client, examining economic drivers, market condition, geographic distribution and technical attributes that aren't specific to Bombardier.

"I believe we're also fortunate to have a passion for aviation. Through passion you never stop learning and both Diana and I have gained in-depth knowledge on other models; you inevitably learn a lot about aircraft you've been competing with for many years too." Perhaps most critically of all, he says these two industry veterans are never shy to ask about that which they don't know. "If we need to fill a gap in our expertise, we're always ready to call our regular consultants for help."

Learning and adapting are constant factors in Jet 8's strategy. Chazottes reckons

understanding the product isn't enough, it's also essential to nurture a deep knowledge of its clients, their culture and needs. "We can't know everything and that's one reason why it's important for us to have people in China. But wherever your customer is, the common denominators are clarity and trust. Clients want to know that the people working for them are telling the truth, maximising the value they're getting in any transaction and staying around to become a solid partner over the long run, during the airplane's lifetime with them. That's what we do."

Adrien Chazottes

Aviation might have been sewn into Chazottes' DNA. Born in Toulouse, a centre of excellence in French and European aerospace, he entered the industry with Turbomeca Asia Pacific via helicopter support. In 2008 he moved to VistaJet, working to expand its Asian market, before joining Hawker Beechcraft's European sales team.

After Textron assumed control of the Hawker and Beechcraft brands, Chazottes transferred to Bombardier Business Aircraft, spending four years as sales director in Singapore, before joining with Chou to found Jet 8 in 2018.

Van Nuys Airport, California

Van Nuys Airport has established itself not only as the world's busiest general aviation airfield, but as a premier business aircraft destination. **Home to more than 200 aviation companies,** it features four FBO providers and several maintenance providers, including Western Jet Aviation, which is celebrating an anniversary of its own

Located 20 miles or so from Los Angeles International, Van Nuys Airport (VNY) is the world's busiest general aviation airport, a fact Airport Manager Flora Margheritis says makes it: "...a vital economic engine that contributes approximately \$2 billion annually to the Southern California economy and supports over 10,000 jobs. As part of the regional approach to meeting passenger demand, VNY reduces congestion, enhances safety and diminishes flight delays at nearby airports."

Which means it handles a lot of traffic. Yet business aviation remains a priority and Margheritis notes: "Investment in business aviation not only benefits pilots and passengers, but promotes economic growth and job creation for the entire community. In partnership with our tenants, users and operators, VNY will continue to find innovative ways to advance into the future.

"VNY recently completed a security enhancement project, for example, that included major improvements to perimeter fencing, lighting and signage, plus the closure or restriction of dozens of high-volume access gates. Currently, a \$26.3-million taxiway rehabilitation project is under way, representing the first of three projects to ensure a 20-year taxiway lifespan and significantly improve



The company's long history is recalled in photographs on the walls of this lounge area in Clay Lacy Aviation's FBO



The lobby of Castle & Cooke's Van Nuys FBO



FLORA MARGHERITIS

...over the past five years, our tenants have committed to \$65 million in capital improvement projects...

airport operating areas. And, over the past five years, our tenants have committed to \$65 million in capital improvement projects that will enable the airport to maintain its world-class status.”

Under this ethos of improvement, VNY also takes its environmental responsibility very seriously. “We’re at the forefront of environmental sustainability for general aviation airports,” Margheritis explains. “We were the first business airport to earn Airport Carbon Accreditation Level 2 from Airports Council International and we’re working toward achieving Level 3. We can also generate more electricity from solar panel projects than any other general aviation airport in the state, sufficient to power 8,000 homes and reduce CO₂ emissions by more than 73 million lb per year. In addition, VNY was the first general aviation airport in the nation to offer sustainable alternative jet fuel on a trial basis, which means fewer emissions and cleaner air for the community.

“Mitigating the impact of aircraft operations on airport neighbours is also a top priority, and VNY has a long history of implementing some of the most stringent mandatory and voluntary noise management programmes of any general aviation airport in the US.”

So, why do business and VIP flyers come to Van Nuys? “It’s located less than 20 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles and within a short freeway drive of major centres of commerce, entertainment, finance, culture and industry. Home to four major fixed base operators and multiple aviation service companies, the airport caters to the full demands of business aircraft. With

two parallel north-south runways, an instrument landing system, and 24-hour airport operations and police staffing, VNY maintains a level of safety and security that far exceeds federal standards for general aviation airports.”

