

EVA

WINTER 2022

EXECUTIVE &
VIP AVIATION
INTERNATIONAL



Corporate Eagle

Customer Perspective: How Good is Gogo?

Disruptive Vision – Richard Kane, CEO, Verijet

Proactive Safety – Mark Baier, CEO, Aviation Manuals

Go Digital! – Krister Genmark, VP of Sales, Web Manuals

Faciens Universa Simplex – Brian Proctor, President and CEO, Mente Group

Mach 1 & More – Stephen McCullough, VP Engineering – Chief of Aircraft Design and Development, Bombardier



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Editor's NOTES

Paul E Eden
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This year, 2022, has been a big one for Bombardier. In May it stunned us with the Global 8000 and on 29 November it revealed a further order for four more of the type from NetJets. This US\$312-million transaction will complete a planned fleet of 24 Global 8000s, including eight converted from Global 7500 jets already on order. In this Winter 2022 edition, we speak to Bombardier's Stephen McCullough, VP Engineering – Chief of Aircraft Design and Development, to find out a little more about how Global 7500 becomes Global 8000.

Then, as if launching a new ultra-long range flagship model were not enough, on 30 November, Bombardier inaugurated its expanded UK service centre at Biggin Hill. A massive new facility, the centre was thronged with Globals even as preparations were being completed on a dedicated space for Bombardier's partner in the building – F/LIST.

Happy to return to NBAA-BACE after a two-year hiatus forced by the Covid pandemic, the EVA team found inspiration among many of the exhibitors, none more so than Brian Proctor, President and CEO of Mente Group, and Richard Kane, CEO of Verijet. Both are looking forward to expansion in the US and moves into Europe, regardless of the difficult geopolitical situation and rumblings of recession. The fact that these companies operate in the business aviation sector yet fulfil very different requirements also serves to illustrate the diversity inherent in the industry, a theme EVA has examined more deeply in interviews with four leading women.

We spoke with Claudia Arnold, Senior Director of Marketing, AEGFUELS; Katie Bancroft, Associate, Jaffa & Co; Natalie Rodríguez, VVIP Aircraft Interior Designer, Natalie Rodríguez Luxury Design; and Rebekah Hill, Wellbeing & Sustainability Manager at

SaxonAir, about their journey into the industry and the work they do. Between them, these four young women stand out as role models for the next generation of aviation professionals, regardless of gender.

Their example, and those of their colleagues across aviation, ought to be a powerful driving force pushing new blood into the industry. They illustrate the growing presence of women in the sector, but also its diversity of roles and diversity beyond gender. Combine this with the type of flexible working opportunity explained by Web Manuals VP of Sales, Krister Genmark, and the industry should have everything it needs to attract new talent, but there are still hurdles to overcome.

In a culture of flight shaming – the COP27 summit provided the ill-informed popular media with another opportunity to hammer business and VIP aviation – ours is not a naturally attractive industry for any young person other than a diehard enthusiast. Compared to our best efforts to reach those people and explain the opportunity, the flight shaming message will always be stronger until business aviation stands up and makes a serious noise about how it is leading, not denying, sustainability.

And then we must show people how diverse the opportunities in aviation are. Arnold, Bancroft, Rodríguez and Hill are all pursuing successful, fulfilling aviation careers abundant with future promise, yet none of them are pilots or engineers, and neither do they work in the cabin. In the conversations I've had while preparing this last EVA of 2022, the struggle to attract and recruit young people has been a recurrent theme. Perhaps tackling the popular falsehoods of business aviation sustainability and telling potential new talent what the industry really has to offer ought to be the most important aims for 2023?

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Contents

WINTER 2022



Issue 60 2022
www.evaint.com

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ISSN 1754-1166



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Published by:
EVA International Media Ltd
Boswell Cottage
19 South End, Croydon
London, CR0 1BE, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 20 8253 4000
Fax: +44 (0) 20 8603 7369

www.evaintmedia.com

Printed by:
The Manson Group Limited
St Albans, Hertfordshire
AL3 6PZ, United Kingdom

Distributed By:
Asendia UK LTD
Heathrow Estate
Silver Jubilee Way
Hounslow, TW4 6NF



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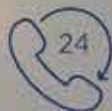
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How Good is Gogo?

