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Welcome

Is social media a useful tool for the business aviation industry? How can the likes of LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter make a real difference to FBOs and charter operators? What better way to find out than to use social media itself – a discussion I posted on LinkedIn in August about this very topic received almost 70 comments, with opinions sharply divided. Overall, the feeling was that social media does have an important part to play, but it should not be relied upon too heavily.

One view was that social media connects people, and as aviation is all about making connections, they go hand-in-hand. Another poster pointed out that Twitter can be great for posting information about empty legs and fuel prices, and to help get to know your customer.

However, as was repeatedly highlighted, just because social media enables you to connect with potentially thousands of people, this does not always mean you are reaching out to the *right* people. Comments also highlighted the fact that social media is not suited to marketing highly technical services.

Other contributors to the discussion pointed out that the use of a cell phone or a handwritten letter will never die, and this still presents the best way to connect with customers in what was described as a "good ol' boy" industry.

However, it's inevitable that these 'good old boys' will give way to a younger generation that has been brought up using social media on a daily basis – perhaps it's a little early to be writing off social media just yet. Read more about this topic in *Social Standing* on page 26.

One company that is using social media to attract customers and build relationships is Farnborough International Limited (FIL), organizers of the Farnborough International Airshow (FIA). This year the FIL team set up a Facebook page for the event to help them engage with customers by posting information on the show, and enabling people to ask questions and post their photos of the event. The FIA was just one of 300+ airshows held this year. In *Rise to the Occasion* (p32) we look at how airshows, like social media, can help promote business aviation, as well as the challenges and opportunities they present to FBOs and business airports.

Enjoy the issue – and please don't forget to visit our LinkedIn page to tell us your views and opinions! Meanwhile, we hope you agree that the magazine remains an excellent tool to reach the business aviation community, highlighting those issues that really matter and joining the dots between bizjet operator, customer, FBO and airport.

Helen Norman, Editor

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Universal Aviation UK celebrates refurbishment of Stansted FBO

ABOVE: The spacious departures area
BELOW: Crew can relax in their own private lounge



Universal Aviation UK has officially inaugurated its refurbished FBO at London Stansted Airport, which now offers customers a spacious, contemporary facility with dedicated passenger, crew, and driver lounges, as well as meeting rooms and shower facilities.

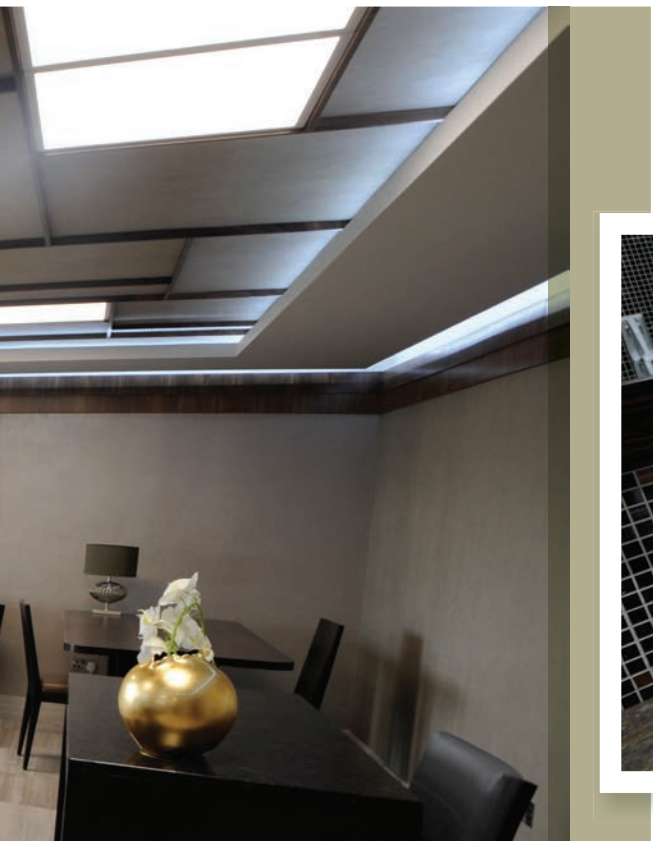
The ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at the airport on September 18, 2012, and was attended by clients, airport officials, media, and friends and family, who were given a guided tour of the new 10,712ft² building.

Speaking at the inauguration, Jonathan Howells, Universal Aviation's regional vice president of Europe, Middle East, and Africa, said, "Stansted represents a very important location for us, not only because it is in the London area, but also because it is one of our oldest FBOs and home to our 24/7 flight operations center, where

we provide dispatch services for a number of our regionally based customers.

"Unlike other European cities, operators traveling to London have many airport options, and while our customers were always delighted with the quality of our services at Universal Aviation Stansted, we felt it was important to upgrade our facilities to meet the changing profile of our customers, many of whom make quick short-haul flights to the London area and require more amenities for both crew and passengers."

The company completely gutted the original 1950s building, working with Ampersand on the exterior structural architecture and Ecuadorian designer Adriana Hoyos on the interior finish. The departure and arrivals lounge is furnished with sofas and chairs from Ecuador, and features a sliding partition to separate the two areas.



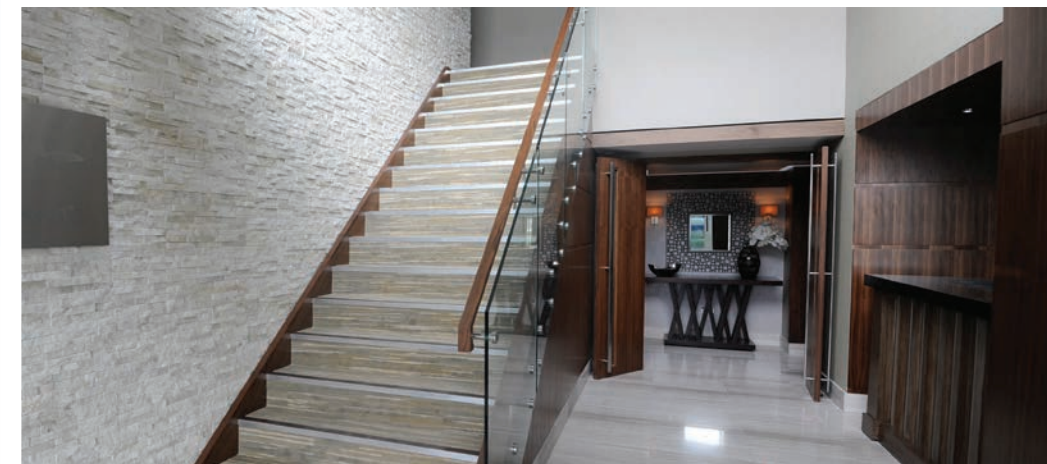
ABOVE & LEFT: The interior finish was created by Ecuadorian designer Adriana Hoyos

shower facilities that enable crews to freshen up, and there are plenty of quiet places to sit and relax. A dedicated state-of-the-art business center featuring UK, EU, and international plug sockets, desktop computers, and free WiFi means clients and crews can catch up on correspondence, while two fully equipped meeting rooms capable of accommodating up to 24 people make the facility an ideal location for business meetings.

The entire project took years to plan, with the refurbishment completed in six months at a cost of US\$1 million. The company now plans to use the Stansted design as a basis for upgrades at its locations around the world. "What we've decided is that this is a design concept we like; it is a timeless, warm design, and certainly over the next year or two a number of our other locations will be redesigned around this format," said Howells.

Alongside the opening of the refurbished FBO, Universal Aviation's inflight catering service launched its Lebanese menu. Acquired by Universal Aviation in November 2011, Air Culinare is part of the Air Chef Holdings LLC group and provided savory and sweet Lebanese inspired canapés throughout the September 18 event.

According to Howells, feedback from visitors to the FBO has been very positive: "We have had a lot of people coming in, especially customers who have been using us for years, and being wowed by what they've seen. Fundamentally, they always used us because they loved our people and now the facilities support the great customer service they have always received," he concluded. [↪](#)



"The whole of the ground floor has been completely refurbished for our customers and crews," explained Howells. "We have a departure lounge and an arrivals lounge separated by a sliding screen that meets immigration regulations; we have x-ray and security equipment; we have two meeting rooms, bathrooms, and shower rooms; a crew rest area; a drivers' lounge; a business center; and our ground handling operations center. Upstairs we have our European operations center and our sales, marketing, and finance departments, so it's probably our biggest office in Europe in terms of structure."

Throughout the building, Hoyos has created a sense of calm and tranquillity that enables clients to relax before departure and upon arrival, and everything has been designed to facilitate a quick and seamless procedure. Chauffeurs are catered

for in a comfortable drivers' lounge and are able to gain airside clearance in order to pick their clients up directly from the aircraft.

Jason Hayward, general manager of Universal Aviation Stansted, commented, "With regards to the arrivals and immigration process, we spent a lot of time in the pre-planning phases speaking to airport officials about exactly what they needed to facilitate a swift and rapid clearance through the FBO. We also spent time thinking about how people interact with the building and how to ensure they had quick access to and from the site to their cars. We have tried to keep things simple."

Crews are also amply catered for in the refurbished FBO, with a large crew lounge featuring comfortable sofas, reading material, and flat-screen TVs. Although there are no sleeping facilities at Universal Stansted, there are new

Open for business

Business Airport International takes a look at the recent openings of some noteworthy new business aviation facilities



AMAC Aerospace, Istanbul, Turkey

Swiss-based AMAC Aerospace has opened a new hangar facility at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport dedicated to carrying out maintenance support on the Pilatus PC12-NG aircraft. The facility, which opened on September 7, 2012, includes hangarage, spacious offices, and shop-floor space, and will be used by AMAC Aerospace to support customers from the Gulf area.

"We are very excited about the prospects for sales in the Middle Eastern region and the initial response to the aircraft has been very positive. Potential clients become even more interested when they appreciate maintenance can be carried out as close as Turkey," commented Atilla Guney, COO of AMAC Aerospace Turkey.



ExecuJet Africa, Lagos, Nigeria

ExecuJet Africa has opened a 3,000m² (32,300ft²) FBO facility at Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos, Nigeria. The FBO, which opened on October 1, 2012, offers direct access to the main runway as well as maintenance, FBO, charter and aircraft management services, a VIP lounge, 24-hour support capabilities, and on-site customs and immigration services. Mark Abbott, ExecuJet Group FBO director, commented, "ExecuJet's new Lagos FBO is a direct response to the vibrant growth taking place in Africa."



Weston Aviation, Doncaster, UK

Weston Aviation opened on July 9, 2012, its fourth UK business aviation center and FBO, at Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield. The company will be responsible for local charter sales development and marketing for business aviation and cargo aircraft operations. Nick Weston, Weston Aviation's managing director, said, "This newest business aviation center is a significant step forward for us as we continue to take our brand and expertise to a wider market."



Comlux America, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Comlux America unveiled its completed hangar at Indianapolis International Airport on September 12, 2012. The hangar will provide a modern completion center solely for the cabin outfitting of Airbus corporate jets and Boeing business jets. The 12,000m² (129,167ft²) facility is fully integrated with supporting back shops and can accommodate up to four narrow-body aircraft.

David Edinger, CEO and president of Comlux America, stated, "This state-of-the-art hangar is a unique building in its category and it has impressed all our guests from around the world. Our new facility will allow us to continue to deliver the best quality VIP cabins and strengthen our reputation worldwide as a leader in single-aisle VIP cabin completions."



Signature Flight Support, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Signature Flight Support opened on August 7, 2012 at Chicago O'Hare International Airport a US\$3 million FBO facility that will provide support services to general aviation operators at the airport. The 9,150ft² single-story building features a large lobby, management offices, conference room, crew lounge, VIP lounge, a ground support equipment maintenance bay, and supporting restroom facilities with showers. A 52,000yd² ramp area can accommodate a mixture of aircraft and a supporting taxi lane. The facility is environmentally friendly: it is expected to receive three green airplanes under the SAM rating and award system and is expected to pursue LEED Silver certification.



Universal Aviation, Bermuda

Universal Aviation opened a full-service FBO at L. F. Wade International Airport in Bermuda on August 9, 2012. The new location features fully equipped lounges, conference rooms, fuel, and on-site customs and immigration. It also has 130,000ft² ramp parking, a crew lounge with kitchenette and showers, WiFi access throughout, easy access to the beach, and dining and entertainment options.

"Whether operators are taking advantage of Bermuda's strategic geographic location as a tech stop, or making the island their final destination, we will continue to provide the level of service customers are used to around the world," said Adolfo Aragon, senior vice president of Universal Aviation.

To keep up-to-date with the latest FBO openings and other business aviation news visit: www.BusinessAirportInternational.com



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Expansion project

The founder of a new online marketplace for private-jet passengers talks about his plans to go transcontinental

Victor, an e-commerce booking site for private jets, has gone long haul for the first time in October 2012, offering seats between some of the world's major cities such as London and Los Angeles, Madrid and New York, and other popular transcontinental routes.

"We'll be using 10- to 14-seater aircraft at first and 100-seaters if there is a demand," founder Clive Jackson (pictured, right) told *Business Airport International (BAI)* in late September. "We will accommodate demand as it grows."

The pool of aircraft currently available to Victor, which has been in operation for just 14 months, is 300 but is on target to rise to 500 by the end of the year. The inventory covers much of the spectrum from Boeing business jets, Falcon 900s, and Citation Vs, to the smaller Citation Mustang VLJs as well as Beechcraft King Airs. The last is a popular choice, commented Jackson, adding, "It takes lots of passengers and luggage and can land on a small strip."

Until now, Victor has confined operation to within Europe but the business has grown so rapidly since it was launched in August 2011 that Jackson is confident there will be a significant demand for transcontinental hops as it steadily moves toward a worldwide presence. "My job is to build a sustainable business to compete on a global stage," he explained. Also on the drawing board is an expansion into Asia. Under the current timetable, Victor will be represented in Asia by late 2013, depending on the availability of aircraft.

In the meantime, it's been a year of rapid growth for Victor, which started with a single route between London and Majorca and now offers 441,000 route pairings. Membership has rocketed to 2,100 individuals and Victor has lined up a widening range of business partners such as Burgess Yachts, Oxford Ski Company, and five-star travel operator ITC Classics.