FBO Choices

Castle & Cooke, Clay Lacy, Jet Aviation and Signature Flight Support all operate Van Nuys FBOs. For Castle & Cooke, VNY is home to its corporate headquarters and an FBO, making a total of 255,000sqft of office, shop and hangar space, along with 205,000sqft of ramp area, located on the airport’s west side. As with its Honolulu and Everett FBOs, Castle & Cooke’s Van Nuys facility offers Avfuel contract fuel and AVTRIP points.

Clay Lacy Aviation (CLA) operates a full-service FBO at Van Nuys Airport, open 24 hours, 365 days per year. Its staff of just over 50 is joined by more than 250 others, the company proudly citing its ability to support any aircraft capable of landing at Van Nuys, from small propeller machines, through helicopters, to large commercial VIP aircraft including the BBJ and ACJ.

An authorised dealer for Honeywell, Garmin, Collins Aerospace, Gogo, SmartSky, Flight Display Systems and others, CLA’s Van Nuys presence also includes an FAA Part 145 repair station and provides flight line maintenance on all business jets. Beyond that, inspection services are available on a variety of Gulfstream, Falcon, Hawker, Bombardier and Embraer models; CLA’s Van Nuys facility is an Authorized Service Center for the Embraer Phenom 100 and 300.

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Right: Jet Aviation's extensive Van Nuys facility
Below Right: Lobby area of Signature's East FBO

Scott Cutshall, VP Marketing at CLA, sums up its VNY presence: "We're an aircraft management and charter operator under both Part 91 and Part 135 with worldwide authority. We hold IS-BAO Stage III, the longest standing Wyvern Wingman and ARGUS Platinum ratings and our full-service FBO offers all the expected facilities, including aircraft ground handling, coordination of catering, ground transportation, hotel reservations and conference room facilities." Preparing for the future, he says: "We recently completed renovation on a 72,000sqft hangar to house our maintenance, repair and overhaul divisions," but even then, it's only part of the CLA/VNY story.



Among the pioneers of business aviation, Clay Lacy landed his first business jet at Van Nuys in 1964, establishing Clay Lacy Aviation at the airport four years later. Today, CLA is Van Nuys' largest employer.

Although it traces its origins to 1967, Jet Aviation came to Van Nuys only recently, taking control of its lease in June 2016, explains Michael McDaniel, Director & GM FBO Van Nuys. "The facility encompassed nine structures, including hangars and two umbrellas/shades, but there was no formal FBO. In the months since, we've undergone a major new construction and renovation project, which will see a brand-new 10,000sqft FBO terminal, 43,000sqft hangar with 8,000sqft of office space, and a 42,000sqft Gulfstream operations centre, including more than 20,000sqft of office and shop space. The hangar has a 30ft clearance, adequate for larger aircraft – the Global 7500, for example."



As the first new full-service FBO with hangars constructed at VNY since the 1990s, McDaniel says that not only are the Jet Aviation facility's buildings brand new, but all its equipment is new too.

Alongside its FBO, aircraft management and staffing, charter, refuelling, domestic and international handling, complete line service, aircraft cleaning and nightly hangarage offerings, Jet Aviation also provides maintenance upon request,

via its Burbank maintenance centre, the Gulfstream Fast Team, or Bombardier, while the onsite Gulfstream operations centre offers maintenance support immediately, on demand.

McDaniel reckons customers will also appreciate the Jet Aviation ramp. "We have massive ramp space. It's an unobstructed, deep, long ramp that avoids congestion issues and the need for towing, especially for larger aircraft. They are able to taxi unobstructed on arrival and departure; we also have ample car parking."

Even at Van Nuys, where every FBO has a story, Signature Flight Support's presence is unusual. It includes East and West FBO locations, and a limited use facility at the airport's north end, while Signature also staffs a private operator's facility on the eastern side of the airport. Digital Marketing Strategy Analyst Matt Franklin says: "Our operations are so dispersed that we operate a dispatch office on top of our VNY East FBO, to help track ground movements."