While Gogo Business Aviation works to bring 5G and LEO satellite services online, *EVA* wanted to know just how good the company's offer is, so we asked a customer

Over anything but the shortest missions, most business, corporate and private aviation passengers expect inflight connectivity. How that connectivity is delivered depends upon customer requirement, budget, aircraft type and even geography, with operators in the US and Europe having air-to-ground (ATG) options as well as the variety of satellite possibilities relied upon across the globe.

Gogo Business Aviation operates across both spaces. Its US ATG service has evolved through 3G to 4G and will imminently offer 5G connection, through the popular AVANCE system that aims to seamlessly merge ATG and satellite services on the aircraft. Satellite communications, through Iridium ST 4300 and Inmarsat's SwiftBroadband, have long been options for Gogo Business Aviation customers, and now the company is preparing to offer global low-latency Ku-band service in association with OneWeb and its low earth orbit (LEO) satellite constellation.

Hughes Network Systems has developed an electronically steered antenna, the first for LEO connection in business aviation, sufficiently compact to suit even smaller jets and turboprops. Integrated into the AVANCE system, it will require the installation only of an antenna, a power cable in and an ethernet cable out to the AVANCE 'box'. Sergio Aguirre, Gogo Business Aviation's President and COO says: "It will be a fast and affordable broadband system providing best-in-class global performance on the broadest range of aircraft in business aviation."

The LEO service is expected to come online in 2024, while Gogo Business Aviation completed its 5G tower network in October 2022 and expects to begin connecting customers in mid-2023. Combined, the LEO product and 5G promise to offer a convenient, affordable, high-quality service to customers who travel regularly in US and Canadian airspace and need the option of international connectivity.

In the meantime, customers will continue to enjoy Gogo Business Aviation's 4G offer and wider service package, the quality of which any Gogo executive will inevitably describe as exceptional. And so it may be, but *EVA* sought an entirely different perspective from long-time Gogo customer Corporate Eagle.

The customer

Operating out of Oakland County International Airport, Michigan, Corporate Eagle provides fractional ownership on a fleet of Dassault Falcon 2000EX and Hawker 900XP jets, and Beechcraft B200 King



Melanie Prince, Head of Innovation, FLIST

Gogo Business Aviation completed the last of its 5G tower installations in October 2022. Gogo Business Aviation

Air turboprops. The Falcons and Hawkers are similarly equipped with Gogo Business Aviation AVANCE L5, Gogo Text & Talk, Gogo Vision and SwiftBroadband. The King Airs have no connectivity although Christopher Weedon, Corporate Eagle's VP, Director of Operations, acknowledges that should sufficient demand arise among its King Air members, installing ATG on the King Air would be a relatively simple task.

Dissatisfied with a job at the local grocery store, Weedon joined the Corporate Eagle team in 1987, after "knocking on doors to see if anyone needed a hand over the summer scrubbing bugs off airplanes". Signing up for flying lessons at the same time, he worked on the ramp before eventually leaving for college. "I came back as a flight instructor and worked my way up. We sold off the flight school in 2006; fast forward to 2022 and our primary business is fractional ownership with just a little bit of management."

Since its fleet is owned, Corporate Eagle makes its decisions on critical capability, including connectivity, with the proviso that all the aircraft in each fleet must be equipped to the same standard. Why was Gogo the first choice? "We go



Christopher Weedon, VP, Director of Operations, Corporate Eagle, in the cockpit of a company Hawker. Corporate Eagle

right back to Gogo's 3G system," Weedon begins. "It was really gaining traction because until then there was no cost-effective solution beyond SwiftBroadband that could provide a reasonable download speed. We tried it on one of our Hawkers and it became very popular.