The Victor concept was born in early 2011 when Jackson, a serial entrepreneur in the e-commerce sector, was aboard the last BMI flight from Majorca (where he has a home) to London. And, with British Airways also deciding to pull out of the route, he started canvassing other passengers about an alternative carrier.

"One passenger told me he sometimes flew to Majorca by private charter on a six- to eight-seater at a fare of about £10,000 (US\$16,220)," he told *BAI*. "Most of the seats were empty on the flight out and the jet returned to London empty."

When other passengers expressed interest in flying by private jet, his e-commerce background



"My job is to build a sustainable business to compete on a global stage"


told him the key was to coordinate demand for spare capacity via a client-friendly site. In the following weeks he further gauged the level of interest and found the reaction to be positive. "I began to think that maybe there was something in this," he recalled. "The big issue was whether I could make private jets more affordable."

He then tapped the experience gained from Global Beach, a global digital platform he had established for luxury brands such as Jaguar, Land Rover, and Bentley, and from his Autotorq, a website system adopted by automotive brands around the world. Within a few weeks, Jackson had raised £1.5 million (US\$2.43 million) in a massively oversubscribed private placement in preference to venture capital or private equity. Most of the early-stage funds came from ex-BMI passengers reluctant to rely on Easyjet or Ryanair.

Industry reaction was uniformly negative. "It was hugely skeptical," commented Jackson. "I was told that others had tried and failed to sell

empty legs, but I pointed out I was working on a per-seat and not a per-leg basis." He was also told jet charterers would be unwilling to share an aircraft with others.

But, convinced there was a latent interest, Jackson pushed on. He hired commercial lawyers Clyde & Co, specialists in aviation, to clear regulatory hurdles with the CAA, and engaged HSBC as underwriter for all client payments. "It was important to give reassurance to clients that this was being done properly," he explained.

The creation of the Victor website was crucial. Based on transparency, it features actual illustrations of the aircraft – rather than visualizations – as well as photos of the operator's safety and other regulatory documentation. The business proposition is based on booking fees. Revenues come mainly from the 5% charged on the charter of the aircraft and not from commissions. "We're not brokers. There's no middleman," said Jackson. "The brokers hate us." 

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Opportunity versus anarchy

“ Forcing communication upon someone causes tension and refusal, and that is precisely the opposite purpose of approaching clients ”

✈️ *Getting messages across depends on available time for perception of messages, priorities of which are determined by relevance or pertinence.’ I just explained to you, within the 140-character limit of Twitter, what is essential for social media to be effective. That is all there is to it. Forget about 10 Secrets To The Effective Use of Social Media, as some catchlines suggest!

Getting to the point is what the 140-character limit is all about. Some consider the Twitter limitation a breakthrough in communication. The wisdom that a message comes across better when you can be extremely short dates back to when the only tools available to write messages were a hammer, chisel, and a flat piece of rock, and writing was hard labor. Secretaries in those days had facial hair instead of eyeshadow and lipstick, they went barefoot instead of in high heels, and having hands like shovels were a requirement for powerful hammering.

Some historians suggest that before that, messages were even shorter because vocabulary was limited to variations of ‘aah’, ‘ooh’, and ‘uhh’ sounds. Times have indeed changed and we have made tremendous progress (proven by the fact that now some people use 140-character tweets to tell their friends how often they use the bathroom).

But what effect does social media have on humans? There are two schools of thought. On one extreme side you have the scientific approach suggesting that it causes brain shrinkage. On the other extreme side is the snake oil quackery approach that claims it will expand the universe. Between those two extreme opposites, informational anarchy thrives.

What about the millions of people using social media to send billions of messages every day? In business-to-business communications it doesn’t matter how many people you reach if you reach the wrong people. Billions of messages indicate that there is an overload of information. Those numbers are not appealing, but rather are repelling arguments. Instead of focusing on mass numbers, keep the numbers 8 and 30 in mind.

The average attention span is only 8 seconds; an elevator pitch might take 30 seconds. Social media cannot stretch time and the numbers of followers on Twitter are no proof of market share.

There are practical and social reasons to be cautious about social media. A major concern is the loss of privacy caused by exposure. It is a legitimate reason why many don’t want to be part of social networks. Actually, in the discreet environment of the business aviation clientele, these non-partakers could be potential clients with whom you would be eager to communicate. If they do sign up at one of the networks, it is a sign of consent. But consent for what? Often it is interpreted to be for ‘permission marketing’ and thus an authorization for the sending of promotional messages. It is certainly not a license to be annoyed. Forcing communication upon someone causes tension and refusal, and that is precisely the opposite purpose of approaching clients. I cannot make myself clearer about how seriously wrong this is than by saying that in private life it is a common reason for divorce.

So am I against social media? No, not at all. I’m against the hype caused by those who try to make you believe that social media provides you with an opportunity to use a machete for more effective shaving rather than using a razor blade. Social media is a very sensitive tool for communication that requires someone who has distinct knowledge of client behavior and customized communication, and uses it in a strategic communication mix. It has a razor-sharp edge for clean communication and a razor blade is a dangerous tool in the hands of a monkey. It’s all about building relationships, not cutting them.

There is one other thing about social media that bothers me. Ever since I signed up for Twitter I feel like people are following me... ↩

Commander Bud Slabbaert is an expert in strategic communications and business aviation development. He is also the initiator and chairman of BA-Meetup

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The Middle East's business aviation market may still be in its infancy, with a current worth of around US\$500 million, but this is forecast to more than double over the next 10 years. So now seems like the ideal time to look at what the region can offer

Words | **Keith Mwanalushi**



Unleash the East



Private jet operators should take into consideration several factors before choosing a technical stop in the Middle East

 The business aviation market in the Middle East is growing. It is forecast to be worth more than US\$1 billion in 10 years' time, but there will be some challenges that need to be overcome. Operators must adhere to some stringent operational requirements and continually deal with issues of security and the growing threat of illegal aircraft operations.

As a market, business and private aviation in the Middle East is still in its infancy compared with the more mature sectors in Europe and North America. However, the region is experiencing robust growth and according to the Middle East Business Aviation Association (MEBAA), the business aviation market in the region is currently worth around US\$500 million, with approximately 160,000 aircraft movements expected by 2018 and 1,300 business jet operations by 2019.

General requirements

Regulatory and operational issues in the region may vary from one country to another and some can be complex. Generally, the priorities for someone flying a private jet are safety, security, privacy, and time. In most situations, private and business jet operations are relatively trouble-free. However, it is vital to double-check all the necessary requirements that are unique to each country and airport – unlike in a region such as the European Union that is governed by the same, or a similar, regulatory framework.

Planning is key, and initially it is essential to get the right crew and passenger documentation in place prior to operating in the region. Some countries in the Middle East require a receiving party. “This is something you have to consider and be aware of when handling flights going to certain destinations in the region,” says Khaled Shurbaji, operations manager at Dubai-based Jetex Flight Support.

Saudi Arabia, for instance, which is one of the largest business aviation markets in the region, requires both visas and sponsor letters for most foreigners; some of the other countries in the region will need the contact information of the people being visited. For example, the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority requires business contact information prior to approving a permit. Saudi



Approximately 1,300 business jet operations are expected by 2019 in the Middle East



“With every month that goes by, business aviation operations become easier in the region in general”

Dave Edwards, managing director, Gama Aviation

Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt will issue 72-hour crew visas on arrival, but these can often be restrictive so it is generally advisable to obtain necessary visas in advance.

Having a second valid passport at all times while operating in the Middle East is critical for flight crew. This will ensure that there are no issues with Israeli stamps on passports during entry to Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, or other Arab League Boycott countries.

Based on the constantly changing security situation in the Middle East, and the sometimes elevated risk in the region, it is usually essential to check for new or updated documentation requirements, because these are commonly subject to short-notice changes.

“With every month that goes by, business aviation operations become easier in the region

in general,” says Dave Edwards, managing director at Sharjah-based Gama Aviation. “As an industry, we’re really educating our customers about the benefits the business aviation sector brings and as a result, our regulators understand the unique differences between scheduled airlines and business jet operations.

“Security and regulation aren’t the reserve of the Middle East, in general most government agencies around the world are resistant to change, but we’ve found that the relationships we have at Sharjah International Airport and the compact size of the teams there means that we’re able to fully engage with the likes of customs, the police, immigration, and airport security, and find solutions to any issues we’ve faced. As a result, the systems are really customer focused and are all aimed at delivering the fastest



Strictly business

The rapidly expanding business aviation scene in the United Arab Emirates is running parallel with the planned evolution of Abu Dhabi into a vibrant international business center. As the demand grows for private charter flights in the region, the UAE authorities have established a high-quality gateway dedicated to exclusive private business travel.

Al Bateen Executive Airport is the first of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa. The airport has a historical significance. It was built in the 1960s and was the first airport in the UAE situated in the Al Bateen district of Abu Dhabi.

By 1970, Al Bateen was the sole international airport serving the UAE capital. With the opening of Abu Dhabi International Airport in 1982, Al Bateen was transformed into a military airbase. In 2008, the ownership and management of the airbase was transferred to the Abu Dhabi Airports Company (ADAC), which restored the facility into a civilian airport with a dedicated focus on private and business aviation.

ADAC announced a 26% increase in visiting business aviation traffic in the period between January and April 2012 versus the same period last year, and a 6% increase in total commercial aircraft movements over the same period. Al Bateen has also recently seen the completion of refurbishment works for three hangars at the facility.

Left: **Executive Terminal at Al Bateen Executive Airport**

Below: **Traffic movements are constantly on the up at Al Bateen**



possible movement through the airport – if our passengers have to wait in a lounge on arrival while something happens behind the scenes, we really feel that we've not delivered the service we've designed," Edwards adds.

Rules and regulations

Saudi Arabia is sometimes considered by foreign operators to be full of bureaucratic hurdles, but Mohammad Saideh, chief commercial officer at Palm Aviation, says it only seems that way because the Saudi authorities are keen to go by the rules and regulations – like anywhere in the world. "We strongly recommend that you have your entire documentation readily available, pre-plan your flight, and you can obtain what you need very efficiently. These are not hurdles, they just don't like cutting corners, which we respect," comments Saideh.

The rules regarding an aircraft departing from Israel and overflying the Middle East are often a source of some confusion. As long as your aircraft is not manufactured in Israel or does not have Israeli registration, there are ways to depart Israel and operate throughout the region in an unrestricted manner. This typically requires an outbound stop at Larnaca International in Cyprus, or Marka Airport or Queen Alia International in

Amman, Jordan. From these points, flights may proceed with overflights or landings in the Middle East. It is essential to ensure that no passengers carry Israeli passports or Israeli passport stamps, as this may bar the private jet operator from operating in much of the Middle East.

Permit requirements are becoming more stringent for charter flights in particular. Operators can be and have been stopped or turned back due to permit issues. Local operators say if a permit-related glitch is encountered, it is often recommended to act very quickly to rectify the situation, using a 24-hour third-party provider to monitor permit requirements and assist in permit issues. This can prove invaluable.

Iraq is no longer subject to broad-based US economic sanctions; however, certain restrictions still exist. Specifically, due to concerns regarding

security, US registered aircraft must obtain an exemption based on the Special Federal Aviation Regulation 77 (SFAR 77). The SFAR 77 imposes limits when overflying Iraq or operating into Iraq. In addition, it is important to be mindful that SFAR 77 does not apply to non-US registered aircraft utilizing a US-based third-party provider. However, it is important to be aware that delays in the permitting process may occur, so planning is essential. Additionally, an operator must screen the US government's Restricted Party Lists (RPLs) prior to a transaction involving people and companies based in Iraq.

Technical stops

Choosing a technical stop may not always be straightforward; local operator advice is that due to the changing political situation in the area,



Above: **Pre-planning for Middle East operations ensures a more seamless experience**

Right: **The Middle East is catering for increasing numbers of business jet users**

safety considerations should be kept in mind before choosing a tech stop. Noteworthy is that tech stops at Dubai International Airport may take longer because of traffic delays, congestion, and jet fuel delivery waits. Preferred tech stops are at the airports of Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Amman, and Beirut, which offer full services and a quick turnaround. Al Bateen Executive Airport in Abu Dhabi is the only airport in the region dedicated to business and private aviation and it is widely considered to be the best in the region (see *Strictly Business*, page 17).

"In general, airport operating hours, ease of obtaining landing permits and slots, average turnaround times, overall cost-effectiveness, and acceptance of a wide range of payment methods are the key benchmarks that determine whether the airport can be considered as tech-stop friendly for business aviation operators," says Shurbaji of Jetex.

Shurbaji adds that one would presume that selecting a tech stop would be an easy choice considering that almost all airports in the region operate around the clock, generally accept all major payment methods, and have no significant disparities in fuel costs, but this is not necessarily the case. "You have to consider some smaller yet important factors such as airport congestion and lead times to arrange fueling."

From a Jetex perspective, Shurbaji recommends a number of airports for tech stops, including Al Bateen, Fujairah (which is less congested than others), and Dubai because the airport is well equipped, has competitive prices and is where Jetex benefits from having a base. He also mentions Doha, Riyadh (King Khaled), Kuwait, and Sharjah.

Sharjah International

In fact, Sharjah is growing considerably as a business aviation center and the airport has no slot restrictions (unlike Dubai). In January this year, Gama Aviation opened a fixed base operator (FBO) base at Sharjah International Airport and has the exclusive concession for providing FBO services to business aircraft at the airport. "We're seeing consistent increases every month, even in the heat of July and at the start of Ramadan, both traditionally quiet times in the region. Having been an operator at Sharjah for almost 10 years, we knew that there was a



Shady operators

One of the biggest challenges the business aviation market in the Middle East faces is the so-called 'gray market', which has eaten into at least 20-25% of business aviation operations over the past few years, according to MEBA.

Drawing comparisons between the hourly rates charged by organized and non-organized segments, the MEBA said if a company such as Royal Jet, for instance, leases a Boeing Business Jet for US\$20,000 to US\$25,000 per hour, the gray market

would offer it for around US\$15,000 per hour.

