

EVA

SPRING 2022

EXECUTIVE &
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INTERNATIONAL



Avfuel

Craig Sincock, President and CEO

A Lifetime of Achievement

Changing the Game – Benoit Defforge, President, ACJ

Service Unimagined – Gabriel Madrid, CEO, Jet Luxe

Opening Pandora's cabinet – Mélanie Prince, Head of Innovation, F/LIST

A Job Very Well Done – Tony Marlow, President Aviation Operations & Business Development, Castle & Cooke Aviation

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Editor's NOTES



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In the past two or three editions of *Executive & VIP Aviation International* I've commented on the continued transition from Covid pandemic to Covid compliance, noting how the world, at least as far as business aviation is concerned, was beginning to settle into a new normal. Sure, there have been ups and downs – the omicron crisis in Hong Kong among the latter – but on the whole the ups were outweighing the downs.

And then the world was faced with another crisis: a new, unthinkable and entirely man-made tragedy, staining our lives with an unjust war.

Yet commerce and industry continue against this history-making backdrop, as they must. Business aviation will inevitably continue playing its largely unsung role in making international deals happen, connecting people where no other means of connection exists, moving decision makers and leaders quickly and discreetly and, quite literally in some cases, saving lives.

This Spring edition of *EVA* includes a personal celebration of Avfuel president and CEO Craig Sincok, recently honoured with the 2022 Kenn Ricci Lifetime Aviation Entrepreneur Award and inducted into the Living Legends of Aviation. Sincok's life centres on family and aviation, as befits a living legend.

We also enjoy a candid conversation with ACJ President Benoit Defforge, where he reveals his enthusiasm for the ACJ TwoTwenty and plans to conquer the US, in the best possible way.

Elsewhere, we dip into the behind-the-scenes worlds of operations and charter, FBOs and fuel, including two very different companies: Jet Luxe, headquartered in Dubai, and Leviate Air Group, based in Dallas. We talk fuel with AEG and Avfuel, then discover the FBOs and facilities at five UK airports: London Biggin Hill, and the XLR Jet Centres at Birmingham, Bournemouth, Exeter and Liverpool.

Meanwhile, Castle & Cooke Aviation's President Aviation Operations & Business Development, Tony Marlow, explains the company's FBO and support offer at Van Nuys and Honolulu, while Interim OCC Manager Emilio Padilla Escoto reveals Manny Aviation's expansive Mexican ground support operation.

This geographically diverse edition reflects the worldwide nature of business and VIP aviation. Ours is a niche industry with global reach and, I'd like to think, a global family – illustrated no better than through the fact that Kennedy Ricci (president of 4AIR, also featured this time around) is the son of Kenn Ricci, whose award Craig Sincok received. That spirit of family, of unity, has never been more important.

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A Lifetime of Achievement

Avfuel president and CEO Craig Sincock has been honoured with the 2022 Kenn Ricci Lifetime Aviation Entrepreneur Award and inducted into the Living Legends of Aviation. In a very personal interview he reflects on the award and a lifetime in aviation

Avfuel owner, president and CEO, Craig Sincock received the 2022 Kenn Ricci Lifetime Aviation Entrepreneur Award at the 19th Annual Living Legends of Aviation Awards ceremony in Beverly Hills' Beverly Hilton Hotel on 21 January 2022. He was also inducted into the Living Legends of Aviation, with actor and aviator John Travolta presiding as the Official Ambassador of Aviation. The lifetime award was the evening's highest honour, but Sincock is characteristically modest in his acceptance.

"Of course I am incredibly honoured by this recognition. It is humbling to be counted among some of aviation's greatest entrepreneurs and pilots. But it's also about what's behind the award. In particular, the people who have helped me over the years. They're the ones who have made it all possible. I've been fortunate to be surrounded by amazing family, friends, colleagues and industry colleagues – really some of the best in the business. I wouldn't be where I am today without them and this award belongs to them as much as it does to me.

"I wasn't expecting it; you certainly don't work day to day with recognition in mind. So when I learned about the award, I was really, truly touched and humbled. Same with the ceremony. I was in awe of the passion for aviation I saw in that room, being surrounded by some of aviation's greatest minds. What made the evening truly memorable, though, was less the occasion and more those I spent it with. I was surrounded by some of my closest family and friends, including colleagues I've worked with for

more than a quarter of a century. Having them there, feeling their support and celebrating with them, was truly special."

A lifetime award feels appropriate for someone nearing the end of their career, perhaps just entering retirement but for Sincock, a total aviation person in every sense, that is not the case at all. "This lifetime award in no way signifies the 'end' of anything," he confirms. "Aviation is a huge part of my life, of who I am. As is Avfuel. The aviation industry is ever-evolving and therefore so, too, is Avfuel. We have to adapt, change and grow. I'm proud of what we've accomplished so far, but the work is far from over. How exciting is that? I still feel enthusiastic when I think about what's on the horizon for aviation and what Avfuel needs to be for its customers in 5, 10, 15, 20 years. That passion is still very much alive and it inspires me every day."

Right now, Sincock is especially enthused with the next generation of aviation technology, including sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), no-lead avgas, electrification, advanced air mobility and vertical take-off and landing (VTOL). He says: "The Avfuel team works diligently every day to lead the mission in commercialising SAF, having formed partnerships with producers including Neste and Gevo. I truly believe SAF is going to become more and more significant as time goes on. To come up with a new fuel that's sustainable and compatible with the existing infrastructure is incredibly meaningful. I'm also excited about the advancements in no-lead avgas – there is an immense focus on that initiative and I'm confident we will see multiple answers evolve in that arena.



"Then you have advanced air mobility and VTOL, and the electric powerplants that go with them – what a thrilling time this is to be involved in aviation! Soon we're going to see a whole new generation of efficient, sustainable aircraft that operate differently than anything we've seen before. These new technologies will usher in the next generation of aviation. Our industry will look completely different, with aircraft featuring multi-propeller fan lift and the ability to fly from Point A to Point B without a runway.

"I'm as inspired now as I was as a young boy watching the moon landing and the Beatles walk off a Boeing 707 in New York. The possibilities are great and Avfuel will be here to support it all – even electrification. I say all the time: 'We're not in the business of selling fuel. Not really. We're in the business of connecting people, businesses, governments and cultures.' That's what this industry is really about and that's the service we strive to provide to our customers, no matter what their needs."

Giving back

Complete aviation person though he is, Craig Sincock, along with his wife, Sue, is also passionate about giving back to the community through their combined



'A few words' from Craig Sincock at the 19th Annual Living Legends of Aviation Awards ceremony. ©2022 Living Legends of Aviation/Jim Koepnick

philanthropic efforts. The Living Legends of Aviation Awards ceremony provided a neat snapshot into the industry's true reach and effect. On the one hand, Hollywood superstar and pilot John Travolta was there, on the other, the Sincocks, who leverage Avfuel's success to support a variety of initiatives.

Sincock explains: "Of course, we're strong supporters of the industry, furthering several aviation causes, including medical-flight and aviation education institutions, veteran organisations, and scholarships for the next generation of aviators.

"But we also support health research initiatives. We established the Susan L Sincock and Craig R Sincock Scholar Fund, which supports University of Michigan researchers devoted to solving some of medicine's most complex challenges. Together, we've sponsored more than 25 physician-scientists encompassing more than two dozen research projects in the last 11 years. These have included new discovery projects for prostate and pancreatic cancer, Alzheimer's, leukaemia and lymphoma, and paediatric organ transplants through CS Mott's Children's Hospital."

During almost 40 years in the aviation industry, Sincock has met many

extraordinary people, now including John Travolta. "He's been involved with the event for a number of years and was given the Official Ambassador of Aviation Award by the Living Legends of Aviation in the mid-2000s," Sincock explains.

"The event was very well done. The emcees announced me as a new inductee, there was an introductory video, then I walked across the stage before John Travolta shook my hand and presented me with a medal as the official induction. From there, I had the opportunity to say a few words to the audience and take some photos with Travolta and the other Living Legends. He is certainly a true aviator, being an ATP-rated pilot and owning and flying a number of aircraft, including some rather large jets. I was with him for about an hour backstage and I have to say he is a very approachable, down-to-earth person."

Personal inspiration

The fact that Craig Sincock was presented with the 2022 Kenn Ricci Lifetime Aviation Entrepreneur Award and inducted into the Living Legends of Aviation demonstrates how he is regarded by his peers. But what does the man himself consider to be his greatest achievement?

"Watching others succeed has been my greatest joy and point of pride across my career. Nothing inspires me more than the people I work with. I love mentoring others, watching them grow, and seeing their passion and determination flourish. We have some of the best people in aviation – I truly believe that. I can tell you first hand that great people attract great people. That's how we grew Avfuel from a team of three to more than 1,000 globally. We attracted talent, and then mentored and nurtured that talent."