"As our aircraft subsequently came up for their 48-month heavy inspections we took the opportunity to install the equipment. The costs were reasonable and the service per month, divided between eight co-owners per airplane, wasn't that much more than they were paying for their home internet. Because the fleet had to be identical, we had to equip every aircraft the same. Then, when the buzz started around 4G, we told our members about it and transitioned the fleet onto that. Now 5G is coming and we're provisioning for that. We'd like to

include it in the King Air too, but the members using that airplane are rarely in the air for more than an hour and they're happy to tolerate being out of touch for that long. But it absolutely could be done very easily."

Corporate Eagle's jet members are typically in the air for five hours on the Hawkers and up to seven on the Falcon. They want connectivity and enjoy their Gogo provision, but how good is it in day-to-day service? All providers, and Gogo Business Aviation is no exception, talk excitedly about speeds – but the reality is that if connecting to the service is difficult or slow, or the basic action of sending an email or text is frustrating, then the promise of absolute speed is irrelevant.

"I understand the underlying design constraints of the systems that are out there, but you can't expect that of

passengers or co-owners: it comes down to the experience," Weedon says. "We find it works very well and we get signal as low as 3,000ft; it just depends on what part of the country you're over. If you're over northern Michigan you probably won't get a reliable signal until you're at 10,000ft or further south, towards Detroit and Toledo, but we don't often operate the jets in that area. The speeds we see are satisfactory in as much as we've had minimal negative feedback from passengers. It's giving our owners what they want, and we'll learn more from their reaction when we start purchasing the 5G equipment. I doubt we'll see any pushback."

Acknowledging that Gogo's is a terrestrial system, Weedon notes: "There are inevitably areas where there's more noise on the frequency or on adjacent frequencies, usually over major



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Corporate Eagle Hawker 900XP shows the Gogo 4G antenna under the fuselage, ahead of the wing leading edge. Corporate Eagle

metropolitan areas. But when you're going 400kt plus, that only lasts for a couple of minutes. We get occasional complaints about service dropping out and when we go back and look at the route it's usually over a city – Atlanta, Georgia is a classic example. But any internet or wireless system has similar challenges.

“We were curious about how good the system was. We weren't really getting any other complaints, but we didn't want to assume it was good just because no one was complaining. We ran a test case, going from the top-tier non-streaming unlimited plan to the top-tier streaming