As the number of aircraft grows, this market could also grow if proper procedures are not put in place as a matter of urgency. "Anything that is illegal is obviously not something that anyone should condone; the difficulty with this gray market is exactly that – it's gray and not straightforward," says Dave Edwards of Gama Aviation. He says the end user might have borrowed a friend's aircraft and may not be aware that

it's illegal and it's likely to invalidate any insurance claim if something went wrong.

"It really falls on the likes of the industry and our associations to educate the end users about what is and isn't illegal. At the end of the day, we're all working to ensure that business aviation is safe and secure, and FBOs have a role to play in this education campaign, but it really needs to start with the owners and operators themselves and the likes of MEBA," Edwards concludes.

good business case to develop business aviation facilities at the airport," says Gama's Edwards.

Volume of traffic into Sharjah has been on the increase in recent years: "It's an excellent alternative to Dubai, with really fast and efficient services. We've really started to see a strong increase in traffic; as well as not being slot restricted, we're able to offer fast turnarounds.

From landing to being on stand and getting into your own vehicle can take just six minutes. This really delivers the main selling point of business aviation – time," says Edwards.

In April next year, the business aviation community will converge in Beirut for the MEBA's first round of regional forums to bridge and strengthen communication channels between local operators, suppliers, regulators, and governments.

MEBA's founding chairman, Ali Al Naqbi, says, "We have recognized the market in Lebanon is growing at a remarkable rate, dovetailing a private sector that contributes 75% toward GDP. As such, business aviation is now considered to be the fourth largest market within the MENA region. With such growth comes continual dialogue with industry stakeholders, ensuring that the interests of business aviation are promoted and protected. This regional forum will provide the perfect platform to discuss the emerging challenges and opportunities within the private aviation sector in Lebanon, Levant, and its integration with the regional industry." <



Above: **Royal Jet's awarding-winning FBO facility in Abu Dhabi**

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Part 129

Part 129 certification is essential for any charter company wishing to fly to the USA. But how should a company go about achieving accreditation?

Words | **Saul Wordsworth**

China may soon become the world's biggest economy, but the USA remains by far the most important aviation gateway. The ability to fly in and out of the world's corporate hub at a moment's notice is a vital component in any charter company's arsenal.

"The cost of obtaining Part 129 pales into insignificance when compared with the loss of revenue of not having the approval to enter the USA in the first place," comments Rick Asper, chairman of Aviation Professional Group (APG) of Florida, which offers airline consulting and certification services.

There is a great deal of talk and conjecture surrounding Part 129, a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certification that enables foreign airlines and operators to conduct commercial air operations into the USA. Some of this conjecture is based on the apparent complexity of the application process, although according to Asper much of it dates back to the turn of the millennium.

"Part of the misconception about Part 129 is the old mindset going back to 9/11," he says. "There was a sense that the Department of Transport (DOT) made your life difficult, and in

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“Your job is to convince a foreign civil aviation regulator that your operations are of a suitable standard to operate frequently within their airspace”

Paul Cremer, commercial manager, Gama Aviation



some cases this was true. They were understaffed and overwhelmed, and having trouble processing all requests. The DOT is now automated and streamlined, and things have changed.”

Attention to detail

Despite changes over the past decade, it would be wrong to suggest that achieving FAA Part 129 certification is straightforward. Each phase of the process requires strict attention to detail and adherence to careful process planning, documentation standards, and safety and security. Paul Cremer is commercial manager at Gama Aviation, a UK charter company that was granted accreditation in March.

“Your job is to convince a foreign civil aviation regulator that your operations are of a suitable standard to operate frequently within their airspace,” he says. “They don’t necessarily have a history of knowing the company. You are a blank sheet of paper. You have to convince them that what you do is safe and legal.”

There are two different approaches to seeking FAA Part 129 accreditation. One is to do it by yourself, learn on the job, save money but take a year or more to complete the process. The other is to seek professional guidance either through a USA-based law firm specializing in such matters, or an industry consultancy (“Without inside help it can be quite difficult to get hold of the right officials,” says Cremer, whose company

enlisted the help of law firm Zuckert Scoutt & Rasenberger LLP of Washington DC). Assuming all your manuals are in English and your country has reasonable aviation reciprocity with the USA, this should reduce the entire process to between two and four months.

“All we had to do was fill in a standard application form and send the FAA copies of our Civil Aviation Authority-approved manuals and documentation for each aircraft,” says Cremer. “They reviewed these and there was a meeting between the FAA inspectors and senior Gama personnel. Two months later the accreditation came through.”

With outside help, the accelerated process is likely to cost between US\$20,000 and US\$40,000, but it could be more if there is much compliance work to be done within the operator’s home country. It should be noted that this figure could be lowered dramatically if someone within the organization is adept in regulatory matters and able to work closely with the third party.

Before the technical approval – Part 129 – begins, operators coming to the USA must obtain a foreign air carrier permit from the DOT. This gives economic authority to operate. With assistance this can be completed within a month, although you may be entitled to begin application for Part 129 while seeking your permit. There is also a provision whereby both the DOT and the FAA will permit the operator to make up to

12 commercial flights pending issuance of their permit and Part 129 approval.

“This 12-flight DOT permit evidences how reasonably both the DOT and the FAA are now treating foreign commercial operators in their effort to support licensed commercial operations to the USA,” says Asper.

Three phases

The first phase is the submission of a request for a meeting with the relevant FAA Oversight Office, known as FAA International Field Offices (IFO). The IFO will then evaluate the applicant’s operating systems to insure they can provide the highest possible level of service and safety. A formal application meeting is scheduled after the FAA receives all submissions required by the Certification Process Document (CPD) and the Statement of Compliance Checklist. After these phases, it is a question of completing administrative functions. On some occasions these meetings can be bypassed if the IFO has a good working relationship with both the country of the operator and the operator’s professional counsel or consultants.

“They want manuals built in a way that will ensure safety, as well as to see that the organization is committed to a safety-driven ethos,” comments Bill Lange, chief consultant with USA-based ATP, which provides safety and compliance information and guidance for the

aviation market. "It's a 'design-in' philosophy, which tends to be hard on foreign national carriers who have a different approach to regulatory compliance and standardization."

According to Lange, Part 129 has moved away from the specific and toward performance measures, aiding applicants. "Depending on the size and culture of the company, there might be 10,000 different ways to meet these requirements, but the requirements give you flexibility as long as you can meet the end goal. That is very helpful. You are shooting for a performance, not checking off a list of to-dos. Just insure you read the paperwork, talk to a lawyer or consultant, and meet with the FAA. This is vital. Listen and learn. Create a relationship."

Safety first

The FAA has a series of certification process documents that provide detailed information about the steps required to meet accreditation, including relevant contact details. All these are important, although undoubtedly the best way to prepare for Part 129 is to already be in step with the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) safety regulations.

"The process may be exacting, but it is strictly a function of knowing what you are doing," says Asper. "It looks at face value to be daunting. Our submissions will frequently run to hundreds of pages of data. ICAO brings commonality to the evolution of aviation safety. ICAO Annex 6 talks about operations, while Annex 8 focuses on maintenance. Both have undergone substantial revisions in the last few years. Some countries have been very dutiful in keeping up with the various international requirements, some less so. Those requirements are vital if you are going to do it right, and will be difficult for those who have only paid lip service."

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) adheres to all ICAO annexes, which means there is a high degree of standardization between FAA and European rules.

"Now the EASA has a common standard, anyone coming from Europe is going to receive very expedited treatment because the USA just wants to make sure the airlines themselves

Irish charm

Flying to the USA can also be made easier for passengers if they travel from or through Shannon Airport in Ireland. This is because in 2009, Shannon became the first airport in the world, outside of the Americas, to offer full US Preclearance facilities to passengers on airlines traveling to the USA. And in 2010 the airport became the first in the world to offer full US preclearance for passengers on business jets, and is still the only airport with this service.

This service allows USA-bound passengers to undertake all immigration, customs, and agriculture inspections at Shannon prior to departure, making arrival in the USA easier and faster. Corporate jet passengers can be processed in as little as 45 minutes for customs and immigration at the airport before flying directly into more than 200 US airports, including domestic.

According to Joe Buckley, cargo and technical traffic development manager at

Shannon Airport, "This amounts to a huge potential saving for business aviation travelers who will no longer, on arrival in the USA, have to endure time-consuming international airport customs and immigration processing before re-boarding for their onward journey. This plan is already beginning to take shape with corporate jet operators looking closely at how they can maximize opportunities at Shannon arising from this preclearance facility," Buckley concludes.



comply with these standards," says Asper. "We get these done quickly."

Although the international language of aviation has been English since 1944, not all countries have followed ICAO rules and possess dual data. If this is the case, each and every manual will need to be translated into English, something that can hold up the process. The answer, again, is always to stay in line with ICAO regulations.

The outcome

Once Part 129 is granted, those companies or individuals wishing to fly charter to the USA know that as long as a plane is available at their charter of choice, it's just a case of making the call. They

also have it on more than one aviation authority that they are in safe hands.

"For pop-up flights without a lead time, it's essential we have the Part 129 and since March we have been making good use of it," says Cremer of Gama. "Not only is there the immediate commercial advantage of being able to launch a flight to or from the USA with no notice, there is also a reputational enhancement. The fact that we have this accreditation demonstrates that not only are we regarded domestically as a legitimate and safe operator, the FAA thinks that too."

Without Part 129, 'last-minute' flights to the USA require seven days' notice. With it, the world opens up to you. <

5 tips for gaining Part 129

1. Seek professional guidance

Finding a USA-based law firm or reputable aviation consultancy is not imperative but it will save you as much as nine months and take the headache out of the process. Their existing relationship with the FAA will speed up the process. At the very least you should run all your completed documentation past an expert. "If your

submission is woeful, the FAA will stop paying attention," says Rick Asper, chairman of APG.

2. Take advantage of the 12-flight rule

If you need to operate quickly while your application is being processed, take advantage of the fast-track process that can be arranged in as little as 10 days. Also known as Part 375, it enables provisional

approval for up to 12 short-notice flights a year to the USA without the need for Part 129.

3. Listen

Whether you are working through a consultancy or independently, it is imperative that you listen to what the FAA says and respond accordingly. Focus on building good relations and pay attention to its advice. Remember: this isn't the USA trying

to make life difficult. Part 129 is based on a bona fide observance of international standards that 196 countries have agreed on to create a commonality of safety.

4. Do it by the book

Make sure you do it right. Consequences of being caught out not having all the requisite documentation are draconian. You will be blacklisted. Do it by the

book – it will save you money in the long run.

5. Remember to renew

Once you have achieved Part 129, don't forget to renew. Part 129 is granted for one, two or five years, depending on your agreement. Renewal is a remarkably simple process, but imperative nonetheless. Doing it through a third party may only take a few hours and will cost almost nothing.

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WHAT DO
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Empty legs, where aircraft fly without paying passengers, are the key challenge for most fixed-based operators (FBOs) and charter operators. They are a costly drain on cashflow so the challenge for most is to find ways of generating revenue in order to increase their profitability. With this in mind, many are turning to social media – not to reach the usual clientele, but to promote last-minute offers whereby non-traditional business and private aviation clients can hire an entire aircraft for around US\$499 (see *Attracting the aspirational customer*, page 29). There are other operators who are changing their business models to allow per-seat sales rather than requiring a client to hire an entire airplane, and many of them have also begun to dabble in social media.

Changing perceptions

Social media isn't an easy or obvious marketing tool for business-to-business organizations because they don't necessarily have a mass audience with whom they can interact. Consumer brands, on the other hand, can use it to access a mass market of customers – many of whom have a willingness to interact with them using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. The business aviation sector is often criticized by some as an unnecessary luxury and wasteful, therefore operators often find themselves starting off from a negative standpoint, but a multi-channel marketing strategy that includes social media could turn this around.

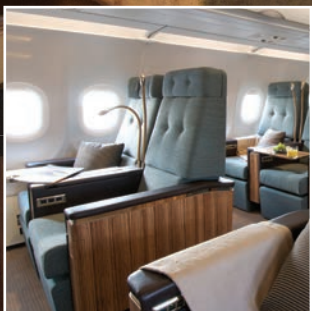
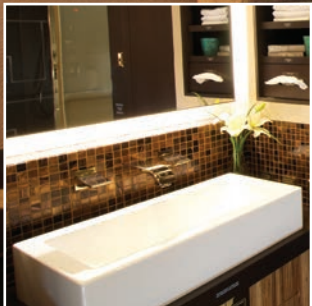
Social standing

With high-net-worth individuals preferring the personal touch to mass communication, is social media a viable and financially worthwhile marketing tool for business aviation?

Words | **Graham Jarvis**

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Ryan Keough, associate director of marketing and communications at charter operator Cutter Aviation, says that social media offers his company the “opportunity to tell actual and potential customers about the reality of business aviation and how accessible it is to them”. It can, for example, enable a group of people to fly to a ski resort such as Sand Point in Idaho, which is not covered by a traditional and regular airline service. “By bringing everyone together you can fly everyone up there and pay per person, and this costs less than a first class airline ticket,” Keough continues, before commenting that in some cases a seat could even cost less than a coach fare.

So FBOs and charter operators can use social media to attract people to business and private aviation, and help toward changing peoples’ perceptions of the industry – whether they are private individuals, lawyers, or start-up companies.

Social Flights is one of the charter operators that is adopting new business practices to attract a new type of client described by Keough. Its CEO, Jay Deragon, says that an increasing number of operators are recognizing the power of the internet, but not many of them have a formal marketing strategy. They have historically relied on promoting



Allan McGreal, director, Rizon Jet UK

“Rizon Jet recognizes social media as an important tool in which today’s FBOs can generate conversations, develop capability, and talk more readily about the needs that are vital to the customer base”

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their brands, products, and services by using local word-of-mouth and by building networks of relationships to expand this approach.