Both FBOs offer everything one would expect for passengers and crew, but Franklin notes:

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“The US Customs and Border Protection [CBP] station located in the terminal building at Van Nuys allows international guests to exit the aircraft and proceed directly to passport processing and onwards, without having to clear remotely. Up to the point when the CBP facility was opened in 2015, international visitors had to land at an area airport to clear customs before completing a final leg to VNY.”

Crew and passengers are also likely to appreciate the Tesla Supercharging stations installed at Signature VNY East, a first in the Signature network. They might also recognise Signature Van Nuys as a backdrop from reality television shows, where it is regularly the

setting for celebrities returning to or leaving the US. And, Franklin observes, “Signature VNY West’s entrance, just off Sherman Way, gives many crews the unusual opportunity to drive underneath 34L/16R, a rarity among general aviation airports.”

Like Jet Aviation, Signature’s presence at VNY is relatively recent. Hawker Beechcraft built Signature Van Nuys West in 1991, Signature purchasing the company’s FBOs in 2008. Signature East was established as Peterson Aviation in 1992, passing to Maguire Aviation in 2008. Signature purchased Maguire in 2014. Today, Signature Van Nuys handles a variety of aircraft types, from single-engine pistons

to BBJs and AJs. And Franklin is particularly proud to explain: “Signature was among the first US FBOs to provide sustainable alternative jet fuel for general aviation when, in February 2019, we fuelled a Challenger 350 with a sustainable jet fuel blend. Signature VNY has also provided support for CAL FIRE water tanker aircraft during the Southern California fire season.”

Two Decades at VNY

Among VNY’s maintenance providers, Western Jet Aviation provides scheduled and unscheduled maintenance and AOG support, 12- through 192-month inspections, 5,000-landing inspections, structural repairs, engine and APU troubleshooting, repairs, line maintenance and rigging, while its avionics competencies include complete cockpit and cabin upgrades and repairs, with expertise in Wi-Fi, ADS-B/FANS and cabin management systems; it’s also an authorised dealer for Honeywell, Collins Aerospace, Universal Avionics and most of the major OEMs. Western Jet is a specialist and parts supplier for all models of Gulfstream and Twin Commander, with further avionics capabilities in Bombardier, Citation, Hawker, Falcon,



Signature West at Van Nuys

Western Jet's offering includes specialist services for Twin Commander (foreground) and Gulfstream (behind) models



Boeing, Piaggio, Pilatus and other fixed-wing business aircraft, and various rotorcraft.

It's a broad spectrum of services to which WJA Management adds aircraft management, while associated companies cover charter, paint and interior work. And, significantly, although it was established only in 1999, Western Jet's heritage at Van Nuys stretches back almost as far as Clay Lacy Aviation's Sales & Marketing executive Gail Erwin explains.

"Our founder, Jim Hansen began his aviation career at Van Nuys Airport, on February 12, 1973, right after graduating from Northrop Institute of Technology in Inglewood. Hired as a line mechanic at The Jet Center on Daily Drive, Jim soon advanced to lead mechanic, shop foreman and then parts department manager. Jim played a significant role in the Jet Center's storied success and was especially disheartened to witness its closure after multiple mergers and acquisitions.

"But Jet Center's demise provided a perfect window of opportunity. Jim found himself taking care of a handful of customers' aircraft but with no full-time job. He'd dreamed of owning his own company and now a few of

those clients wanted him on their aircraft full time and asked him to start in business.

"Western Jet Aviation opened its doors on September 13, 1999. It has grown to almost 80 employees and specialises in Gulfstream maintenance, with close to 300 full-time clients. The addition of a state of the art avionics department in 2009 positioned Western Jet for meeting NextGen mandates and providing the latest in Wi-Fi and sophisticated cabin entertainment systems.

"Expansion continued with the addition of aircraft management, on-site custom paint and design through Mike Boal Designs, expert

interior services with Extraord-N-Air and charter through tenant Mira Vista, operating an exclusive, all-Gulfstream fleet.

"Jim believes a strong business is founded upon good people who value quality and exceeding customer expectations. Reflecting upon Western Jet's 20th anniversary milestone, he says he feels exceptionally blessed to be surrounded by the 'best' employees and customers, local service providers and the very supportive management and personnel at Van Nuys Airport, all of whom have helped make Western Jet Aviation a world-class organisation."

GAIL ERWIN

Western Jet Aviation opened its doors on September 13, 1999. It has grown to almost 80 employees...