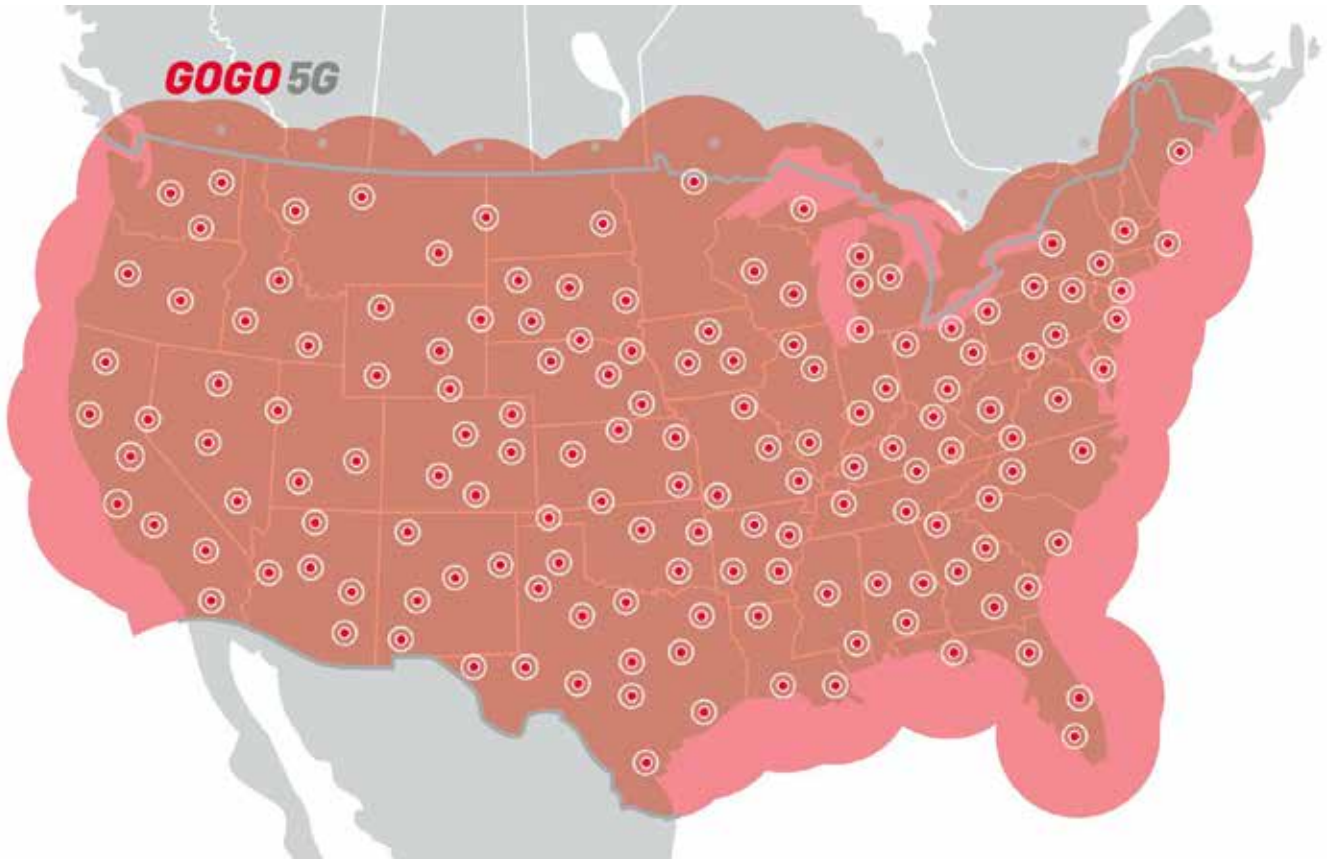
unlimited plan, which effectively doubles the cost; it doesn't necessarily double the speed, but it does remove data restrictions and allow you to stream content. We told the membership base we'd done it and encouraged them to give it a try. The feedback we got was that no one was really using it and for most of them the extra capacity wasn't worth double the cost per month.

“We reverted to the non-streaming plan and kind of waited for someone to say: ‘Hey, what happened, turn the ‘good’ one back on,’ but we didn't get that. Our members tell us they use it to

stay connected, with text, email, calls and internet browsing. All our jets also have Gogo Vision installed, with the hard drive onboard loaded with all the latest movies and TV shows. We don't know how much that's used in flight but it's a cost-effective way to provide connectivity and entertainment without paying the extra for streaming.”

Problem solving

Operators and, for the most part customers, accept that connectivity is unlikely to be perfect – we are all used to occasional buffering at home and



Gogo's 5G service covers the whole of the US. Customers should begin accessing it in 2023. Gogo Business Aviation

in the office after all. But every system fails sometimes and then operators like Corporate Eagle are directly in the firing line for customer complaints. In this case, Weedon explains: "Most of the time

when we hear 'it's super slow' or 'not working' more often than not there's a disproportionate number of devices connected to the internal Wi-Fi network, and we can see that on the Gogo Dash

app. And when it's not that, it's because they were over one of those areas where connection is difficult.

"We've had an occasional hard failure of an LRU, but that happens with any

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Corporate Eagle's immaculate fleet wears the smart livery displayed on this Hawker. Cabin layout and equipment fit are identical within each type fleet. Corporate Eagle

equipment, and the LRUs are generally rock solid reliable. I don't think we've had an antenna failure, but we have had a couple of misconfigurations when the airplane came out of the shop. We hadn't been precise about how to configure the Wi-Fi system. We had an airplane with SwiftBroadband, for example, and installed AVANCE L5. Normally the systems are configured to work together so that when you go out of range of the terrestrial system it automatically switches to satellite. The switch works so well that you don't know it's happened other than seeing a drop in speed that even then you may not notice. And then a big bill comes in for satellite data usage.