“For instance, Blue Star Jets launched its website in 2001 and to date owns 16% of the North American search traffic as pertaining to the term ‘chartered jets’,” Deragon explains. Blue Star Jets uses Google Ad Sense and pay-per-click advertising extensively, but Deragon says the website is very much Web 1.0 as Blue Star Jets does very little content marketing, online networking, or social media marketing. However, he adds that many operators have set up Facebook Fan Pages and LinkedIn Groups. The trouble is that they are putting more effort into them than they get in return. This is partly because among the other businesses, charter operators each find themselves at different stages of engagement and understanding about social media.

A complementary channel

Although around 25% of charter operators are using social media to complement direct marketing channels and brokers, Keough claims that 65% of FBOs are using social media as a communication and sales and marketing promotion channel in the USA. However, many small FBOs that *Business Airport International* contacted said they don’t have a formal social media strategy and only use it sporadically. In the UK, according to Allan McGreal, director of Rizon Jet UK, “A greater percentage of FBOs are using social media, and Rizon Jet recognizes it as an important tool in which today’s FBOs can generate conversations, develop capability, and talk more readily about the needs that are vital to the customer base.” He thinks that social media can bring both the flying and non-flying communities of business aviation together and it can be used to educate FBOs’ clients about their specific benefits.

However, Dan Marshall, operations manager at FlairJet, cautions, “Social media platforms offer easy and low-cost options for advertising specific flights and empty legs, but the sales conversion rate is incredibly low or non-existent, and the problem lies with one’s audience because in an open social environment it’s something that’s difficult to control.” In other words, FBOs and charter operators won’t always attract the much-needed customers they desire, and no matter how much they promote offers, customers will not always buy a flight just on the off-chance. Retail customers will tend to make their purchases as and when there is a need to

Attracting the aspirational customer

There are some kinds of marketing suited to certain types of clients and social media is often used as a tool to reach out to the masses. Luxury products and services such as those pertaining to private aviation aren’t therefore usually seen as the most likely candidates for a Facebook and Twitter campaign, but JetSuite wanted to attract more customers – and not just high-net-worth business executives. The company developed a lower cost business model that included finding staff and fuel cost savings with Phenom 100 aircraft. It also decided to change its image by adopting a more light-hearted approach to marketing.

The company sees social media as a ‘necessary evil’ and so it launched what it describes as a standard Facebook and Twitter campaign. The company’s marketing director, Sara Klinger, explains that it realized in 2011 that its social media audience was “very interactive and involved more of an aspirational buyer than our standard clientele in our usual marketing outlets”.

The company also decided that it could be a means of reducing any negative impact on its bottom line as empty legs often mean that they burn cash rather than make money. So it took to using social media to promote its SuiteDeals program, which was launched

in April 2011, to generate revenue. Using Facebook, JetSuite posted its discounted last-minute SuiteDeals flights for as low as US\$499 for an entire aircraft.

Traditional marketing tools such as print advertising, online advertising, direct mail, and events are also used to promote the offers and the company’s social media presence. The deals have since been automated and they can be booked via the firm’s website, but the final goal of the campaign is to sell SuiteKey memberships and non-empty-leg retail flights. Some of its clients had learnt about JetSuite through its traditional marketing channels before they used SuiteDeals and made their bookings via social media. Some of them have converted to SuiteKey membership based on their experience of SuiteDeals.

JetSuite also claims to now have more Facebook fans than any other private jet charter operators, with 32,792 supporters compared with XOJet’s 4,058. The firm therefore considers social media as an important sales channel and branding tool for spreading the word about JetSuite among its employees, clients, and by using social media applications such as Pinterest and Facebook, where it posts and shares pilot photos about its trips.

TOP 10
SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

Business Airport International spoke to a number of FBOs and charter operators about how they are using social media. Below are 10 of their top social media marketing tips:

1. Use social media to listen first and then develop your own messaging strategy, and use language that is simple for your audience to digest.
2. Always have a call-to-action to encourage your customers, staff, or partners to respond to your posts by commenting, uploading a photo, or making a purchase.
3. Check your spelling and grammar before posting any content.
4. Position the company to protect the brand. As Ryan Keough, associate director of marketing and communications at Cutter Aviation, comments, "There are a number of companies that didn't jump on the Twitter or Facebook bandwagon early enough, and so they are now finding it harder to establish themselves."
5. Segment and vary the message to target particular target audiences.
6. Adopt and create standards of social media behavior that are governed by a champion within the organization.
7. It is not just about providing content, but more about creating conversations and actions.
8. Devise a social media campaign that will catch the attention of the media to increase your support and subscriber base.
9. Get your brand name and brand message into your posts and establish a presence on Google+, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
10. Respond quickly to negative feedback and measure your campaign to ensure that your commercial objectives are being met; metrics include an increase in Facebook likes, brand awareness, and sales derived or complemented by social media campaigns.



William Coleman, president, Coleman Group

"Most FBOs and charter operators use social media, but 90% talk to existing customers and very few prospects are gained because the communication's link is usually formed into an abbreviated and unintelligent format"

do so. Moreover, in the high end of the market, discounted offers won't have much of an impact on sales. That's because the perception of quality and value is far more important to high-net-worth customers than price.

Listen and react

However, social media can be used effectively for crisis management to forestall reputational damage and to listen to what customers really want to be offered. This enables FBOs and charter operators to customize their messages and offers to suit the prerequisites of each customer segment. FBOs and charter operators can then offer empty-leg promotions to non-traditional private aviation customers and higher value flights to high-net-value clients. Social media can also be used to make certain destinations attractive to each type of client, while also offering a range of complementary services such as hotels and car hire.

"Destinations can be attractively presented by Instagram [a free photo-sharing network] and detailed offers showcased with Urban Daddy JetSet, ASmallWorld, and Luxury Society," says Michael Ricks, chief operating officer of Oriens Advisors. He believes that there are different roles for different social media outlets: LinkedIn serves up detailed information about buyers, influencers, and people who are likely to travel, and Facebook is good for stimulating and spreading word-of-mouth messages, managing a firm's reputation, and for gaining feedback from a particular audience to evaluate the services of an FBO, a charter operator, or a broker.

All of this is great, but it's important to track whether these networks actually help to turn social media presence into sales by using an analytical tool. Google Analytics is one such tool that can be employed, and some operators have their own systems which enable them to analyze where their key customers are based within a particular geographic area. This can then help them to collect contact details and produce targeted marketing campaigns. For example, Linear Air's air taxi service uses social media as an awareness and referral-based marketing channel. "We use Facebook, Google+, Twitter, and LinkedIn, but we know we are not getting sales from those channels as it is trackable and we ask customers where they heard of us from, but it is not the primary purpose of the campaign," says Bill Herp, the company's CEO.

Herp's main goal is to be able to capture the email address of each customer to create an email marketing list in order to send email communications whenever it is appropriate. "We use a multichannel approach because social media is not a transaction channel for charter operators – at least not in the current environment," he argues. However, the capturing of a customer's email address is not always possible because high-net-worth individuals will often prefer to remain anonymous. So it's important to consider the preferred communication needs and expectations of each market segment.

It is also important to maintain a strong level of communication with customers if investing in social media, and this is where some critics find companies lacking. William Coleman, president of the Coleman Group, comments, "Most FBOs and charter operators use

social media, but 90% talk to existing customers and very few prospects are gained because the communication's link is usually formed into an abbreviated and unintelligent format."

He has found that all too many operators never follow up on any comments that are made, and in order to use social media effectively it's crucial to allocate time and people to update and manage it. Without the investment in human resources and at least 20 man-hours per week, it is hard to achieve tangible results. The cost of social media therefore equates to hiring people with the knowledge and expertise to make it really work. <



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Rise to the occasion

More than 300 airshows are held globally every year, attracting around 10 million spectators. *BAI* takes a look at the main challenges these events present and how the shows can help promote business aviation

Words | **Mark Huber** Illustration | **Matt Herring**

Putting on an airshow, even a relatively small one, requires a complex choreography that involves multiple layers of government and community cooperation, marketing, finance, and logistics. No matter how many you have attended as a spectator, nothing prepares you for the challenges involved in organizing a modern airshow. Add commercial exhibits, concerts, and sophisticated aerobatics to the mix, and the difficulty can increase exponentially.

The primary question is logistical: can your airport even handle an airshow event? When Paul Poberezny was looking to relocate the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) annual airshow in the late 1960s, he took great care to survey the area around Oshkosh, Wisconsin, including roads, vacant land immediately adjacent to the airport facilities, and nearby commercial airports.

More than three decades later, Oshkosh has become synonymous with one of the world's largest annual celebrations of general aviation, hosted by a group Poberezny founded in 1953 in his basement. Today, the EAA's week-long AirVenture has grown from fewer than 10,000 attendees in 1970 into a phenomenon that draws almost one-tenth of the globe's general aviation fleet and attracts more than 500,000 participants from many countries around the world. More than 50,000 of them camp on the grounds and the remainder jam hotels and rent private homes up to 60 miles away.

But even with this pedigree, the Oshkosh site is not perfect: surrounding neighborhoods limit the size of its aerobatic box and it is not large enough for the USA's two premier military aerobatic teams – the Air Force's Thunderbirds and the Navy's Blue Angels – to perform there.





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All in the preparation

The first thing rookie show organizers typically underestimate is the preparation time required, says John Cudahy, president of the International Council of Airshows (ICAS), the trade association that represents the industry.

"Underestimating the lead time required to organize and conduct a show is one of the main problems faced by new event organizers," Cudahy explains. "It is the kind of thing that a newcomer thinks can be done intuitively in three to four months. Even a very small show needs five to six months and a larger show with jets and large crowds takes at least nine months. Even very sophisticated shows that have been around for a long time begin planning their next show just a few weeks after the current show is over."

That includes making sure the show dates do not conflict with other national or community events; for example, this year's Farnborough International Airshow (FIA) could have clashed with the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London. Most of the time, any potential conflict is on a smaller scale. "Typically an airshow competes with a food festival or a music festival," comments Cudahy. "It is important for anyone planning a show to consider the community calendar writ large. On the one hand you have challenges on hotel rooms and rental cars. On the other hand you have the challenges of getting 15,000 people or more to the event and you don't want to force people to choose between the airshow and another family event on the same weekend. If you are out nine months ahead of time, you can plant your flag on that weekend and encourage other people to schedule around you instead of vice versa."

Organizers of FIA, which has roots dating back to the 1920s, know only too well the importance of preparation. Amanda Stainer,

"It is important for anyone planning a show to consider the community calendar writ large"

John Cudahy, president of the International Council of Airshows

Servicing Oshkosh

Orion Flight Services is one of two FBOs based at Wittman Regional Airport in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. During the week of EAA AirVenture – typically in late July – Orion, which usually sees four to five transient aircraft each day, will pump up to 150,000 gallons of aviation fuel into thousands of airplanes. That's just part of the challenge, says FBO manager Garrett Kamark.

"Customers start calling in January for ramp space and hangar reservations. Around June we start getting flooded with requests for hotel reservations and rental cars," explains Kamark. Demand for storage in Orion's new 12,000ft² hangar is strong. Daytime temperatures during the show can be very high: this year, on the show's opening day, the mercury reached 104°F. Conversely, the show can fall victim to brutal thunderstorms, often with damaging hail. Two years ago, pre-show deluges turned much of the space reserved for turf parking into unusable muck for most of the week. Kamark referred to it as "Sloshkosh". During the week, Hertz and Enterprise provide Orion's customers with up to 700 cars.

Pumping fuel is a different matter. Orion usually operates with a staff of four to five; during AirVenture, that increases to 25. This year, four more avgas and two more Jet-A

trucks were brought in; in the past Orion has had as many as 14 extra avgas trucks.

During the year, Kamark trains his temporary help in the National Air Transportation Association's (NATA's) Safety First program as well as its in-house training. "It is very expensive for us to bring in the additional equipment and help," says Kamark.

This year, for the first time, Kamark began sending the fuel trucks out on patrol among the seemingly endless rows of airplanes parked on the turf adjacent to Oshkosh's two main runways. Kamark estimates that as many as 25,000 airplanes cycle through Oshkosh during AirVenture week and that as many as 12,000 are parked there at any given time. Truck drivers collect and process credit card payments via iPods and iPads at the point of sale – wherever the aircraft are parked. Customers get the receipts on their cell phones seconds later. Fuel trucks patrol between 7:00am and 2:00pm, when the show flying begins and the airport closes to traffic, and again once the show flying has finished, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

Orion brings in two 15-passenger vans to shuttle fliers and their passengers from the FBO to main show registration, more than a mile away. "There are a lot of variables to the equation," concludes Kamark.



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exhibitions and events director for Farnborough International Ltd (FIL), says, "FIA is a biennial event but preparations for shows are continuously rolling. We are already planning for the 2014 event and beyond. The team is constantly looking to market trends for ways in which we can improve our event, making it valuable and topical for our visitors and exhibitors. We also work on a one-to-one basis with exhibitors and are able to work with them to deliver unique exhibition and meeting solutions. Several of our exhibitors now have standalone buildings at FIA with bespoke areas that they have identified for up to three shows."

Meticulous preparation has paid off for Farnborough; the 2012 event, which was held in July, saw US\$72 billion of orders and commitments confirmed, covering a total of 758 aircraft. The figures represent a 53% increase on the 2010 show and close to the figure in 2008, when sales peaked at US\$88 billion. To add further weight to the show's success, FIL announced in August that 20% of exhibitors had already rebooked for the 2014 show. Over the

five days of the show, the event attracted just over 109,000 trade visitors and more than 1,500 exhibitors from across the supply chain.

Teamwork

The FIA has prospered mainly because of the capabilities of the organizing team from FIL – a wholly owned subsidiary of ADS, a British aerospace industry organization. For new shows starting out, one of the major challenges is finding the right people to run things. The seed of an airshow generally begins with pilots based at the host airport, but they are not always the best people to run things, according to Cudahy. "It is important to find people with relevant business expertise to get involved with the enterprise," he explains. "One of the more common problems for a show that struggles is that it is a bunch of pilots, none of whom have any marketing, finance, transportation, logistics, or contracts experience. Although important, flying is only about 25-30% of what goes on."