Interestingly, global success has not prevented Avfuel from remaining a family business with true family values. Both Craig and Sue are pilots, so it should come as no surprise that the aviation bug passed on to the next generation. "My family is all about aviation," Sincock agrees. "Our son, CR Sincock, II, plays an integral role in leading the family business as Avfuel's executive vice president, and Avflight's president and CEO. He grew up around the industry. In the early years of Avfuel, I'd travel with my family to just about every airport in the country. He was just a little guy, but we'd have a sport coat ready for him when we landed, and he'd go up and shake everyone's hands. It brings me great joy to now call him my colleague and watch him lead the company." ■

Avfuel: Thoughts on Fuel

Avfuel's global presence and refinery-to-wing logistics combine with comprehensive loyalty and business packages to make it a leading fuel supplier

Serving the global aviation industry, Avfuel also claims to be the leading independent supplier in the US. Established as a supply and logistics company almost 50 years ago and transformed over the past 37 years under the ownership of president and CEO Craig Sincock, Avfuel's network reaches in excess of 3,000 locations worldwide and more than 650 branded FBOs. Members of its executive team answered *EVA's* questions.

Where does your fuel come from and how does it reach the customer?

Joel Hirst, Senior Vice President of Sales, says: "Avfuel has more than 100 relationships with refineries and oil companies. Our supply team manages these relationships and handles the logistics of transporting fuel from the refinery to the terminal or short-term storage facility, of which there are more than 275 in the Avfuel Network. This is done via pipeline, barge, rail or truck, depending on product type, origin and destination.

"Trucks then haul fuel from the storage terminals to their final destinations: airport and FBO fuel storage systems. Then refuelling trucks take the fuel from their storage systems over to an aircraft and pump fuel into the wing.

"The product undergoes meticulous quality control procedures at multiple touchpoints along its lifecycle. To further ensure fuel safety, Avfuel employs a team of fuel quality assurance experts, available 24/7/365 to answer and troubleshoot any fuel or refuelling equipment question or concern.

"The process is quite similar for jet fuel and avgas, but sustainable aviation fuel requires an extra step where the concentrated SAF product is blended with traditional petroleum-based jet fuel.



Avfuel is involved in every mile of the fuel journey, from refinery to wing tip

Avfuel receives SAF already blended, from a terminal in northern California or Texas. From there, it is transported via road to an airport or FBO fuel storage system."

There are many Avfuel-branded FBOs, yet your fuel is also available from some non-branded locations. How does this work?

Joel Hirst again: "We brand more than 650 FBOs globally and hold a 28% market share of branded FBOs in the US. These locations have Avfuel signage and benefit from a slew of front- and back-end solutions, including marketing and sales support, fuel safety training, streamlined payment processing, refuelling equipment backed by an in-house quality assurance team, risk management and aviation insurance, streamlined loyalty rewards, and Avfuel Contract Fuel.

"The Avfuel Network also includes more than 3,000 global Avfuel Contract Fuel locations. These airports and FBOs may or may not be branded but allow our

flight department customers to purchase fuel from Avfuel at competitive rates through our contract fuel programme. They accept the Avfuel Pro Card, which saves operators and FBOs time and money. They are also advertised on our fuel finder and price listings."

How do you encourage crews and others to seek out your fuel rather than a competitor's?

Jon Boyle, Vice President Contract Fuel, says: "We do a great deal of direct outreach to fuel decision makers, like flight operators. This is done through a mixture of marketing and sales efforts, but the foundation is always building relationships. We love meeting with customers, talking with them on the phone, figuring out what they need and connecting them to the right solutions.

"We also have a number of touchpoints with flight operators, including weekly pricing, newsletters, online management resources, social media, advertising and

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Top: Branded FBOs benefit from a wide range of services beyond fuel delivery
Bottom: The Avfuel brand is recognised globally

Avfuel is committed to investing in new technologies that move our industry forward. That's why we created Avfuel Technology Initiatives Corporation

CR Sincock, II,
Executive Vice President, Avfuel

traditionally sold toward SAF, electricity, hydrogen and maybe other alternatives too. How will Avfuel adapt?

CR Sincock, II, Executive Vice President, says: "Avfuel is committed to investing in new technologies that move our industry forward. That's why we created Avfuel Technology Initiatives Corporation. Founded in January 2012, the company's mission is to further industry advancements, including bio and renewable fuels on several fronts, and no-lead avgas replacements, domestically and internationally.

"In addition to the development of these products, Avfuel Technology Initiatives Corporation thinks through the logistics of market introduction to help ensure any new product is sustainable, reliable, competitively priced, and fairly accessible. We don't have a crystal ball, but we do have a dedicated team working with researchers on the latest technologies; just as we support and lead initiatives on SAF and unleaded avgas, you can be sure we're keeping our finger on the pulse of further technological advancements, including electrification of flight, to better support the needs of our customers, our industry, our communities and our world." ■

more. All the while, we also promote Avfuel Network airports and FBOs, so the two go hand-in-hand."

How widespread is your SAF distribution and what's the story on pricing?

Marci Ammerman, Vice President of Marketing, responds: "Avfuel now has consistent supply of SAF at Ross Aviation (KTRM), ACI Jet (KSNA), Million Air Burbank (KBUR), Monterey Jet Center (KMRY), Del Monte Aviation (KMRY), Sonoma Jet Center (KSTS), Telluride Regional Airport (KTEX), Truckee Tahoe Airport District (KTRK) and Atlantic Aviation in Aspen (KASE), in addition to multiple limited-quantity deliveries to airports and FBOs, consistent-supply

agreements with OEMs and special deliveries to corporate flight departments."

Keith Sawyer, Manager of Alternative Fuels, adds: "The price of SAF is at a premium compared to traditional jet fuel, but we expect the differential to narrow as SAF supply increases to meet demand over the next five years. Today, that price is dependent on a number of factors, including, but not limited to the blend ratio of SAF to petroleum jet fuel, how far the SAF had to be trucked to its final destination, and what state-level credits are available for operators who use SAF."

As we look toward the future, fuel companies must evolve, moving away from the products they have



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LEVIATE

The Leviate Jet Group senior team, from left to right: Luis Barros, Rob Rosenberg and Randall Mize. ©2021 Leviate Air Group – Jonathan Carrera



‘Leviated’ Service

Expert in charter, aircraft sales and aircraft management, the team at Leviate Air Group is all about customer relationships and doing business the right way

Leviate Air Group CEO and co-founder Luis Barros oversaw creation of the word ‘Leviate’ as a combination of ‘levitate’, ‘aviate’ and ‘elevate’. The resulting name suggests a multifaceted aviation company. And, indeed, Leviate Air Group is at the same time a charter, aircraft sales and aircraft management company, excelling at all of those things.

Barros created the company in 2014, with the aim of constructing a new type of private aviation provider. Industry veteran and Managing Partner Rob Rosenberg

joined in 2015, to lead Leviate’s air charter division, and President Randall Mize arrived in 2016, to head up aircraft management and sales. The result, recognised for exceptional growth on the Inc. 5000 list in 2021, is essentially three expert companies in one.

Key to Leviate’s success is the disparate backgrounds of its senior leadership team. A graduate in aviation management, Barros began his career as a dispatcher, later moving into charter sales, gaining the expertise with which he established Leviate’s charter business. With more than 3,000 hours piloting a variety of business

jets, Mize brings crew perspective and operational know-how to the company, while Rosenberg has an extensive background in sales.

Company ‘Levolution’

Barros explains the company’s evolution: “Leviate began as a charter sales outfit in 2014/15, but really came together in 2016/17 when we added the aircraft sales side with Randall.”

“I got out of the cockpit in 2012,” Mize continues. “I hadn’t thought of doing anything other than flying, but the company I worked for was sold and I didn’t

have a job. The owner of Starbase Jet, now one of our aircraft owners, said, ‘Hey, you should work with me and do aircraft management’. Turns out I was good at it. The fleet grew from five aircraft to 30 in five years before we broke away, ultimately acquiring Starbase in 2017.”

Rosenberg also worked at Starbase and having purchased the company, the three men combined their charter sales, and aircraft sales and management skills with the operator’s Part 135 licence, creating Leviate Air Group. Having weathered the worst of the pandemic, Mize says the goal now is to build towards a managed fleet of as many as 50 aircraft and a company that people want to work with. The Part 135 purchase gave Leviate a global operation centred on large-cabin and super-mid-size business jets. “We already had a US\$10 million charter sales group, now about three times that per year, and it complements aircraft management really well,” Barros concludes.