There's airspace, advertising, insurance, security, fire/rescue, parking, food, music, static



Above and below: In 2012 the Farnborough International Airshow attracted more than 109,000 trade visitors and over 1,500 exhibitors





“Safety and security are also paramount in our planning and our safety record is second to none”

Amanda Stainer, exhibitions and events director, Farnborough International Ltd

displays, exhibitor tents, and pavilions to think about, and that’s just to name a few.

“There are many challenges in the staging of an international airshow,” says Stainer. “We have our client requirements to consider, visitor expectations to meet, and the logistics of delivering the world’s largest temporary exhibition, which includes a flying display. We manage a plethora of activities, which range from visitor management – such as transportation, on-site facilities, and accommodation agents – to building and fitting the four large exhibition halls and some 120 chalet structures. We liaise with third-party contractors on behalf of our clients and engage and work to a very tight project plan, which is overseen and managed by the Farnborough International Ltd team. Safety and security are also paramount in our planning and our safety record is second to none.”

Professional management like FIL’s is extremely important. “When it comes to organizing shows you have a lot of options,” says Cudahy. “You can run it yourself and bring in contractors for specific things or you can hire a single contractor who takes care of everything. The shows that suffer through the least invasive learning curve are the shows that recognize what they don’t know and go out and get people to come in and help them with those issues.”

Lessons from Reno

During the 2011 national championship Air Races in Reno, Nevada, a highly modified World War II P-51D Mustang fighter crashed into the crowd after suffering a mechanical failure. The airplane’s trim tab separated from the elevator, putting the aircraft into an uncontrolled pitch-up, stall, and roll. The pilot and 10 spectators were killed, and almost 70 more were injured.

The airshow organizers are quick to point out that an air race is not the same as an airshow, a point not lost on airshow insurance underwriters. In the wake of Reno, aircraft inspection standards, the racecourse, and the crowd lines were changed to make sure that the race was much safer.

Keeping it safe

Airshows have the best safety record of any spectator motorsport, but even the most minor mishap can draw disproportionate, negative media coverage. The airshow industry has worked hard to develop and update safety standards, an effort that began in the aftermath of a deadly 1951 crash during an airshow in Flagler, Colorado, that killed the pilot and 19 spectators on the ground.

Following Flagler, minimum airshow centerline and crowd set-back standards were established based on the weight and type of the aircraft flying aerobatics. It is currently 500ft for airplanes under 1200 lb, 1,000ft for warbirds, and 1,500ft for almost any jet.

International Council of Airshows (ICAS) president John Cudahy says the standard has worked “remarkably well” to ensure

spectator safety, but that pilot safety “remains a challenge”. Almost every year, pilots still die performing at, or practicing for, their airshow performances, although the fatality rate is declining. “Pilots know they are taking some risk. But our absolute accident rate has been on the decline for 20 years,” adds Cudahy.

In the USA, airshow performers must have a certificate of aerobatic competency, which used to be issued by the FAA but which since 1992 has been issued by ICAS.

“When the FAA ran it, the local FSDO (flight standards district office) really didn’t have the expertise to say whether or not a pilot was a good aerobatic pilot,” comments Cudahy. “Our evaluation is such that you have to have a lot of flying experience before you get to perform in an airshow environment.”



Financial risk

Any public event, particularly a new one, involves financial risk, but there are ways to minimize it. Trade-outs, such as surrendering a percentage of parking revenues in exchange for police and fire/rescue, works at many airshows. Spreading the show over two days can minimize the impact of adverse weather. So does weather insurance. “It is relatively expensive but it is a good deal, particularly for shows that have not been operating long enough to establish any kind of cash reserve,” Cudahy adds.

Weather insurance typically covers lost admission and concession revenues, but policy terms are exacting. Show organizers may initially be tempted to buy it to cover the flying hours of the show, but it should really cover time earlier in the day, when the public makes the decision whether or not to attend based on the weather.

Holding an airshow at airports with scheduled airline services also can complicate matters, especially if carriers have flights scheduled during show flying hours. This usually means carriers must be persuaded to alter their flight schedules during the performance block. US military teams are intractable when it comes to their flying times, offering a further challenge.

For Farnborough, as an international airshow the TAG airport facilities are very important to visiting clients. “It’s an enhancement to FIA to be able to partner with TAG and offer facilities and support services for aircraft and airshow visitors wishing to arrive at the airshow by either fixed-wing or helicopter,” says Stainer. “The airshow also benefits from the expertise of the TAG on-site services, for example a permanent airport fire station, hangarage, and ramp space.”

Airshows can sometimes be the victim of their own success, says Cudahy. “Profits can be the death knell of a show because everyone wants to get paid – and the show can’t sustain it.”

But if organized properly, a show can provide a great platform for business and provide the local area with a highly prestigious event. “There are many aerospace events across the globe, some international and some regional,” says the FIL’s Stainer. “My advice to anyone looking to start any new event would be to undertake careful research and ensure you have the correct in-country support. The Farnborough International Airshow is a world-renowned event that has highlighted globally the small Hampshire town of Farnborough and, as such, the airport benefits from this raised profile.”

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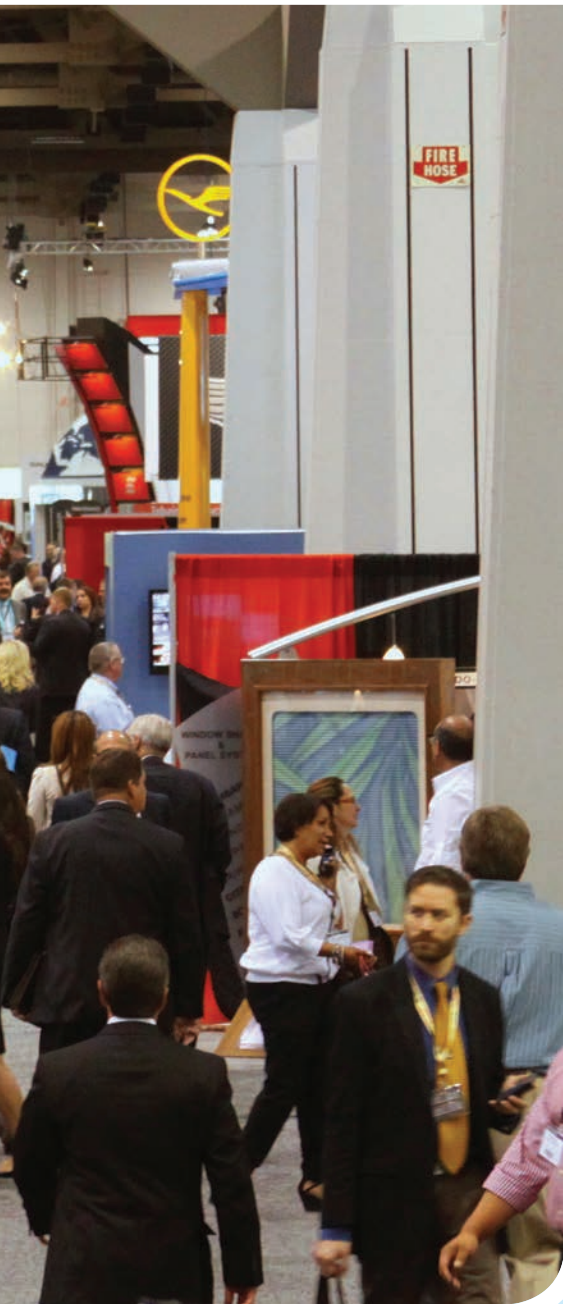
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Show time

This year's National Business Aviation Association's Annual Meeting & Convention will bring together around 25,000 business aviation professionals in Orlando to discuss the current challenges and trends affecting the industry. *Business Airport International* takes a look at what is on offer over the three-day event



Left: **Thousands of business aviation professionals will come together in Orlando for the NBAA's 65th Annual Meeting & Convention in October. Picture courtesy of NBAA**



Above: **The Ranger Jet Center at Kissimmee Gateway Airport is one of many FBOs available in the Orlando area**

Below: **A static aircraft display will be situated at Orlando Executive Airport. Picture courtesy of NBAA**

Where to fly

Flying into Orlando for the NBAA annual meeting and convention is easy. There are four airports located within about 40 miles of the OCCC, all of which offer a number of fixed base operator (FBO) options.

1: Kissimmee Gateway Airport (10 miles)

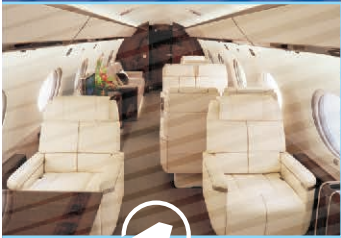
Kissimmee Gateway Airport accommodates general aviation air services 24 hours a day and has three FBOs located at the airport – Kissimmee Aviation Services, Ranger Jet Center and Signature Flight Support.

Ranger Jet Center offers AvFuel refuelling, a quick turn around service, pilots' lounge, snooze room, shower facilities, catering, conference room, VIP security, and a 24-hour on-call service on request. Fuel and ground support are available

Taking place at the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) in Orlando, Florida, USA from October 30 to November 1, 2012, the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA)'s 65th Annual Meeting & Convention is the USA's biggest event dedicated to business aviation.

Over the course of the three days, key operators and industry leaders will attend more than 100 education sessions to gain information about the developments in business aviation, and take part in active discussions with their peers. There will also be an extensive on-site exhibition with displays and demonstrations from the leading companies in the industry, as well as a static display of aircraft at the Orlando Executive Airport.





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7:00am-10:00pm with on-call services available 24 hours a day. There are no landing fees and the airport and aircraft parking costs depend on the type of aircraft and whether it requests fuel – with the minimum fuel purchased, there are no facility fees and the first night of parking is free.

Signature Flight Support's FBO features a 7,000ft² aircraft canopy, pilots' lounge with video library, passenger lounge, shower and locker facilities as well as refreshments including popcorn, ice cream and cookies. The FBO is open 7:00am-10:00pm, with 24-hour service available on request.

2: Orlando International Airport (12.1 miles)

Orlando International Airport is the closest commercial airport to the city's world-class attractions, the Orange County Convention Center, and the downtown business district. There are two FBOs at the airport – Galaxy Aviation and Signature Flight Support – both of which offer 24-hour access, seven days a week.

Galaxy Aviation is located adjacent to customs and offers a spacious lobby, conference room, hangar, office space, pilots' lounge, and a flight-planning room. During the NBAA convention, Galaxy is offering a free limo service to and from the OCCC, free breakfast and lunch at the FBO daily, free trip-ready aircraft cleaning, and the best crew rates at local hotels.

Signature Flight Support supplies Jet A and Avgas fuel, a modern spacious lobby, executive conference room, pilots' lounges with quiet room, US customs, and a shuttle service to and from the main terminal. It also provides special discounts for Cessna Citation Service Center and



Left & below: **The Signature Flight Support FBO at Orlando International Airport is in a convenient location**



Session topics There will be eight session topics at this year's NBAA, and *BAI* has chosen its highlights from the three-day event:

Safety and risk management:

October 30 – The IS-BAO process: 'the gold standard', 2:30-4:00pm.

Sonia Bates and John Sheehan from the International Business Aviation Council will explain the concept of the International Standard for Business Aircraft Operators (IS-BAO), how to get started with the standard, and how to develop uniform practical procedures. The session is designed to assist single and multiple aircraft operators.

Maintenance and technical issues:

October 30 – Modern office in the sky: radar to a road map, 10:30am-12:30pm.

Richardson Aviation's Jim Sparks and Brad Townsend from DuPont Aviation will provide insights into the choices and pitfalls of existing and new system architectures, and the importance of Electrical Wiring Integration Systems.

Airspace and airport access:

October 31 – FAA NextGen: happening now for business operators, 9:00-10:03am.

Gisele Mohler from the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will discuss NextGen operational benefits from equipment in the aircraft now as well as benefits operators can expect to receive as FAA implements NextGen in National Airspace System.

Aircraft and flight operations:

October 30 – iPads in the cockpit, 10:30am-12:00pm.

Jeff Buhl from Jeppesen Aviation, Hilton Goldstein from Wing X Pro, and Tyson Weihs from ForeFlight will discuss developments in business aviation apps as well as best practices for utilizing iPads in the cockpit and FAA regulatory guidelines on electronic flight bags. Major app providers will also discuss what they have in store for business aviation.

Aviation management and aircraft ownership

October 30 – Transactions gone bad: litigation between aircraft buyers and sellers, 1:00-2:00pm.

Mark D. Pierce from Slack & Davis LLP will discuss what happens when a newly acquired aircraft does not meet its new owner's expectations and post-sale negotiations fail. He will also address the variety of potential problems associated with the sale of a business aircraft and how to deal with them.

Career and leadership development:

October 31 – How to successfully address the declining aviation talent pool, 9:00-10:00am.

Sheryl Barden from Aviation Personnel International looks at the future of business aviation and how flight departments can manage an aviation personnel shortage.

Industry update:

October 31 – Operating and doing business in China – a continuing dialogue, 2:30-4:00pm.

Jeff Lee, American Express Company and NBAA Board Member, Jay Mesinger, J. Mesinger Corporate Jet Sales, and NBAA board members will begin with a regulatory and airspace update and continue with real-time examples of the execution of these flight department internal plans.

Light Business Airplane Sessions:

October 31 – Light business airplane: missions critical – using aviation to grow your business, 1:00pm-2:15pm.

This session will discuss how businesses can use general aviation airplanes to gain efficiency and proficiency. It will address safety considerations, options for using a co-pilot, and benefits to the pilot and the business.

FlightSafety customers as well as complimentary golf passes to the Remington Golf Club in Kissimmee, Florida.

3: Orlando Executive Airport (15.6 miles)

Orlando Executive Airport provides 24-hour service through two FBOs – SheltAir Aviation Services and Showalter Flying Services – as well as an FAA air traffic control tower and full instrument landing system capacity.

SheltAir Aviation Services operates from 6:00am-11:00pm and offers a self-service AvGas fuel pump. FBO facilities also include a first-class concierge, catering, conference room, wireless internet, pilots’ lounge and flight planning room. During NBAA, the FBO will provide complimentary crew lunches and a continuous static display shuttle service. Showalter Flying Services operates 6:00am-10:00pm and offers courtesy cars, gourmet catering, shower rooms, hangar space, and a laundry service.