Compared to his colleagues, Rosenberg had very little aviation background, but lots of sales experience. “I worked for my dad. We had 23 retail stores dealing in high-end fitness equipment, so I had lots of face-to-face selling experience. I’d known Randall pretty much since eighth grade and that’s how I found my way to Starbase after my dad sold the company. This was 2012 and Luis was director of charter but planning to set up Leviate in Dallas. I became one of the new company’s first hires.”


Leviate performs well in each of its chosen business areas and there are clear specialities within its segments. “We could dabble in management on smaller aircraft or turboprops, but our management programme is for larger jets on worldwide ops, Argus Platinum and IS-BAO II rated,” Barros states.

“And our aircraft sales aren’t just a pilot doing sales on the side: Randall’s an IATA-certified broker. Same thing with

We want to do business the right way, founded on long-term relationships with a good culture both inside and outside the company.

Luis Barros,
CEO and co-founder, Leviate Air Group
.....


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BY TEXTRON AVIATION

our charter: it's Argus registered, carefully managed and could be a reasonable mid-market brokerage in its own right."

Rosenberg adds: "There are few companies that do all three and with those aspects in-house, we successfully feed clients up the chain through charter to aircraft sales and then management."

Part 135

Barros, Mize and Rosenberg refer to 'Part 135' (FAA certification for commercial, non-scheduled operations) frequently in conversation and the certification is mentioned often on Leviate's website.

What does it mean to the company? "With federal oversight, the certification process, ongoing audits and more, it's all about credibility. It shows us as a very knowledgeable, credible aviation organisation," Barros says.

"It's the same on the aircraft sales side," Mize confirms, "where people see us as a worldwide air carrier and it lends credibility to the sales."


Leviate has invested heavily in systems and international partnerships to ensure its charter customers receive the highest standards of service wherever they are. Barros says: "When we charter in Europe, Asia and North Africa we use trusted local brokers who know those markets. Client retention is more important to us than making as much money as we can. We are happy with lower margins because someone is involved in the middle, so long as the client receives service in line with an Argus Platinum operator. We know our reputation is everything."

Another important component of reputation is communication and client relationship, which is why, Rosenberg says, attending shows like EBACE and NBAA-BACE is so important. "It's also about our relationship with our operators, helping us work with them to deliver a better service to our customers."

Barros concludes with a pragmatic outlook. "We want to do business the right way, founded on long-term relationships with a good culture both inside and outside the company. It's especially true on the charter side. It's easy to set up as a charter broker with only a laptop; that's why people sometimes hear 'charter broker' and cringe. We're the opposite and that's been Leviate's policy since day one." ■

Leviate specialises in super-mid and large-cabin jets, including this immaculate Gulfstream.
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Opening Pandora's cabinet

Mélanie Prince is Head of Innovation at F/LIST, where she helps fuel the creativity of already innovative people, and explores the future of materials technology and sustainability

After more than a decade with the company, in June 2021 Mélanie Prince became Head of Innovation at F/LIST. Renowned for the luxurious quality of its products and the excellence of its engineering, the Austrian-headquartered cabin interiors specialist is also noted for its innovative solutions, sometimes designed to satisfy requirements its customers didn't know they had until F/LIST's experts showed them.

Leading innovation in so overtly creative an organisation is a tall order. The job is, Prince explains, about providing her team with the tools, time and framework upon which to hang their imagination, identifying products that add value for the customer and look good in the cabin, and then working backwards to investigate how to make them. "We look at the full spectrum of innovation. We do a lot of organic brainstorming, sometimes looking at problems from a new perspective. I go out to see the latest technologies from other industries and we watch developments in

research papers and at universities. And then we also go back to our roots, looking at traditional processes and craftsmanship."

Prince's team has the space to innovate freely, and she acknowledges that not all ideas turn out to be good ones. "Failure is part of the process. My background is in aircraft certification, where failure is rarely a good thing, but here we embrace it because it's part of the iterative process. Quite often the process we begin with is barely related to the product we finish up with. It's how we create things that are interesting, beautiful and unique."



Extreme attention to exquisite detail and precision engineering are F/LIST hallmarks

Prince says much of F/LIST's success in innovation is thanks to the core competency of its multidisciplinary research team. "They are from many backgrounds, including automotive, some with expertise in carbon fibre gained in Formula 1; architecture; jewellery and more. They're brilliant. They come up with ideas so 'wild' that I often think, 'this will never work in an aircraft', but I have to quiet that little voice in my head and say, 'prove me wrong, show me'.

"So they run with it, make a prototype and create a concept you wouldn't believe. More often than not, our innovation wows our customers and much of our upcoming catalogue, [many of] our new product lines, are generated through this process."

Lightweight luxury

Business and VIP aviation is an F/LIST core market, alongside yachts and luxury residences. While there are commonalities, aviation demands particular attention to safety and certification standards, as well as weight. Low weight helps reduce fuel burn, saving money and lowering carbon emissions. The challenge for F/LIST is to make cabin monuments with the solid feel and quality finish expected of a luxury, bespoke piece, yet low in weight, fully compliant and recyclable at the end of their useful life.

Prince explains: "A hollow structure will always sound thin and 'cheap', but

if you apply a thin material over a more solid structure, it can be very thin, light and sustainable without feeling cheap. The bigger questions are about finding new methods and materials – do we want to build very thin cabinets and apply thin finishing materials to them, or would we rather use a very strong 'monocoque'

Quite often the process we begin with is barely related to the product we finish up with. It's how we create things that are interesting, beautiful and unique.

construction and apply the finish; we are even seeing some designs for very light, small passenger aircraft where decorative materials are applied directly to the aircraft structure."

Meanwhile, "Sustainability accounts for a large proportion of my work at the moment," Prince says. "It's hugely important to the market. Weight saving provides perhaps the biggest 'bang for the buck' in terms of tangible sustainability impact at the aircraft level. We push the limits for low-weight interiors every day, using carbon fibre, innovative finish build-ups and minimalist, purpose-designed and exactly engineered components.

"Right now we're doing a lot of research into sustainable next-generation materials that are light and offer high performance. It's true the cabin interior has a relatively minor impact on sustainability compared to overall aircraft weight, aerodynamics and engine performance, but we want to ensure the materials we use reinforce the message of sustainability. Placing new materials in front of the owner, making sure they understand the message, is important and maybe it will affect their subsequent choices."

The bigger sustainability picture goes beyond the aircraft to the processes and attitudes of every company involved in its manufacture, including those supplying cabin components. It's about how factories and workshops are lit, efficient heating and



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*Top: F/LIST's Thomasberg headquarters boasts a huge area of rooftop solar panels
Right: Stone veneer countertops and flooring epitomise F/LIST's innovative product offer*

air conditioning, manufacturing responsibly to reduce waste and dealing correctly with hazardous materials.

“We’ve been improving our infrastructure at F/LIST for many years,” Prince confirms. “It includes a huge photovoltaic installation on the roof of our main Thomasberg facility and we use a river that flows through the site to provide cooling. Overall, we satisfy up to 20% of our energy needs with renewable resources and we reuse as much material as possible from our crates and packaging.”

F/LIST’s products inevitably rely on topcoats and varnishes which, Prince agrees, “are not the most sustainable products”. Even here though, the company is employing alternatives. “The beauty for us is that as the industry looks at sustainable alternatives, so it is also willing to look at new finishes. We therefore have entirely natural alternatives to traditional



finishes and while they may not resist staining or damage as effectively, they are easier to repair.”

Pandora’s cabinet

Considering structural components, especially those that are functional and

hidden, additive manufacturing – 3D printing – has obvious benefits in its ability to increase material density where a component comes under greater stress, perfectly matching component design and performance, while reducing waste compared to traditional milling techniques.



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Prince confirms it is an area of great interest for F/LIST and alludes to a forthcoming product application, but says so far the company has only scratched the surface of its possibilities. The ideas for 'fusing' one material with another, or 'transitioning' between materials, are particularly interesting, while she also mentions creating parts with 'impossible geometries'. Meanwhile, 3D printing is already playing an important role in rapid prototyping and production tool-up.

She also muses on the future. "We opened Pandora's box – Pandora's cabinet maybe – to see if a future machine could create a cabinet adhering to all the regulatory requirements, and additive manufacturing clearly has a role in that. We realised it's a long way off and decided to close the lid on it for now; the human element in design is always so present in any case."

A great cabin – and there is no doubt F/LIST helps create great cabins – will always seem at one with the aircraft, which

means it is easy to forget that it was created separately, rather than by the aircraft manufacturer. How then does F/LIST create and maintain a meaningful relationship with its customers?