4: Orlando-Sanford International Airport (41.4 miles)

StarPort and Avion by Quinn Inc operate the



Above: **SheltAir Aviation Services at Orlando Executive Airport**

FBOs at Orlando-Sanford International Airport, both of which offer fueling, fast turnarounds and prompt concierge support.

StarPort offers a state-of-the-art facility including a pilots’ lounge, customer lounge, flight-planning room, executive conference room, snooze room, and showers. A US customs office is located across the field, and air charters are provided through Keywest Executive Air Charter.

Avion by Quinn operates from 6:00am-10:00pm and provides Jet A and 100LL fuel.



Above: **The StarPort FBO at Orlando-Sanford International Airport**

It offers private shower and restroom facilities for crew as well as a business center with telephones, computers and color printers, wireless internet, and a complimentary executive conference room. ↩

Registration for NBAA 2012
 7:00am-6:00pm on Tuesday, October 30,
 8:00am-5:00pm on Wednesday, October 31
 8:00am-3:00pm on Thursday, November 1

Five things to do in Orlando

Visitors to Orlando will find plenty to do, whether it is thrill-seeking at the numerous theme parks, sightseeing around the cultural and historical monuments, shopping, relaxing at a spa, or partaking in sporting activities. Here’s a look at five things to do in Orlando:

1. Theme parks

A trip to Orlando, Florida would not be complete without visiting at least one of its famous theme parks. Most famous of them all is perhaps Universal Studios Florida, where visitors can go behind the scenes and beyond the screen of iconic movies. Located just four miles from the Orange County Convention Centre (OCCC), it is easy to make a quick detour to experience some of the amazing rides available. Other theme parks include Walt Disney World Resort for the younger generation, SeaWorld which offers an insight into the lives of ocean animals, and Islands of Adventures featuring thrilling and technologically-advanced rides designed by movie director Steven Spielberg.



special knock-and-password combination before being treated to more than two hours of non-stop musical productions, stand-up comedy, and theatrical performances. An all-you-can-eat buffet of American and Italian food is served as well as unlimited alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks – all of which are included in the ticket price of US\$40-US\$60. Situated 10 miles from the OCCC, the show is available all year round and promises to provide a night to remember.

2. Dinnertime entertainment

For visitors wishing to experience dinner with a difference, Capone’s Dinner & Show is ideal. Guests enter the theater using a

3. Relaxation

Orlando has plenty of spas on offer, providing the perfect environment to relax and be pampered after a busy day at the NBAA meeting and convention. Blue Harmony Spa is situated just nine miles from the OCCC and offers all of the traditional spa services as well as a 1,900ft² fitness centre, relaxation lounge, outdoor spa garden, and a hot tub. Massages range from US\$60-US\$195 and beauty treatments start from around US\$25.

4. Wildlife adventure

To really get to grips with Orlando and its surroundings, why not take an airboat ride through a 4,200-acre nature preserve and experience the Florida wilderness at its best? The Wild Florida boat tour is situated in Kenansville, 25 miles from the OCCC, and promises to take you on the trip of a lifetime through its expansive family-owned land. During the trip passengers also get to hold live baby alligators, visit a tropical bird aviary, and sightsee from the 500ft dock. Tickets for the tour cost between US\$25-US\$60 per person depending on duration and time of day.

5. Hole in one

With more than 170 courses and over 20 academies, Orlando is the ideal location for a round of golf. The Grand Cypress Golf Club is situated four miles from the OCCC and its 45-hole golf course was designed by Jack Nicklaus as a tribute to the Old Course at St Andrews in Scotland. The course is also the location of the NBAA 16th Annual Chairman’s Charity Classic Golf Tournament on Monday October 29, 2012. Richard Shine, NBAA chairman of the board, will preside over this year’s tournament. Player positions cost US\$295 and foursomes cost US\$1,180.





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Time is money

The marketing genius behind Hublot Genève explains why his Embraer Phenom 100 has helped him save time and improve comfort while traveling the globe to run his business empire

Words | **Selwyn Parker**

When Jean-Claude Biver, chief executive of Switzerland-based watch company Hublot Genève, settles into the cream-colored seats of his Embraer Phenom 100 aircraft, he's almost always alone in the passenger cabin. This is by design rather than by accident. It means he is able to relax and forget about his work – fascinating as it is – for a few precious hours. There's nothing aboard to remind him of the daily toil that often consumes 100 hours a week; no models of Hublot watches, not even a brochure. "It's the same in my car – nothing about watches," he says.

Aside from that, the Embraer is all about business. "Seven years ago I started flying with a small private jet company based in Geneva because I found it made the connections so much easier when I traveled by charter. Getting from commercial airports to where I wanted to go was so time-consuming. Now I save a huge number of hours."



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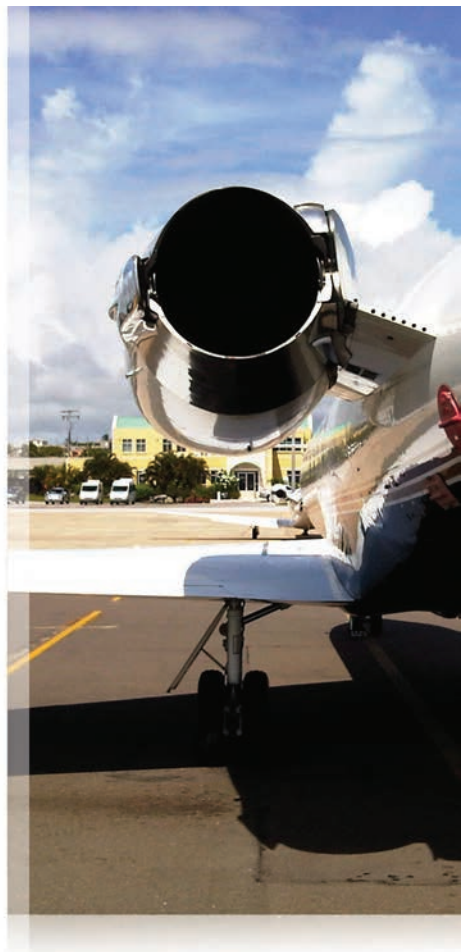


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A firm believer in face-to-face salesmanship, Biver uses the aircraft only within Europe for marketing and other missions. He averages around 100 hours a year in it as he hurtles between F1 venues, Hublot-sponsored events, and customers, conferences, and seminars. "I've flown to Ferrari [at Marinello] seven times this year," he says. "The Phenom is small and designed for European routes. It's got the latest-generation engine and it's very economical."

On transcontinental hops, 63-year-old Biver flies a total of 1,100 hours a year, spending the equivalent of 30 days a year in an aircraft. He travels first class on a variety of carriers to reduce the strain. "Because I'm a frequent flyer, I get certain privileges – lounges, limousines, and so on. You don't need them, but they help to make life more comfortable."

Convenience and comfort

But he clearly prefers his jet, which he bought three years ago. The aircraft is based at a military airport at Sion about 80 miles from Geneva in the Rhône valley. The airport, which has a capacity of 2,600 passengers a day, has a permanent customs service and police station, and is a favorite destination for privately owned aircraft, especially during the ski season, because of its proximity to the Valais Alps and holiday resorts such as Verbier.

Although the airport boasts a coffee bar and restaurant, Biver doesn't often have time for either. "Sion is very convenient for me," he explains. "I just drive there in my car, park, and take the plane. I don't have to worry about getting a slot." For an entrepreneur who sleeps just four hours a night, time is clearly of the essence.

At a starting price of US\$2.98 million, the four-seater twin turboprop Phenom 100 is a VLJ aircraft with a range of 1,178 nautical miles.

"I don't blame people for not acting like me. I'm not an ayatollah. But I do like to do my bit"

Importantly for its owner, it has low-carbon as well as low-maintenance credentials. The aircraft's Pratt & Whitney engines claim high fuel efficiency with low carbon emissions. "You have to do the best you can for the planet. It's how we designed our new factory [at Nyon, just south of Geneva] in an environmental way," Biver says. "I don't blame people for not acting like me. I'm not an ayatollah. But I do like to do my bit."

The interior of the Phenom 100 is by BMW Group Designworks, a project it conducted exclusively for Embraer and which was unveiled at the 2007 NBAA show in Atlanta, Georgia. Based on a 'lounge-like' atmosphere, it's a standard configuration and features four colors dominated by beige because the owner said he wanted a restful environment.

"Around 90% of the time I fly by myself," Biver explains. "That's why I bought the aircraft. It makes a big psychological difference to have your own aircraft. For me, the biggest advantage is that you know who you are flying with. I always travel with the same Swiss pilot and co-pilot; we've gotten to know each other and it's always good to see them."



Above: **The Hublot King Power Minute Repeater Chrono Tourbillon 48mm**

Revenue generator

Biver can certainly afford to fly alone. After an impressive revival at his hands, Hublot was bought in 2008 by French luxury conglomerate LVMH for about CHF480 million (US\$514 million) and Biver, as a significant shareholder, chief executive, and main driving force, pocketed CHF150 million (US\$160 million), according to *Bilan*, the Swiss business magazine. He was also retained as chief executive on a substantial salary.

Biver did not establish Hublot, which means 'porthole' in French. Inspired by the 'fusion' concept of a precious metal case with a strap of natural rubber, Carlo Crocco founded the brand in 1980 mainly on the basis of nautical designs. But it was struggling when Biver joined the firm in 2004 as chief executive and shareholder, bringing with him a track record of reviving ailing Swiss brands such as Blancpain, a historic timepiece, which had collapsed in the 1950s. "Since 1735, there has never been a quartz Blancpain, and there never will be," he declared at the time. (Like Omega, Blancpain is now owned by the Swatch group.)

Biver saw Hublot as another opportunity for rescuing the centuries-old mechanical Swiss watch industry from an invasion of mass-produced quartz-movement watches, from Japan in particular. A collector of mechanically driven trains, he had grown up with a fascination for intricate engineering. An economist by education, he started his working life in Brassus in the Joux Valley, the historic seat of the watch industry. "I was able to penetrate into the very soul of watchmaking," he comments. "I developed a real passion for watchmaking and for the watchmakers themselves."

Using his considerable savoir-faire of the industry, he was able to quadruple the Hublot turnover within two years and, a further two years after that, to boost revenues tenfold compared with 2004. For that achievement, he was named by Swiss business newspaper *Handelszeitung* as one of the top 10 entrepreneurs of the year.

Making connections

For Biver, the connection between high-design timepieces and the aerospace industry is obvious and natural. "It's like the Airbus A380, the world's biggest passenger airliner," he explains. "In today's aircraft, all the materials must be stronger and lighter. It's the same with watches – the materials that we use at Hublot are absolutely similar." Indeed the Hublot Aero Bang Gold Ceramic design, to give the timepiece its full title, claimed first prize in the Oscars of the industry, the Grand Prix du Public category at the Nuit de L'Horlogerie in Geneva. (Among others, Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo wears one.)

He also discerns common elements between luxury watches and F1 – incidentally a sport of which Hublot is a principal sponsor. "You see immediate and very interesting comparisons between F1 and our watches," he says. "The materials are also 100% similar and both products must be extremely durable. We are in absolutely the same atmosphere." And he goes on to cite titanium, aluminum, magnesium,



"You are better off with a newer plane. It's an attitude of mind that I have"

ceramics, and carbon – the raw materials of 200mph racing cars and Switzerland's luxury watch industry. "Except that an F1 car lasts only one year, while a luxury watch must keep working for many years," he adds for good measure.

There's certainly a link between the aerospace industry's pursuit of lightness with strength and high-end timepieces. In the model line of Hublot, which manufactures its own carbon fiber to high specification, there's a £14,000 (US\$22,667) carbon fiber-based model that weighs just 50g – less than a third of its standard range.

Keeping current

The Phenom has an economic life of 35,000 hours, but Biver will probably trade it in soon for a newer model. "You are better off with a newer plane," he says. "It's an attitude of mind that I have. I prefer to make changes quickly and to adopt the newest technology."

While the savior of Switzerland's mechanical watch industry is clearly attracted by the advanced skills that are required to make aircraft such as the Phenom 100, he also sees the more intangible elements in them, too. The practical time-telling function of watches has long been usurped by a lot of other devices, he points out. Indeed he believes that if anybody has spent more than €50 (US\$65) on a watch just to tell the time, they have made a mistake. "At Hublot we sell image, emotion, dreams, beauty, art," he says. "It starts with the marketing and ends with the technical." <

Room for improvement

Fixed-base operators (FBOs) in Europe have to raise their game. That's the firm view of Jean-Claude Biver, one of their more frequent users. His Embraer Phenom 100 flies about 100 hours a year between nearly all capitals in Eastern and Western Europe and, although he says the aircraft saves him a lot of time, he could save a lot more on the ground if FBOs improved their performance.

"FBOs are not flexible enough and it makes traveling through Europe – small as it is – longer and more complicated than traveling through the USA or China," he says.

That said, one of the big attractions of flying on corporate jets for Biver, whether it's his own or chartered, is that he lands at business airports rather than commercial airports. "I like business airports because they are comfortable, simple, and quiet," he explains. "You almost feel as though you are home. And access is generally easy."

However, he's still looking for an FBO in Europe that ticks all of his boxes. "European business airports should put the customer in the middle, especially ground staff. They must show genuine friendship and hospitality," Biver says. He adds that their administrative systems are too complicated and inefficient. The result is that passengers are forced to spend too much time on the ground.



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Warm welcome

A trip to the Caribbean island of Antigua is a hassle-free, luxury experience with FBO 2000

As part of a locally owned and operated company, the management and staff of FBO 2000 take particular pride in serving Antigua and Barbuda's luxury market, and have long set the standard for VIP services at VC Bird International Airport in Antigua.

The company's dedicated team of highly trained ground staff is always on standby, ready to assist with customs, immigration, and baggage handling at a moment's notice, ensuring a smooth and seamless transition from plane to private transfer. Should customers be continuing onto a yacht, FBO 2000 is conveniently located across from the Shell Beach Marina.

The full-service facilities of FBO 2000 are set a discreet distance away from the main terminal, so that clients may enjoy total privacy and peace of mind. They are comprised of an operations

office set apart, a hangar, and a tastefully appointed passenger lounge that offers a cool and relaxing place for clients to freshen up before continuing on to their destination. An outdoor deck allows passengers and crews to take in some last minute sunbathing. Private aircrews are also cheerfully assisted, provided with their own shower facilities and an area for flight planning. As an additional service, FBO 2000's fuel subsidiary, Bizjet-to-Yacht, will make sure the aircraft is fully fueled and ready for take-off.

With safety being of the utmost concern, the entire facility is equipped with the latest in security technology, including CCTV cameras, passenger and baggage screening equipment, and private security personnel who run a constant patrol of the area. For additional peace of mind, personal guards may also be assigned to individual aircraft on request.

In an effort to continuously raise the bar within its own organization, while also supporting Antigua's growing luxury market, FBO 2000 offers additional services designed to improve the experience of those traveling on commercial airlines. Its Meet & Greet service ensures



Left: **Passengers and crew can relax in the sun at FBO 2000's Antigua lounge**

Below: **The lounges are equipped with everything passengers need for a comfortable experience**



that guests of the island's top hotels are met immediately after immigration and assisted with baggage collection, clearing customs, and locating their hotel rep or transfer.

On the heels of this pioneering service, for VVIP passengers, especially those associated with yachts and high-end passengers traveling commercially, FBO 2000 offers a VVIP Special Services Line. With personalized greeting from FBO 2000's warm staff, clients are met immediately upon arrival, escorted to a Special Services Line, expedited through to baggage reclaim, on to customs clearance, and then to a tour representative or mode of transport. Personal FBO 2000 agents are dressed in a navy blue uniform with the FBO 2000 logo on the left breast.

Exclusive lounge

For guests departing on British Airways, the Outbound Lounge by FBO 2000 is an exclusive service that grants passengers access to FBO 2000's private passenger lounge. The Outbound Lounge operates in a class of its own; no lines, no waiting, no public pat downs or bag searches, and no crowded rooms. Instead guests are

offered a quiet, air-conditioned and spacious lounge, a children's play area as well as an open-air patio and sundeck, plus the following VIP services:

- Private airport entrance across from Shell Beach Marina;
- Baggage tagging and confirmation of check-in and seat assignment;
- Hosts to assist with immigration forms and departure tax;
- FBO staff liaise with customs and immigration officials for processing;
- Dedicated security hall offering state-of-the-art machines for screening passengers and carry-on baggage;
- Priority boarding and executive transfer to the steps of the airplane.

As guests of the lounge, customers are invited to relax immediately on arrival, enjoying complimentary snacks, gourmet food and fruits, fine wine, tea, coffee and soft drinks, while lounge hosts print boarding passes, confirm passengers' check-in and seat assignment, and liaise with Antigua Airport's customs and immigration officials. The lounge

is fully equipped with two modern bathrooms, both with hot and cold showers, so guests can enjoy an upgraded airport experience.

A small duty-free shop in the lounge offers some local items, t-shirts, fine local rum, travel pillows, and local gift baskets. Shopping for special items at the main terminal can be done by the host, thereby allowing guests to take home a little more of Antigua and Barbuda and the wider Caribbean.

For guests traveling away on business, FBO 2000's free WiFi and computer areas, equipped with fax and printing machines as well as a conference table, simplify work on the run.

At the appointed boarding time, passengers are escorted to a highly equipped and dedicated security room where normal airport security standards are upheld with the highest level of professionalism. Guests are then transferred by executive transfer directly to the aircraft, avoiding all the queues, crowds, and hassles normally associated with commercial travel.

Because of these private airport services, British Airways passengers departing from Antigua and Barbuda or transiting through VC Bird International Airport via St Barths, Anguilla, Dominica, St Kitts & Nevis, and the BVIs, may opt to land directly outside the lounge for private charters. Landing directly outside the lounge allows travelers to skip the main terminal completely as the inbound and outbound immigration and customs will be taken care of in the lounge.

Booking is very easy: just visit www.outboundlounge.com, select reservations, complete the reservation form, click send and in little less than 24 hours, a personalized email confirmation is returned. By limiting the number of guests invited to use the Outbound Lounge, the private jet service is never compromised. The client's experience is second to none, because each entity employs its own team. For more information about these services, please email info@outboundlounge.com.

FBO 2000's sister company, Nevis FBO Services, has also recently opened an Outbound Lounge at the Vance W. Amory Airport. Located inside the main terminal, after security and immigration, the Outbound Lounge in Nevis offers a slightly different service than its counterpart in Antigua. Though smaller in size, guests will enjoy an equally comfortable lounge setting with friendly beverage service, complimentary WiFi, and private bathrooms.

FBO 2000 and the Outbound Lounge have revolutionized traveling by providing high-end clients with a unique, hassle-free, comfortable and professional VIP service – a truly upgraded travel experience! <

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Left: Passengers can relax in the FBO's comfortable surroundings

Below: Avcom-D is situated at Moscow Domodedovo International Airport, one of eastern Europe's largest airports



Russian standard

Business jet users can be sure of an efficient, reliable, and discreet service at Moscow Domodedovo International Airport with Avcom-D

Avcom-D Business Aviation Center was established in 1995 by Avcom Group, one of the founders of business aviation in Russia. It is located 22km from Moscow in Domodedovo International Airport, which is considered to be the biggest airport in eastern Europe. With 24-hour operations and no slot allocation requirements for business aircraft flights, the business aviation center in Domodedovo is an ideal place to fly with no delays.

Today Avcom-D is a full-scale FBO providing ground handling and supervision, customs and immigration assistance, fuel, cleaning, water, de-icing, and other kinds of non-stop services for business aviation flights in Domodedovo, and has an average traffic of 6,000 passengers per month. Avcom-D's apron and hangars can accommodate 55 jets as large as ACJ, BBJ, GV, and Global Express.

"The main peculiarity in our center is that everything is done in such a way that the ground time of each passenger is as short as possible. Normally there are five minutes from the moment a passenger drops off their car right next to the terminal's entrance until the moment they enter the aircraft. This is the fastest such service provided in Russia," explains Evgeny Pavlenko, Avcom-D's CEO.

Avcom-D's VIP terminal is spacious and comfortable, with a two-floor passenger lounge,

kids' play zone, and free WiFi. The terminal can accommodate up to 100 passengers simultaneously and they spend a maximum of five minutes inside, after which they pass right through security gates, immigration, and customs control to their jet, which is waiting near the terminal's exit.

"Almost every jet is brought right to the terminal's exit at the ramp. That is done, again, to save the time of our clients. We understand that time is priceless for business people and therefore we do everything to accelerate the process," adds Pavlenko

Avcom-D's team pays great attention to the crews and there is a comfortable crew-room in the terminal equipped with all necessary means of communication. At the client's request, the center's staff may provide flight support services, in particular Russian entry and overflight permits, flight plan filing, weather support, ground



transportation, hotel reservation, and heli-taxis. Because of its highly secured area, which has 24-hour CCTV and a security guard, and its remoteness from the main Domodedovo terminal and other airport buildings, Avcom-D's facility is a safe and confidential place from which to fly.

The company provides a considerable discount for business jet operators willing to deal directly without intermediaries such as agent companies or brokers.

The company also has its own maintenance and repair station for business jets, the first in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is authorized for various models of Hawker jets (700, 800XP, and Beechcraft King Air), Cessna CJ and CJ1, and Yak 40 business aircraft. Certified in compliance with Russian and European aviation requirements, the station provides different services executed under control of highly professional engineers who possess FAA and EASA certificates.

In July 2012 Avcom-D announced it would provide interior refurbishment at its station in partnership with Vemina Aviaprestige, and in August 2012 the company signed a partnership agreement with Rockwell Collins to become an installation and modification agency of Rockwell Collins in Russia.

www.bac-dmd.ru

African dream

Operators flying to Nigeria are promised a fast, efficient, and hassle-free journey with Base Aviation Systems Limited

Base Aviation Systems Limited is one of Nigeria's leading aviation services companies with a network covering major airports nationwide. Its comprehensive range of services has been available to the aviation industry for over a decade, meeting the challenges in the growing and ever-changing demands of the aviation sector. The company has received recognition and accreditation from aviation regulatory authorities on the basis of its innovative spirit, leadership quality, and excellent customer services.

With a team of dedicated employees across the country, Base Aviation Systems Limited services its clients flying into major Nigerian airports. The company's expertise extends across all aspects of flight management, from planning, approvals, and ramp services, to refueling facilitation, and passenger-handling services.

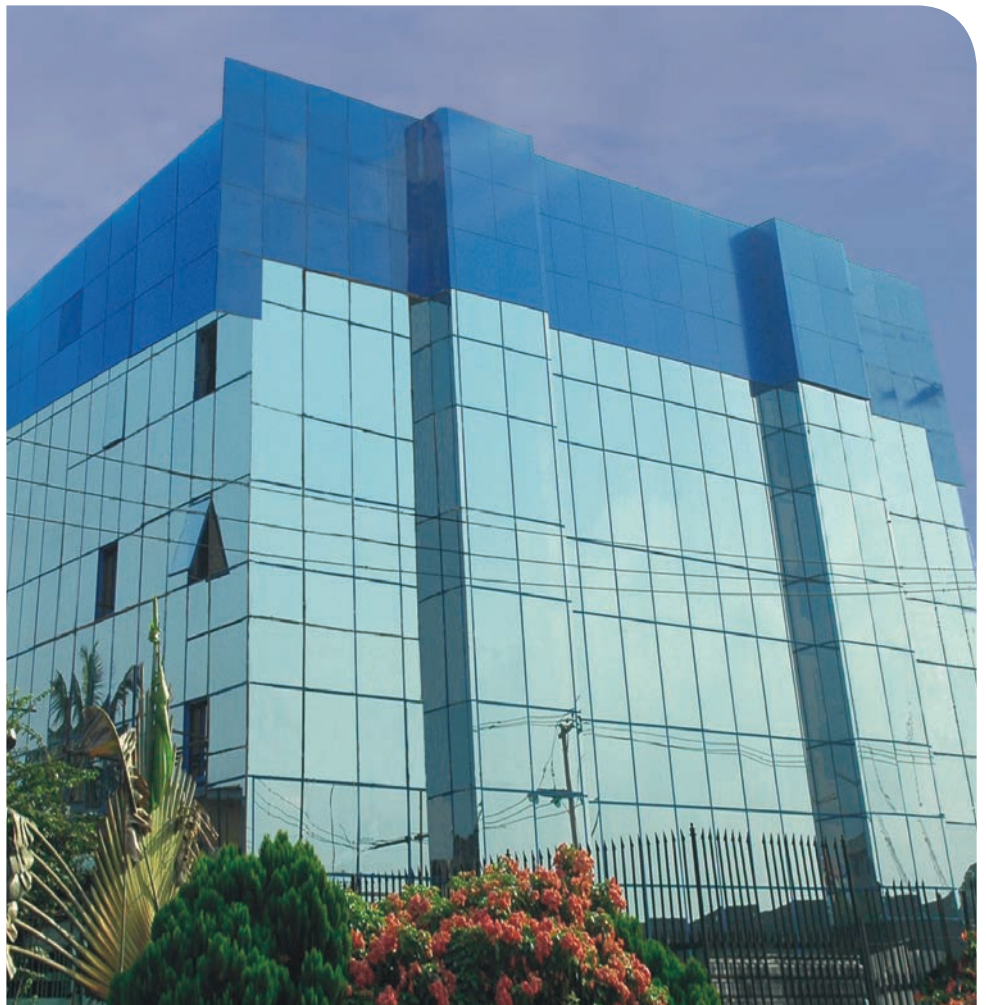
Base Aviation Systems Limited's strengths include teamwork, safety and environmental issues, and human resource development.

The company relies on its rich repository of know-how and technical resources to ensure high-quality services and support for business. It transforms this valuable experience and packages it with a special blend of care and attention to meet each client's individual needs.

Base Aviation Systems Limited's mission is to make arrivals, stopover, and departure as smooth and comfortable as possible for passengers, reducing cost and the time spent with the company's second-to-none aircraft care service.

The company's services include passenger and crew assistance, ramp handling, customs and immigration facilitation, security services, executive protection, international landing and overflight permits, flight plans, weather reports, flight clearances and ministerial approvals, aircraft chartering, aircraft refueling, crew transportation, catering and hotel reservations, and aviation consultancy.

The company's qualified professionals with comprehensive knowledge of the business aviation industry go above and beyond the call of duty to provide the above services to every client. Base Aviation System Limited's staff members are handpicked, alert, and highly motivated individuals who understand the importance of efficiency and trustworthiness in the world of business aviation.



Base Aviation System's Nigerian headquarters

The capability profile of Base Aviation Systems is more than compelling for the aviation community. Top industry profiles have joined forces with Base Aviation to provide quality standards in Nigeria, from Lagos to Port Harcourt, and Abuja to Kano. Base Aviation's clients include heads of state, chief executive officers, sports celebrities/contingents, and military and diplomatic personnel.

From class in the air to class on the ground, Base Aviation Systems addresses the sophisticated needs of discerning clients. Customers are promised a new and unprecedented class of service that is

commensurate with the professional style and quiet efficiency sought by private and corporate business aviation users.

At the locations served by Base Aviation Systems Limited, there is no such thing as standard procedure. The company recognizes the uniqueness of each flight together with each client's requirements. It delivers a consistent blend of care and attention that precisely matches these requirements.

Base Aviation Systems Limited's corporate head office is situated in Lagos, Nigeria, with operational offices located in four major international airports in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Kano, and Abuja. www.baseaviation.com

www.baseaviation.com



Helping hand

Understanding customers' needs and ensuring staff are always on hand is key to a successful trip planning service

Flight-Assist Ltd and sister company Flight-Assist (UK) Ltd certainly know a thing or two when it comes to trip planning. With a knowledgeable team of professionals whose shared approach to what they do is more 'vocational lifestyle' than purely occupational, and who can boast almost 90 years of combined trip planning experience, there's not a lot they haven't been involved with over the years.