Prince says: "We've gained the trust of our customers over many years, bringing them to Austria and showing them how we build cabinets, explaining how everything works and demonstrating our craftsmanship. It creates a lasting impression and helps us build solid, long-term relationships."

There is also an extensive network of international locations offering product support and service, advice and repair.

In the end, F/LIST is a family business and Prince says it operates to family values. "When we say 'yes' to a customer, look them in the eye and shake their hand, that's a commitment to innovate and satisfy their requirement." ■



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A Job Very Well Done

Castle & Cooke Aviation operates exclusive FBOs at Van Nuys and Honolulu airports, each delivering an enhanced level of customer service, as President Aviation Operations & Business Development Tony Marlow explains

.....



There is surely no other FBO operator able to claim a history dating to 1864. During the 1860s, Hawaiian businessmen Samuel Northrop Castle and Amos Star Cooke expanded their interests into selling sugar, a venture that inevitably led to an in-house shipping capability. A significant component of Castle and Cooke's legacy continues as the Dole fruit and vegetable brand, but their names live on in Castle & Cooke Aviation, a private company operating FBOs at Honolulu Airport, Hawaii and Van Nuys Airport, California.

Castle & Cooke entered the private aviation business in 1981, expanding into full-service FBO operations around 15 years ago. Recognised for its service standards, Castle & Cooke Aviation remains staunchly independent, for reasons that President Aviation Operations & Business Development Tony Marlow explains: "Our owner is an independent aviation enthusiast and I share his belief that we can do better on our own, adapting to local markets, pricing, training and even changing uniform as needed. It provides a lot of flexibility and that results in nimbleness to provide what our customers want."

That nimbleness also ensures resilience and Marlow says: "The last two years, through Covid, have been unlike any others in my career. The most difficult, but also the most satisfying, they required so much adaptation and creativity. Through incredible flexibility we squeaked out a few dollars of profit every month, even during the darkest time. And we never resorted to furloughs or staff reductions, a fact I'm very proud of. An inspiring policy driven from the top of the company, it means we now have very loyal employees as we recover to pre-Covid levels and even higher. We will end up stronger through the adversity and that is inspirational."

Elegance and excellence

Passengers and crew enjoy exceptional service standards at both Castle & Cooke FBOs, but with subtle differences to suit their locations. Marlow says they have elegance and excellence in common, while delivering a private, discreet service. He continues: “The Van Nuys FBO started as a private terminal and while we are a full-service FBO, we have kept that ‘private’ feel. It offers an exclusive country club-like environment, similar to a Four Seasons experience – we still own a Four Seasons facility. In today’s Covid-restricted environment, this exclusivity and privacy is more important than ever.

“The Honolulu FBO was modelled after what was then our Four Seasons facility on the island of Lanai. It still delivers a high-end experience but, importantly in Honolulu, which is much like an international destination, we strive to assist passengers and crew right from the jet to their ground transportation and on their way to their Hawaiian lodging. Wherever they’ve come from, it was a long



Tony Marlow, President Aviation Operations & Business Development, Castle & Cooke Aviation. Olivier Borgognon/Avfuel

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Above: Hangar and FBO facilities at Castle & Cooke Honolulu

Top: Castle & Cooke is proud of its association with Avfuel. The fuel company's branding appears across Castle & Cooke's output, including this Van Nuys' bowser. Bob Beresh/Avfuel

way, so we always do our best to expedite their route to relaxation.”

Importantly, Castle & Cooke Aviation's FBOs take their fuel from Avfuel, also using its branding. For Marlow, the link with the US fuel company makes complete sense. “I have been with a half-dozen or so suppliers over time; all the majors, some come and gone,” he recalls. “The relationship with Avfuel is by far the best I have ever had with a supplier. Responsive, caring, always there when we need help, they are like close family. Trucks come straight from their own facility; they have a wide spectrum of products and marketing support second to none.

“It works because they are really a partner, not a supplier. Their CEO, Craig Sincock, is a remarkable businessperson. I envy the organisation he has built, the

loyalty of his team and their willingness to assist us in many different ways. I can't say enough about Avfuel. We just finished our first five-year term with them and there was never a doubt that renewal was the way to go.”

Sustainable future

Sustainability is high on the industry agenda right now and Castle & Cooke has sustainable aviation fuel available – through Avfuel – at its Van Nuys facility. Marlow reports: “Customer use has been relatively low, but is still driven, I believe, by the significant cost difference. As price comes down, utilisation will increase. This is a marathon, not a sprint and we are prepared for the long haul.”

Looking at the bigger picture of company-wide sustainability, he continues:

The last two years, through Covid, have been unlike any others in my career. The most difficult, but also the most satisfying, they required so much adaptation and creativity.

“We've installed photovoltaic panels on several of our largest hangars in Van Nuys and our hangar in Honolulu. To the extent possible, we have switched to electric ground support equipment and we have new-generation clean-burning diesel trucks. We have and will continue to support our airport efforts in conjunction with our own goals to be a good neighbour and steward to the environment.”

Considering the airports Castle & Cooke serves, its customers have other choices of FBO at Van Nuys and Honolulu. So why should they and do they remain loyal? “It's our personalised approach to customer service,” Marlow asserts. “We offer private, discreet and personalised service. We strive to be the best, not necessarily the low-cost leader. I do not pursue market share at the expense of quality, so our customers can expect a higher level [of service].”

It is a policy that has seen the company through, hopefully, the worst of the Covid pandemic. Now the plan is to continue post-pandemic recovery while adapting to the changing needs of the current and next generation of customers. Tony Marlow is typically enthusiastic: “My role at Castle & Cooke has been magnificent and continues to be – I am inspired by the appreciation of a job well done. The future is very bright for us.” ■



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Benoit Defforge, ACJ President, messaged from Dallas to delay our interview by 15 minutes because, ironically, his Uber driver had lost their way. The irony became clear later in our conversation, since Defforge is very clear of the direction in which he and ACJ are going...

Airbus Corporate Jets – ACJ – has enjoyed unprecedented success over the past two years, recording record sales regardless of the pandemic. It's an achievement Defforge was keen to discuss but with a little clear time in his schedule, EVA first took the opportunity to learn more about the man himself and the passion he brings to ACJ.

"I was excited by aviation at a young age," he says. "I liked to draw aircraft, starting with Concorde, which first flew in 1969, when I was five years old. Later, I was passionate about the sea and the air, but the freedom of flight, the additional dimension of the air, really caught my imagination and I became an aerospace engineer.

"After my degree, I was very quickly attracted by making connections with other people and moved into the business and services side of aviation. During the 1990s I had a chance to work for Falcon outfitting. I moved to Airbus in 2003, and when it decided to create its own outfitting centre in 2007, I put my name on the table and was internally nominated as CEO of what was then called the Airbus Corporate Jet Centre (ACJC). We created an outfitting centre from two hangars and 100 experienced people, although they were always the most important element.

"Our success meant ACJC grew in importance and Airbus decided to create the separate ACJ business unit. It brought everyone involved in business aviation across Airbus into one organisation. I'd been pushing very hard for the unit's creation because we needed a dedicated solution to an important niche market that's very different to the airlines. And that's not only because we work with private and government customers, it's also about the way the aeroplane is used."

Corporate, business, VVIP and government customers use their aircraft less than the airlines, so although the basic A320neo and ACJ320neo platforms

Changing the Game



The ACJ TwoTwenty flew for the first time on 14 December 2021. It is expected to emerge, after completion, early in 2023.
Patrick Desrochers/Airbus

EVA caught up with Benoit Defforge, ACJ President, in effusive mood as he talked about his passion for aviation and belief in the ACJ TwoTwenty's ability to open up the US market

are quite similar, the former could easily fly 4,000 hours or more per year, while the latter is typically more likely to spend 500 to 1,000 hours airborne. That means a different service and support offer is required, while the Airbus Corporate Jet is also likely to have modifications including long range fuel tanks, reduced cabin altitude and, of course, a VIP cabin. Government aircraft may even feature a hybrid cabin, secure communications and other systems.

There is also the customer relationship. Defforge says: "When we deliver an aircraft, we begin a relationship. The intimacy between the customer and our product is important – they need to trust the brand and in order to do that they must trust the team. Trust has to be built. You can't create a marketing slide saying

you're entering this market and then make it happen. It took us a long time to reach where we are and the positive feedback we have on sales and customer support is the best gift you can receive as the leader of a business like this."

Leading any aviation enterprise through the Covid pandemic has meant facing challenges and showing resilience, and Defforge and ACJ have done both. Looking back on the period 2020-21, he says: "We sold 16 aircraft and had a market share of 100% in our segment. Even though 2020 was hard, we still had a good year. Some governments realised they were ill-equipped to face a situation like a global pandemic, and we completed deals to provide aircraft for moving people under these special circumstances. So, 2020 saw a mix of private and government

ACJ delivered the German government's first ACJ350XWB to Lufthansa Technik, for completion, on 7 May 2020. Stefan Kruijer/Airbus



sales, 2021 comprised private sales and we launched the ACJ TwoTwenty in 2020 as well.

“Both were record years and last year was also our best year for deliveries – ten aircraft – since 2007. These figures mean that even though we are still serving a niche within the niche business and VIP aviation market, we are leading and continuing to grow.”

ACJ TwoTwenty

Right now, the ACJ TwoTwenty is a particular focus for Defforge’s seemingly inexhaustible enthusiasm. With the first airframe delivered early in 2022, the A220-based business/VIP jet is essentially in a class of its own or, more accurately, the first entrant in a class of its own creation. Defforge explains: “The ACJ TwoTwenty takes us into a new market segment and

it is the perfect product for the US. The market here is quite different than the Middle East, for example, where lots of flying happens in large aircraft, what we might call ‘bizliners’.

“In the US, the bizliner market is limited. We have a few ACJ customers, but most people use smaller aircraft. The ACJ TwoTwenty enables us to enter the game with a platform that is not only already performing super well with the airlines but, with the ACT [additional centre tank], has intercontinental range above 5,500nm. That means it meets 98% of our customers’ flight requirements, while most flights in the US are coast-to-coast – that’s 5 hours and the TwoTwenty can fly 12 hours. Besides which, our analysis shows that 99% of US flights in heavy, long-range jets are under 5,500nm [2019 data]. On top of which, I am convinced the trend for chasing range will change as people realise the more comfortable option.

“We also decided to offer the ACJ TwoTwenty with a flexible cabin allowing customisation through a catalogue, which enables us to position at a similar price to the Gulfstream G700 and Bombardier

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K5-Aviation took delivery of its first ACJ330-300 on 9 February 2022. Fokker Techniek is installing its 243m² VIP cabin. H Gousse/Airbus

Global 7500 but with more than 20% lower key operating costs. It means private customers have the choice of targeting range they won't use in a smaller aircraft, or sufficient range and double the space or three times the cabin volume. I believe it makes a lot of sense in the US.

"It also opens new possibilities for corporations. In can be difficult for corporate customers to justify buying a bizliner, but they may be looking at a Gulfstream or Bombardier. Now they can stand before their board and suggest fleet renewal with an alternative aircraft that has twice as much space, so it can comfortably fly 19 people, and at the same capital expenditure but with lower operating costs."

Meanwhile, the A220 airliner is rapidly attracting customers, so that support for the platform – airframe, avionics, engines – is increasingly available on a global basis. Defforge confirms: "The first ACJ TwoTwenty will enter service early in 2023, with operations ramping up in 2024/25, by which time support around the world will be in line with our customers' needs. As we did with the ACJ319 and '320, we'll have some specific support in regions where our early customers are based, in Dubai, for

instance, to ensure smooth service entry; our customer support director will also be located close to those first customers." This local support will offer reassurance over ACJ-specific features, since the A220 has already accumulated many flight hours in airline service... more, in fact, than the Gulfstream G650 in the entirety of its service to date.

Defforge is confident that ACJ will not lose ACJ319 customers to the

ACJ TwoTwenty. "The ACJ319 will fly 6,750nm, it's a long-range bizliner," he says, "offering even more space and a fully customised cabin, but it costs more than US\$100 million. The TwoTwenty offers similar cabin quality to its smaller competitors at a similar price, so it's complimentary to the '319. It's a question we already asked ourselves."

What's next?

Almost every model, although not every subvariant of every model, in the Airbus airliner portfolio now has an ACJ derivative. Still, one or two aircraft offer interesting possibilities for the future, including the A220-300 (the ACJ TwoTwenty is based on the shorter -100) and A321XLR. What does Defforge think? "Our focus today is on the A220-100 airframe, which we call the ACJ TwoTwenty and which has a long product lifetime; should we have a customer request for the -300, we will look into it. The A321XLR has space and range, but it's achieving so much airline success that production slots are booked for the near future. We already delivered an ACJ321LR to the German government though."

The ACJ TwoTwenty is a game-changer Defforge insists. He is very passionate about the aircraft. Where, then, does he expect ACJ and the ACJ TwoTwenty to go in 2022? What might he be telling EVA about the previous year in spring 2023? "I'll be telling you that 2022 was the year in which we really penetrated the US market, building the foundation for long-term trust with our US customers." ■



The ACJ TwoTwenty offers a 'modular' cabin, with customisation available from a catalogue of choice. Airbus

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The City is just 12 miles from Biggin Hill's runway. The airport easily handles aircraft of BBJ 737 size. Mike Rivett-Fotomotion

London Biggin Hill Airport

Located just 12 miles from the city centre, London Biggin Hill Airport offers a choice of two FBOs, extensive hangarage, a six-minute helicopter transfer service to and from central London, and comprehensive aircraft support and maintenance services. As an aviation hub, the airport is also home to more than 70 aviation businesses. Head of Marketing Andy Patsalides answered EVA's questions

London Biggin Hill Airport boasts a dramatic heritage, as well as being an important aerospace hub and providing key business aviation access into the city. What FBO, hangarage and ramp space do you have available for your private aviation customers?

We have two full-service FBOs and, in keeping with our dedication to ensuring safe, discreet and rapid transfers for passengers through the airport, we offer direct ramp access for ground or helicopter transfers. Plans are also advanced for the development of a new FBO terminal.

The airport offers a comprehensive range of business aviation and ground handling support services for all business jet types including BBJs and ACJs. Equipment includes tugs, de-icing rig, belt loader and baggage carts, GPUs and steps for aircraft up to BBJ/ACJ size.

Biggin Hill airport is independent, but what about its FBOs?

London Biggin Hill Airport is privately owned, but one of its FBOs is run by



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What facilities do you provide for your passengers?

London Biggin Hill Airport provides a large and comprehensive number of services to its passengers, including the SkyPets dedicated animal handling service, which makes it the most pet-friendly general aviation airport in the UK. This exclusive service for owners and their pets on average sees more than 2,000 animals pass through the airport each year.

The London Heli Shuttle, operated by Castle Air, offers airport customers the quickest route to central London, with a flight time of just six minutes, but there are also a number of ground transfer options.

The airport offers custom in-flight menus through its recommended caterer, Air Culinaire Worldwide, which is located on-site and able to accommodate every dietary requirement. And while we complete construction of our own airport hotel, handling agents are able to recommend and book hotels with the advantage of reduced rates.

What facilities do you provide for your crews?

London Biggin Hill Airport's first on-site hotel, The Landing, is under construction and due for completion later this year. The 4-star, 56-bedroom boutique hotel is primarily intended for crew who frequently fly in and out of the airport, as well as engineers and other employees of the numerous resident aerospace businesses based at the airport. The Landing will also have a bar, restaurant, lounge area and gym.

What facilities do you provide for aircraft?

London Biggin Hill Airport enjoys a first-rate reputation as a UK business aviation centre of excellence and is an ecosystem of varied and innovative aviation businesses. Its 70-plus resident companies employ more than 1,000 aviation specialists across the 500-acre site.

We have more MROs based at the airport than any other in Europe, including Bombardier, Embraer and Oriens Aviation, ensuring that most aircraft types are catered for.



The Signature FBO at London Biggin Hill Airport

As a result, the airport is able to offer high-level services to every aircraft, including first- and second-line maintenance, emergency technical support, parts, avionics assistance and completions.

How does the London Heli Shuttle work?

At just six minutes, the London Heli Shuttle is the quickest and most seamless transfer to and from central London. Located 12 miles from the centre of the city, London Biggin Hill Airport is the only dedicated business aviation airport within the capital. The airport-based fleet of helicopters has remained operational throughout Covid-19 and includes six-passenger Leonardo AW109s and 12-passenger AW139s that fly single- and dual-pilot under IFR and VFR.

Attitudes to fuel and sustainability vary between regions. I know you offer sustainable aviation fuel and take sustainability seriously. What about your customers?

London Biggin Hill Airport was the first in London to offer sustainable aviation fuel and we have seen a record uplift in its use recently, reflecting the increase in awareness and desire for aviation to become more sustainable. The airport offers a highly sustainable SAF blend that

highlights its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It's also an important step in the airport's journey to becoming carbon neutral by 2029, as outlined in our Sustainability Statement.

What's next for Biggin Hill? Does the future look positive?

We certainly hope the worst of Covid-19 is behind us, although we did remain fully operational throughout the pandemic, and introduced our Contactless Travel initiative as well as opening an on-site PCR centre, the Mansi Testing Suite.