Ian Dooge, managing director of Flight-Assist Ltd, explains, "Flight-Assist Ltd was set up in 2006, and our aim has always been to keep things simple. We specialize in computerized flight planning, civil and diplomatic permits, ground-handling arrangement, fuel and crew accommodation; basically everything a crew needs, 24 hours a day, all under one roof.

"As a team we have spent years in the business of trip planning, and we uphold a distinguished client list, among which are high-net-worth individuals, corporate fleets, aircraft manufacturers, heads of state, government/military, and air ambulances. Although confidentiality precludes the singling out of an individual client, any one of them would vouch for our attention to detail, commitment to their needs, and ultimate client confidentiality," he adds.

"Our objective is to keep overheads down, and pass this saving on to the customer more so

than our competitors," continues Mike Woodhall, managing director of Flight-Assist (UK) Ltd. "We believe the perfect balance is to offer a cost-effective solution while maintaining professional expertise and ensuring an enjoyable experience for our clients.

"We are committed to providing an unparalleled service, and accordingly each client has 24-hour access to a dedicated client manager – a single point of contact who knows everything the end client likes or dislikes, what they did last year, and what they're planning to do next month – right down to the catering they prefer. We feel that this is a vital step toward ensuring a seamless service for our customers, and avoids operators/crews having to constantly re-explain what they discussed a few days earlier with someone who's no longer on shift," Woodhall adds.

Tim Lester, Flight-Assist Ltd's special operations consultant, illustrates that the team also isn't afraid to tackle flights that some competitors may consider too risky, complicated or time-consuming: "Following the company's support of the 2010 'Cape Run' world record attempt, the team is now working with a client who is planning to fly a 70-year-old DC-3 from the UK to New Zealand later in 2012; a passenger-carrying once-in-a-lifetime trip aimed

at commemorating the solo flight that was first made by Jean Batten in 1936.

"'Sorry we can't do that' is a phrase that we rarely use," Lester continues. "And with the ever-changing nature of worldwide politics and associated bureaucracy, it is more important than ever to have an expert on hand with a proven track record, providing guidance to navigate the regulatory minefield of traveling the globe."

Having been in the business for over 40 years himself, Lester appreciates that it is rare to find companies that are continuously respected and held in high regard by aircraft operators and suppliers alike.

"The Flight-Assist team's knowledge and experience in the field of flight planning and international operations is second to none," he asserts. "With a commitment to personal customer service, dedication to its core business, and a fast and friendly response 24 hours a day, it really has covered the cornerstones of a successful and unmatched trip planning service.

"It is also interesting to note," he adds, "that in a period of economic uncertainty and with operators focusing on reducing costs, Flight-Assist's customer base continues to expand worldwide, with a considerable amount of new business coming solely from word of mouth." ✈

www.flight-assist.com



Russian approval

RusJet's new Embraer is fully approved to perform commercial flights within the territory of Russia and the common Customs Union

Established in 2005, RusJet is one of the biggest business aviation operators in Russia and operates a fleet of 11 aircraft from its base at the renowned Vnukovo-3 Business Aviation Center in Moscow.

The company has recently added to this fleet with its first fully imported Embraer business jet, which will perform domestic flights within Russia. The jet was presented to the company by Embraer on June 7, 2012.

The Embraer-135BJ Legacy 600 aircraft was imported into the Russian Federation with all the proper customs procedures, and in accordance with the '83 bis agreement' between the Russian and Bermudan aviation authorities. The aircraft is approved to perform commercial flights within the territory of Russia and the common Customs Union, which includes Kazakhstan and Belarus.

RusJet will operate these flights and believes they will partially satisfy the huge demand from the Russian market. However, the company also plans to import four more Embraer-135BJ Legacy aircraft by the end of 2013 to fully meet the needs of its customers.

Mikhail Titov, general director of RusJet, explains, "We have been arranging everything

for almost a year. A huge amount of work has been carried out to meet the market changes and demands."

On June 8, 2012 the aircraft became available for charters via direct requests to RusJet, or through Avinode, a private aviation marketplace. This aircraft can perform all domestic flights in accordance with all the customs and civil aviation regulations in Russia, thus making sure any gray areas of domestic flights are legal and clear for foreign operators.

The company has everything that is needed to operate the Embraer-135BJ Legacy 600, and as early as 2011, before the acquisition of the new aircraft, RusJet was already certified for this type of aircraft. The company has also expanded its technical personnel functions in order to be able to provide proper technical assistance. The Jet Aviation station at Vnukovo-3 airport will also provide base maintenance for the aircraft.

RusJet won the Wings of Russia national award in 2010 and 2011, and is also a strategical partner of Ireland-based operator VipJet, which manages 12 private aircraft, including five Global Express models. www.rusjet.aero

www.rusjet.aero

Above: **The Embraer-135BJ Legacy 600 aircraft is used to perform domestic flights in Russia**

Below: **RusJet is one of Russia's biggest business aviation operators**





Luxury service

Passengers wishing to travel in luxury and style can rely on Saudia Private Aviation to meet and exceed expectations

Saudia Private Aviation (SPA) – the private aviation arm of Saudi Arabian Airlines – has more than 30 years' experience in private aviation and aims to offer customers the finest luxury combined with authentic Arabian hospitality. SPA not only offers a single trip or service, but provides a series of privileges that cater to the demands of its clients throughout the year, including direct leasing, annual lease (contracts), ground services, and aircraft management and advisory services.

SPA owns a number of luxury private jets, including the Falcon 7X, and it recently received its fourth aircraft from Dassault Falcon, making SPA the largest single operator of the 7X in the world. In addition, it owns a Hawker 400XP, a small but practical aircraft with a capacity of six passengers in VIP configuration.

Growing business

SPA is inaugurating four new fixed base operations (FBO) facilities in Saudi Arabia in 2012; the first, in Jeddah, opened at the end of September. SPA's managing director, Wajdi A. Al-Idrissi, confirmed the plans, revealing that the other locations for the FBOs are Dammam, Riyadh, and Medina. "It is a huge plan that will cover all the airports when fully functional," he explains.

SPA's business is growing and it is determined to keep its trends up. When it was founded in 2009, SPA had only 69 VIP customers but this

had increased to 596 customers by 2011. The company is confident that by the end of 2012 this figure will reach 750. SPA currently operates 10 aircraft and plans to double this figure by 2020.

Attending exhibitions

SPA actively participates in most of the renowned airshows and expos around the world (including Arabian Travel Market (ATM), Dubai, and the European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (EBACE), Geneva) to ensure it follows and assimilates new trends in business aviation. Indeed, it will be participating in the Middle East Business Aviation (MEBA) 2012 show at Dubai's Al Maktoum International Airport, December 11-13, 2012. After four events, MEBA is firmly established as a key show on the business aviation calendar. The event consistently attracts key buyers and decision makers offering access to the Middle East aerospace market in a highly focused environment.

SPA is always keen to raise the level of services it provides to ensure highest levels of excellence and the best competitive prices to its valued customers. It says its customers can leave everything to its professionals and immerse themselves in genuine luxury. The company adds to the experience by providing a shuttle service and cabins configured to customers' needs, and aims to ensure that every detail is tailored perfectly to match expectations. ✈

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Major makeover

Bangor International Airport has undergone extensive improvements this summer to enhance its services to customers



Above: **New LED lighting is making it easier for pilots landing at night**

Below: **Construction on the general aviation apron will be completed in October 2012**



As summer slides into autumn, the construction season at Bangor International Airport in Maine, USA, is drawing to a close. One of the major projects has been the reconstruction of the US\$5.4 million general aviation apron, which is scheduled for completion in October 2012.

Explaining the reasons behind the renovation, airport director Tony Caruso says, "This area of the airport has needed attention for quite a while. Some of the pavement in that area had been in place since the 1960s and the Dow Air Force Base days. Once the project is complete, we will have a lot more operational flexibility. As it stood before this project, we could park Challengers and Gulfstreams there; soon we will be able to park 737s and the like in this area, and it will help us better serve our customers."

Bangor International Airport does have general aviation tenants, but its location and

port-of-entry status mean that many transatlantic flights stop for technical stops and to clear customs. Upon completion of the general aviation apron's reconstruction, aircraft weighing up to 150,000 lb will be able to park nearer to Bangor Aviation Services – the airport-owned and operated FBO. There will be four new hard stands specifically for aircraft such as 737s.

In addition to aircraft parking improvements, there will also be new fuel truck parking, which will be conveniently located to serve aircraft quickly and efficiently. The construction of the new fuel truck parking area gives Bangor International Airport the opportunity to install a new collector separator system, which collects any oil or fuel if there is a leak or spill and separates it from the water so that no fuel gets into the storm water system. General improvements will also be made to the drainage systems in the area, while the construction project will aim to maintain the environmental standards of the area.

The US\$4.9 million US Department of Transportation grant awarded on May 24, 2012, under the Airport Improvement Program, will primarily pay for the renovation. The City of Bangor and the Maine Department of Transportation will split the remaining 10%.

The general aviation ramp reconstruction is not the only airfield improvement taking place; The airport has also been working most of the summer on upgrading its airfield lighting to LED lights with new bases for better visibility and illumination. Phase 1 of the project has been completed, making the job easier for pilots landing at night. ↩

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Make it personal

Finavia's business flight center at Helsinki Airport is providing customized services to meet the requirements of individual clients

The business flight center (BFC) has been part of Helsinki Airport since the 1970s. The nature of business flights has changed during the decades, but one thing has remained the same – the need for a personal service.

The number of business jet operations was a lot lower 30 years ago than it is today – there were only a few private operators in Helsinki and a couple of commercial airliners transferring their crews in and out of Helsinki with small business jets. The lack of globally connected international companies in Finland also contributed to the lack of business jets in the 1970s. Since the early 1990s, the number of business operations has grown steadily at Helsinki Airport.

Four in one

"We see our client as an ensemble of four different groups. Number one is always the passenger on board. The other three are the operator, the flight crew, and of course the aircraft," says Sami Simola, Finavia's FBO manager. All four have different needs and different demands. "The backbone of our service is the 24-hour availability of airport slots and FBO services. It enables us to handle customers personally at any hour. This is essential for all four groups," he adds.

For the passengers, Finavia aims to provide a smooth transition through the terminal. The walking distance on the apron is very short, and the company can also provide ramp access for limousines. If the passengers have to wait at the terminal for a longer period of time, there are high-class lounges available.



"In terms of operator needs, we see that the main requirement is a quick response to handling requests or any questions regarding flights and services," explains Finavia supervisor Erik Lindholm. With more than a decade of experience at the BFC, Erik has seen almost every possible service request there is. "We get a lot of different kinds of requests. Some of them are very unusual, but if the client's need is within our operational limits, we give 110% effort to fulfill it," he comments.

A satisfied and well-rested crew is the key to a better customer service, and the BFC has renovated its crew lounges and services. "We work in 12-hour shifts ourselves, so we know that small things can make a difference when there is, for example, an unexpected delay. Comfortable

chairs and free beverages with a brand new coffee automat gives the crew a chance to relax before and after the flight," says Lindholm.

For the aircraft itself, Finavia can offer hangar space and technical assistance with its partners. In Helsinki there are also maintenance facilities for Bombardier and Dassault Falcon.

Duty free is back

The biggest improvement this autumn in customer service is the return of the duty free shop. Shopping is available for all outbound passengers and crews traveling from Finland. The store will open in December and will sell a fine selection of high-quality items, including some special Finnish products. 

www.bfcenter.fi



The crew lounges and services, including duty free, have been updated at Helsinki Airport

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Big break

Snooker's most prestigious invitation event, The Masters, is being staged at Alexandra Palace in north London from January 13-20, 2013. *BAI* explores the business aviation facilities in the local area

Words | **Hazel Swain**

Featuring the world's top 16 players and a top prize of £150,000 (US\$240,000), The Masters snooker tournament is one of the most hotly anticipated events in the UK's sporting calendar. The competition is being held at Alexandra Palace in north London on January 13-20, 2013, and for business and private aviation clients wishing to attend the event, London has a selection of airports within 40 miles of the venue.

The largest and most well-known airports servicing London are Gatwick and Heathrow, located 36 and 23 miles from the north London site respectively. Both airports have FBOs from Signature Flight Support, which can service all types of aircraft from helicopters to B747s, and offer 24-hour customs and immigration clearance. Gatwick is serviced by a non-stop express train to central London, where passengers can then

travel on to Alexandra Palace via public transport or taxi services, while Heathrow provides VIP lounges for royalty and head of states. Both FBOs offer passenger transfer facilities.

The closest airport to Alexandra Palace is Barclays London Heliport (11.6 miles), which operates 7:30am-7:30pm weekdays and 6:00am-6:00pm on weekends and bank holidays. Extended operating hours can be arranged between 7:00am and 11:00pm. Helicopter landing fees range from £280 to £1,650 (US\$443 to US\$2,615) depending on aircraft type, and parking fees are charged for 0-4, 4-8, 8-12, and 12-24 hour periods, with prices ranging from £300 to £1,020 (US\$475 to US\$1,617). Amenities at the heliport include a VIP passenger departure lounge, car chauffeur services, secure airside access and security, and Jet A1 refueling.

Situated 16.6 miles from Alexandra Palace is the London City Airport Jet Centre, which provides passenger and crew lounges, aircraft parking and cleaning, refueling, and a full range of chauffeur-driven vehicles.

London Biggin Hill Airport is 25 miles from Alexandra Palace and has three FBOs – Biggin Hill Executive Airport Handling, Jet Aviation, and Rizon Jet – that provide VIP lounges, conference rooms, chauffeurs, and flight-planning services, as well as Jet A1 refueling. Landing charges at the Kent airport range from £20.60 to £237.30 (US\$32.65 to US\$376.18) and parking charges are £9 to £56.80 (US\$14.26 to US\$90) depending on aircraft weight. The airport operates 6:30am-10:00pm Monday-Friday and 9:00am-8:00pm at weekends. Access to London takes 15 minutes by train, and 50 minutes by car. ↩

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