There are a number of exciting developments and investments taking place at the airport, including an FBO upgrade and The Landing hotel. In addition, Bombardier will be opening its new customer service centre later this year, providing a 250,000sqft state-of-the-art, innovative and sustainable facility capable of housing up to 14 Global 7500 aircraft at any one time.

London Biggin Hill Airport is committed to innovation and the future of aviation and we will continue to prioritise investment and development at the airport. We are also focusing on working in partnership with resident businesses to help achieve sustainability and meet our goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2029. ■

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Big Heart Tradition

Manny Aviation provides ground support across Mexico and has plans to open its own FBOs. Interim OCC Manager Emilio Padilla Escoto describes the company on its 25th anniversary

“A big heart is essential for Manny Aviation employees, carrying on the tradition of our founder, Manuel ‘Manny’ Romero-Vargas Gómez de Parada,” says Emilio Padilla

Escoto, Interim Operations Control Centre (OCC) Manager at the company’s Toluca International Airport headquarters. “They truly care about our clients. Many staff are customer services experts with particular application to aviation, and all are trained in operations and service delivery. This, combined with their agility and ability to react to the changing demands of private aviation, means we have a devoted team that our clients always value.”

‘Manny’ already had almost four decades of industry experience behind him when he formed Manny Aviation Services in 1997. Today, although Mexico has few FBOs, Manny has a presence in all of them, including facilities at Aguascalientes, Cancun, Toluca and Vallarta. Escoto also notes: “Manny is authorised to provide services on the general aviation apron at more than 60 Mexican airports that are without an FBO, and we are working towards opening our own FBOs.”

Around 70% of Manny Aviation’s work is in support of leisure and tourism travel, Escoto describing Cabo San Lucas, Cancun and Puerto Vallarta as the ‘hotspots’, along with Mexico City. “The lion’s share of our clients are transient: they are not based in Mexico,” he confirms. Where it has agreements in place, Manny offers ramp parking and hangar space at numerous airports, while also enabling access to a full range of FBO facilities for crew and passengers.

For travellers with particular concerns, Escoto says: “All safety and security needs



are met and coordinated, in advance, with the operators, either directly or in partnership with the customer's international trip support provider. This includes direct and bilateral support as needed. Safety is paramount to Manny, not only in aircraft handling, but also in terms of crew and passengers."

Yet Escoto reckons the service for which Manny is most famous is its outstanding, specialised catering. This particular

expertise should come as no surprise since the company's founder began his aviation career with a family airport catering business in 1959. In 2022, Manny Aviation's 25th anniversary year, Escoto explains: "The catering kitchen is at Toluca Airport and we now also have our own restaurant inside the Asertec FBO, in Toluca. There, crew, passengers and airport personnel enjoy the fantastic tastes of a great, traditional Mexican meal."

While good food sustains its clients, Manny Aviation also has an eye towards the bigger sustainability picture, although Escoto regrets that SAF is not yet available in Mexico. "However, as an NBAA member and active participant in other aviation organisations and committees, we continually review the implementation of fuel supply and sustainability and this will ensure we are

involved in future SAF developments."

In this anniversary year, the forward-looking team at Manny Aviation is also recognising its heritage. Escoto muses: "'Manny' Romero-Vargas was a true innovator. Now, we are moving the company into its next 25 years with our own trailblazing innovation and his heart and soul to guide us. We aim to embrace new technologies as we develop and expand our relationship with clients, partners, fuel suppliers and airport personnel, while simultaneously enhancing our trip support work and governmental/regulatory activity.

"Our daily focus on the smallest details is helping us reach our goal of being Mexico's number one ground support services provider and maintaining that status for at least another quarter century." ■



Above: The team at Manny Aviation is working hard to expand on its current technological offer

Left: Manny Aviation is proud of its 25 years – even its high-vis vests carry the anniversary logo



AEG: Thoughts on Fuel

AEG serves business, commercial and government aviation clients globally, priding itself on industry-leading customer service and flexibility, as COO Chris Clementi explains

Global aviation fuel provider Associated Energy Group (AEG) also offers international trip planning and delivers its services to corporate, commercial and government customers at more than 3,000 locations. Headquartered in Miami, Florida, AEG employs in excess of 200 people in nine offices across its global footprint. Its business aviation customers benefit from a private label fuel card, contract fuel, rewards, carbon offsets, trip planning and flight support services through a partnership with Jeppesen, plus bulk fuel supply, equipment and branding at FBOs, a high-technology platform and mobile app. Chris Clementi, AEG’s COO, answered *EVA*’s questions.

Where does your fuel come from and what does its journey to the wing look like? What fuels do you offer?

Among other suppliers, we procure fuel from all the major multinational oil companies, refiners, national oil companies and FBOs. Our role varies from managing the supply chain logistics of deliveries, which includes transporting fuel by common carrier and pipeline, to managing inventory positions, delivering bulk, or selling into wing on a back-to-back basis from our supplier’s inventory. In the US, AEG has access to over 100 truck terminals where Jet A is loaded for transport to airports and FBOs. We maintain agreements to buy back, market and resell from FBOs to end users, and we supply Jet A, avgas and SAF.

AEG offers a voluntary carbon credit programme available to operators at the time of quote and order...

How do you work with FBOs?

AEG sells branded and unbranded fuel to FBOs and offers an à la carte menu of services that includes bulk supply, equipment leasing, credit card processing, software, branding, contract fuel sales and marketing. We are focused on growing the AEG Connect network, a group of AEG-supplied and marketed FBOs offering premier facilities and service.

It is imperative that we reduce carbon and other emissions. How is AEG as an organisation doing this? And how are you helping your customers do it?

AEG offers a voluntary carbon credit

programme available to operators at the time of quote and order, or electable on all purchases to offset emissions from fuel burn. We are also active in providing SAF and planning SAF distribution as it becomes more widely available. Our goal is to educate our customers to help convert interest in SAF into demand, while using our fuel-moving logistics to make SAF available in bulk to FBOs and on an into-wing basis across our network.

How widespread is your SAF distribution right now?

SAF is not available at all airports and global production is quite minuscule relative to total

The graphic features a central red vertical bar with the Krimson logo at the top. The logo consists of the word 'Krimson' in white, with a stylized compass rose icon where the letter 'o' is. Below the logo, five service categories are listed with corresponding icons: 'FLIGHT SUPPORT' (hand holding a plane), 'CHARTER & LEASING' (hand pointing to a location), 'MRO SOLUTIONS' (wrench and screwdriver), 'CONSULTING' (two people), and 'CONCIERGE' (person in uniform). To the left of the bar, a location pin icon is placed over a photograph of an ancient stone building, with the word 'ETHIOPIA' written below it. To the right, another location pin icon is placed over a photograph of a coastal town, with the word 'MALTA' written below it. At the bottom of the red bar, it says 'PROUD MEMBER OF:' followed by the logos for 'AIBAA', 'EBAA', and 'NBAA'. Below the red bar, on the left, is the text 'CONTACT US' and 'E: CONTACT@KRIMSON.AERO'. On the right, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, along with the text 'KrimsonAviation' and a QR code.



jet fuel demand, but we have sourced and sold SAF in the US and Europe. Product availability will increase over the coming years, however, and AEG is preparing to make SAF available on demand at locations within the network. Another option for matching product with demand and enhancing SAF availability is to offer it on a book-and-claim basis. This way, SAF is delivered into an airplane at one location but marketed across the network with the cost and environmental benefit belonging to the purchaser even though the physical product is burned elsewhere. AEG's network, customer base and administrative competencies place us in a unique position to be able to offer this to our customers.

As we look toward the future, fuel companies must evolve, moving away from the products they have traditionally sold towards SAF, electricity, hydrogen and maybe other alternatives too. How will AEG adapt?

We believe SAF is the future and we expect to be part of the transition in terms of education, supply chain logistics and distribution. There is wide interest from customers, momentum in the market and more capacity coming online in the near term. We expect incentives to help drive economics and demand, so hopefully we will soon see wider SAF availability and distribution – we're very excited about it.

Your customers have plenty of companies to choose from, all of them supplying fuel that burns the same way... How do you engage with customers to ensure AEG remains their preferred supplier?

Jet A is a homogeneous product but service among fuel companies is not. The scale of our activity, depth of the offering and range of capabilities sets AEG apart. Our quoting, dispatching and invoicing timeliness, and accuracy, are our greatest differentiators. We have an amazing team of professionals with local representatives in markets around the world. The last few years have been transformative for the company as we've built out an easily accessible and competitive offering. AEG remained focused on extending credit lines and terms during the global pandemic to support our customers' operations during difficult times. The marketplace has welcomed our alternative and we remain focused on the customer experience. ■



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XLR Jet Centres: Birmingham, Bournemouth, Exeter and Liverpool

Each of the four XLR Jet Centres serves an important UK airport. Distinctive in character and service offering, XLR is especially proud of its support to VIP government and military customers. XLR Director Chris Beer answered *EVA's* questions

.....

There are XLR Jet Centres at Birmingham, Bournemouth, Exeter and Liverpool John Lennon Airports. What do they offer?

Birmingham is the largest facility, with a 27,000sqft heated hangar and two-tier Jet Centre featuring passenger lounges and crew facilities, as well as office accommodation and private car parking. Birmingham, Bournemouth and Liverpool all have private security within the Jet Centre, while all four FBOs have a similar look and boutique feel. The one thing they absolutely have in common is our outstanding staff, who believe strongly in excellent customer service.

What facilities do you offer?

All our Jet Centres have extensive passenger lounges with excellent views of the runway, workstations and premium passenger arrival experiences. For these, UK border officers visit passengers in the VIP lounge, enabling checks in private; at Liverpool ours is the only FBO with this facility.

All our FBOs also have crew lounges or spaces dedicated to crew, including quiet rooms for sleeping. Complementary hot and cold soft drinks are always available – and for crew coming off their last sector and heading for the hotel, we are delighted to offer an ice-cold beer.

As a full-service FBO group, our expert teams carry out all the usual under-wing services. Each location welcomes a number of flights from regular customers, although Bournemouth and Birmingham tend to see more US flights and others from outside Europe. In the winter, Exeter sees lots of



The first floor lounge at XLR Birmingham. Blue accents highlight all XLR's lounge facilities

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Above: The entrance to XLR Bournemouth

Right: XLR's expansive, heated, Birmingham hangar



US visitors enjoying popular field sports, while Liverpool owns the market for football [soccer] flights.

Your offer is based on outstanding customer service and facilities, but is there anything else that sets the XLR experience apart?

Pizza! We began offering pizza to visiting military aircrew at Exeter ten years ago and this has evolved so that all the FBOs have either a pizza oven or a close connection to Domino's, and we treat predominantly military aircrew to lunch or dinner. During the pandemic, when airport terminals were closed, we extended the offer to all visiting crew.

Sustainable aviation fuel is gradually gaining traction – are you able to offer SAF to your customers?

We aren't quite there yet, but we are discussing the requirement with several fuel companies across the Jet Centre network. World Fuel Service, which we work very closely with at XLR Birmingham, has several ideas on how we could make SAF work and we are keen to try. Our fuel team is carrying out market research on existing customers to find out their views and ask how much extra they would be prepared to pay to have SAF in their tanks. We'll look at the results and decide how best to move forward, but we recognise the importance of reducing carbon emissions as much as we can

The XLR Jet Centres are part of a larger

company, but they are its only FBOs. How have they survived through the past two years without the support of a major chain?

All four serve key UK cities with an excellent product that meets the needs of the HNWIs in their catchment. I don't believe our owners want to see the FBOs sold off to a larger chain – they are very happy with how well XLR is doing since the Covid lockdowns ended. Birmingham and Liverpool have done especially well, going above and beyond to win larger customers away from established competitor FBOs by offering better facilities, flexible pricing and an improved customer environment.

The XLR Jet Centres regularly host military and government visitors, but Exeter and Liverpool saw extraordinary traffic during the G7 summit. Can you tell us more?

The team loves looking after all types of business aircraft, from the two SR22s based in Birmingham to the Gulfstreams and Globals we see every day. The Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and British Army all like using XLR and I think our staff consider handling these flights the biggest privilege. Many of our staff are former military personnel and it's great to give something back when their serving colleagues visit us.

The G7 event last June saw the US Air Force visit Exeter, with four CV-22 Osprey tiltrotors supporting the President of the United States and it was our honour and privilege to handle them and look after their passengers and crew. There was another G7 event in Liverpool during December and recognising our previous performance, the USAF knocked on our door to look after its VIP Boeing 757 [C-32A]; XLR Liverpool also looked after the Australian Government's Falcon 7X, Luftwaffe Global Express and A319, and Japanese government aircraft.

What's next for the XLR Jet Centres?

In February we had our seventh consecutive month of growth. XLR went above and beyond to protect staff and customers during the pandemic and we are still having our facilities professionally fogged and cleaned every month, while staff also clean daily, focussing especially on touch points.

I believe the future is very bright, with each FBO location looking forward to key events in 2022. Birmingham, for example, is hosting the Commonwealth Games in July and August, while Exeter will support the return of UK air shows. Thanks to our amazing staff, customers, operators and brokers, we have survived the Covid crisis and we're ready for the future. ■

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For Today and Tomorrow

Established just over a year ago, 4AIR is on a mission to deliver verifiable, transparent and easily implemented sustainability, as President Kennedy Ricci explains



Elsewhere in this edition, Gabriel Madrid, CEO of Jet Luxe, says the company takes sustainability extremely seriously. It was established in 2020 and, he says, “Our accreditation with 4AIR, the global standard for sustainability in business aviation, was one of our first major projects.”

Keen to discover more about 4AIR and how it has become the global standard, *EVA* spoke to Kennedy Ricci, the company’s president.

Jet Luxe, ironically, is an industry veteran compared to 4AIR, which launched on 28 January 2021. During its first year, 4AIR helped private jet owners, operators and passengers voluntarily offset or reduce more than 1 million tonnes of CO₂ through verified carbon offsets and SAF; it facilitated more than 250,000 carbon-neutral flight hours; offset more than 80,000 emissions-neutral flight hours; and made possible more than 125 million carbon-neutral flight miles – an impressive start.



Ricci explains: “Through our ratings framework, we help all private aviation stakeholders achieve their sustainability goals and compliance with industry goals, in simple and fully verifiable commitments. For someone just starting out, we offer a comprehensive, full-service turnkey solution at the level of sustainability they are willing to commit

to – just tell us how much you flew, and we cover the rest. If someone has already started offsetting or using sustainable fuels, we can audit the initiatives and help validate their commitment to their stakeholders in line with our rating system.

“Our ratings framework offers four levels – Bronze (Carbon Neutral), Silver



(Emissions Neutral), Gold (Emissions Reduction) and Platinum (Climate Champion) – that help achieve carbon and emissions neutrality via carbon offsets, and actual emissions reduction through measures including SAF. Each level has specific, science-based

goals, independently verified results and progressively greater impacts on sustainability.”

Starting at Level 2, the company’s emphasis on ‘emissions’ rather than simply ‘carbon’ is particularly significant, since it is easy to focus on carbon and lose sight of

the bigger sustainability picture. Indeed, Ricci confirms that Level 2 recognises CO₂ as only part of the problem.

“Based on the Global Warming Potential – GWP – emissions index applied to aviation, two-thirds of an aircraft’s environmental impact comes from non-CO₂ warming pollutants, including water vapour and soot. Developing a simplified way to account for these emissions, we used the GWP to calculate the carbon equivalent impact of the non-CO₂ emissions and use offsets in that amount to counteract the effect of all aviation emissions. Based on this emissions factor of 3.0, this means offsetting 300% of an operator’s base carbon footprint to account for the impact of all emissions. So, if one carbon credit offsets one tonne of CO₂, then three carbon credits are needed to offset all emissions.”

Transparency and people

4AIR’s offer is based on sound science and enables stakeholders to satisfy their sustainability commitment without working through an evolving, sometimes complex

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system themselves, with the added benefit of knowing they are offsetting effectively. But how does a one-year-old company demonstrate the experience and gravitas to be considered the ‘global standard’? The answer is two-fold: transparency and the right people.

Ricci continues: “All carbon credits through 4AIR are quantified and verified through the most respected international bodies that issue and register them, including the American Carbon Registry, Climate Action Reserve, Verified Carbon Standard [VERRA] and The Gold Standard. Additionally, our end-of-year commitment audits and rating achievements are independently verified by third-party auditors.”

Kennedy Ricci and Chief Operating Officer Nancy Bsales are the driving force behind 4AIR. Ricci’s father leads a family of private aviation companies and is behind the 2022 Kenn Ricci Lifetime Aviation Entrepreneur Award presented to Avfuel’s Craig Sincock, while his mother was a flight attendant and his grandfather was an organiser and manager of the Cleveland National Airshow; Kennedy Ricci himself is a pilot.

While still at the University of Notre Dame, he founded social media agency

Flagship Social, focused on executive visibility. He also worked in the financial offices of Corporate Wings and Directional Aviation, learning the private aviation business and subsequently combining family history and his technological acumen to found 4AIR.

Bsales, meanwhile, has more than 15 years’ experience as a strategist in voluntary markets for sustainability, implementing new – now familiar – concepts including offsets and carbon accounting. Business aviation is among her specialities, where she has built corporate portfolios and launched consumer carbon emissions offset programmes. As a senior manager at carbon offset provider TerraPass and a consultant to organisations including the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, The Good Traveler and the Rocky Mountain Institute, Bsales also helped build one of the first offset providers in the US and developed innovative, first-of-their-kind programmes in corporate aviation, shipping and commercial travel.

4AIR has the people and science to make a real difference to business aviation emissions, but part of the sustainability puzzle is still missing. After

the recent COP26 summit in the UK, for example, the general media criticised world leaders for using private aircraft to reach the summit. Insiders were incensed by the misreporting of an industry that is in reality trying very hard to reach sustainability goals, yet many feel unable to speak out. Could 4AIR provide the foundations upon which the business/VIP aviation industry might finally stand up as a paradigm of sustainability?

“Absolutely,” Ricci declares. “The private aviation industry has made significant, far-reaching commitments to reducing emissions. We see an enormous trend and interest among industry stakeholders wanting to implement effective sustainability programmes and our goal is to make these more accessible, transparent and easy to implement. Because our programme starts with carbon neutrality and not a commitment to it in the future, our partners are going beyond industry goals and taking action now to meet or surpass long-term goals. A 4AIR rating independently demonstrates that a partner is taking verifiable action to be an exemplary sustainability leader.

“We see the business aviation community willing to lead in a manner

Levels in Detail

Kennedy Ricci provides an overview of 4AIR's ratings framework

Level 1: Bronze (Carbon Neutral)

Makes participants' aviation activity carbon neutral by offsetting all their CO₂ emissions with verified carbon offset credits. These are used to finance projects that reduce CO₂, including forest preservation in Kenya, clean wind-generated electricity in the upper Midwestern US and high-efficiency cooking stoves that reduce the wood needed for cooking in Africa, helping prevent deforestation.

Level 2: Silver (Emissions Neutral)

Enables participants to be fully emissions neutral, compensating

for CO₂ and impacts from other emissions with verified offsets.

Level 3: Gold (Emissions Reduction)

Enables participants to go beyond emissions neutrality to reduce their emissions by at least 5%, through solutions including using SAF or purchasing SAF credits.

Level 4: Platinum (Climate Champion)

Allows participants to support new technologies in aviation with a contribution to the Aviation Climate Fund, aimed at supporting research and development in aviation sustainability.

beyond commercial aviation," Ricci says. "We believe that, through the industry's pioneering, we can help lead all of aviation to a more effective and expeditious long-term decarbonisation, applying our learnings and accelerating technologies in a manner that will support the entire aviation industry." ■



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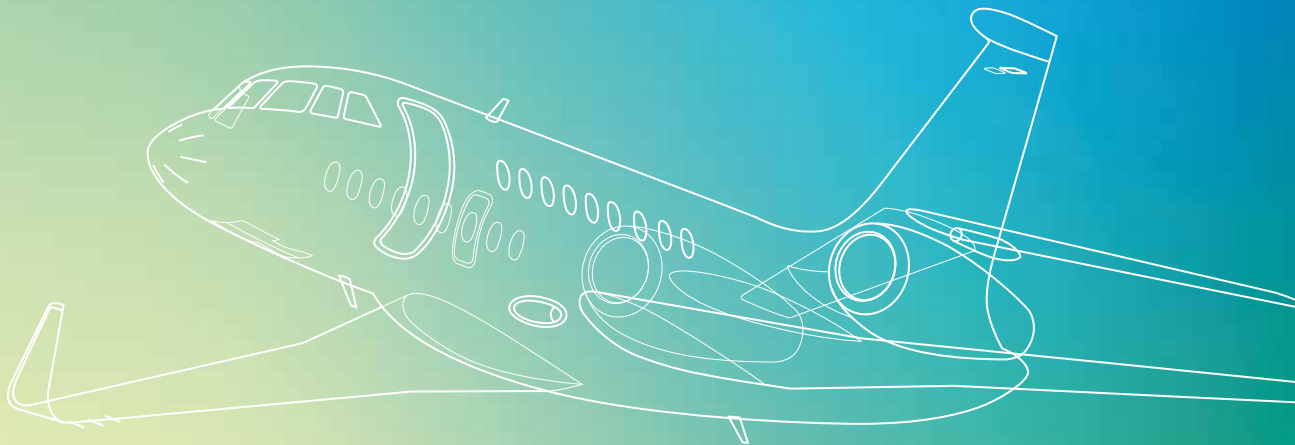
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Service Unimagined

Jet Luxe aims to deliver not just great service, but service so good that it surpasses customer expectations. CEO Gabriel Madrid spoke to *EVA*



Jet Luxe operates a fleet of managed Global 6000s

While it would be accurate to describe Jet Luxe as an aircraft management and charter sales company, that simple summary fails to encompass the unique, experience-led product Jet Luxe offers its business aviation customers. Established in 2020, headquartered in Dubai and with offices in Hong Kong, Mexico, Morocco, the UK and the US, Jet Luxe founds its business on four primary service pillars, as CEO Gabriel Madrid explains.

“Those pillars are Fly Luxe, our luxury global jet charter service; AMS Luxe, our aircraft management service; the INVICTUS Partnership, our innovative guaranteed access programme; and Concierge Luxe, which is powered by

the Forbes Travel Guide Global Service Standards of Excellence. Our ‘floating’ fleet comprises Global 6000 aircraft serving our global charter and INVICTUS clients. Other featured aircraft fall under Fly Luxe.”

The company has tackled several regular industry gripes head on, aircraft access, guaranteed service standards and pricing transparency among them. As the world adapts to cope with Covid, demand for business travel has expanded and remains high. Meanwhile, as airlines progress with their cautious recovery in parallel, demand on some routes is outstripping capacity, pushing even more passengers towards private flying. The result is that the ‘fly where you want, when you want’ ideal of private flying is sometimes compromised by a lack of aircraft capacity, an eventuality Jet Luxe

has addressed through a guaranteed access programme, available exclusively to its INVICTUS Partners.

“The market has nothing like INVICTUS,” Madrid enthuses. “It’s not a jet card, fractional ownership, or a traditional membership. It is a new, niche, highly exclusive partnership with just four opportunities per jet. With INVICTUS, we pass on our significant buying power to the customer, providing access to a closed, private fleet without the financial commitment or depreciation risk associated with fractional ownership. We’ve meticulously developed the model to be completely flexible, dynamic and with guaranteed availability year-round, worldwide.

“The surge in demand for private travel has led to a lack of availability in the market. The availability of pre-owned



The same high standards of service apply to all Jet Luxe charter passengers

aircraft is limited, traditional ownership has become expensive, and fractional ownership comes with the burden of depreciation. INVICTUS gives a sense of owning an aircraft without the cost of being an owner.”

Service excellence

On the subject of service standards, a tricky area in an industry where every operator is understandably convinced that it is the best, Madrid has more to say. “We recently implemented the Forbes Travel Guide Service Standards of Excellence to create Jet Luxe’s Standards of Service Excellence. Rolled out in January 2022, they cover our charter, aircraft management and global concierge service. This enhanced approach gives a guarantee of a highly quality-controlled customer experience and seeks to provide clients with a structure through which to measure quality. It’s not just about delivering what the customer expects – for us, it’s about leveraging our experience to predict a level of service they didn’t yet imagine.

“Jet Luxe is the only private jet brand with bases outside the US to have committed to the programme of Forbes Travel Guide service standards and service excellence training, making it a unique choice for well-informed travellers. Forbes Travel Guide is known for its ‘Star



The Jet Luxe aircraft owners’ app

Ratings’ of luxury hotels, restaurants and spas, and brought its Five-Star hospitality approach to its work with Jet Luxe. So, we can confidently say our service standards are among the best.”

Jet Luxe is inevitably unable to have staff at every airport a chartered aircraft might visit but guarantees service standards by using carefully selected partners. In addition, Madrid notes: “Members of the Jet Luxe team frequently travel to assess and ensure our quality of service, while also developing the relationship with our partners.”

Meanwhile, in its drive for transparency, Jet Luxe offers an app for the owners of managed aircraft. “Our in-house app and reporting system, powered by Portside,

provides instant, accurate, in-depth data. There are no ‘hidden’ costs and our clients have full access to our data,” Madrid proudly explains.

And on the critical issue of sustainability, he is unequivocal. “We take our commitment extremely seriously. Our accreditation with 4Air, the global standard for sustainability in business aviation, was one of our first major projects.”

Now, Madrid says, the next Jet Luxe development will be “a very exciting new move into the crypto space”. No doubt this will be accomplished with the attention to detail and careful focus on quality that has characterised everything so far in the young company’s history. ■

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