"We had a couple of these and contacted Gogo technical support. They're available 24 hours a day and they help you through

the issue. We have access to the diagnostic backend tools where we can log into the router and get deep into the configurations. Each time we realised it was our fault not Gogo's, but they provided all the help we needed to fix it. We've had engineers come out too, once to confirm an LRU hard failure and another time to some equipment that was timing out. It took the engineer, a couple of test flights and our IT department to figure it out, but between us we solved the problem."

Prior to Covid, Weedon says that connectivity was a priority for Corporate Eagle's members, to the point where if a programme aircraft was not available, they were happy so long as the replacement had internet. Now, with demand for aircraft outstripping supply, availability of a flight, with internet or

otherwise, is the driver, but Weedon believes that will change as the market adjusts and connectivity will again be the deciding factor.

Corporate Eagle's crews have come to regard Gogo's connection as an important source of supplemental non-flight-critical data and Weedon says it enables rapid communication between the company's flight operations centre and flight crews. "We use a mobile device as an approved electronic flight bag, and pilots interface with it throughout the flight. So, it's natural for our schedulers to communicate with the crew that way." Overall, as part of Corporate Eagles' busy operation, Gogo Business Aviation's reliable connection and exemplary support has become as useful to its team as it is essential to its members. ■

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Mach 1 & More



EVA spoke with Stephen McCullough, VP Engineering – Chief of Aircraft Design and Development at Bombardier, to find out how the Global 8000 builds on potential designed into the Global 7500, and how Global 7500 customers will be able to upgrade their in-service jets

Bombardier made a song, but not a dance, over the Global 8000 launch at EBACE in May, when even an audio problem did nothing to detract from the fact that not only had the OEM been conducting its flagship test programme in secret for more than a year, but it had also flown the jet beyond Mach 1.

Keenly anticipated as the even longer ranged stablemate of the ultra-long range

Global 7500, the Global 8000 was at last a reality. But it is more than a longer-legged 7500: the Global 8000 is faster and, remarkably, will be available as a new-build aircraft or by upgrade of Global 7500 jets already in service.

The video premiered that Geneva morning is now available on YouTube. Shot on 21 May 2021, it shows Global 7500 Flight Test Vehicle 5 (FTV5), known internally as 'The Masterpiece', achieving Mach 1.015 in Global 8000 configuration. The milestone

was an inevitable requirement of certifying the latest Global to a maximum speed of Mach 0.94; it was demonstrated more than once and achieved using sustainable aviation fuel.

Some in the audience may have walked away believing Bombardier had created the world's first supersonic business jet, a misinterpretation that should not be allowed to distract from the fact that the Global 8000 will cover 8,000nm at Mach 0.85 compared to the Global 7500's

Global 7500 FTV5 has been reconfigured as the Global 8000 trials platform



Stephen McCullough, VP Engineering – Chief of Aircraft Design and Development, Bombardier

maximum of 7,700nm at the same speed. There is no change in fuel tank size between the platforms, yet the 8000 carries more fuel.

No compromise

Stephen McCullough, Bombardier's VP Engineering, previously worked on the company's original Global programme, Challenger and CRJ900 regional airliner. He says the evolution of the Global 8000 from the 7500 is a natural progression

based on the excellence of the original design. "There was no compromise when we designed the 7500. Its wing was optimised for low and high speed. We did lots of work in the wind tunnel. Think of the 8000 as tapping that extra bit of potential the 7500 always had."

Mark Masluch, Bombardier's Senior Director, Communications, adds: "When we started on the Global 7000, which became the 7500, we knew we were developing an aircraft that would be the

flagship for 20 or 30 years, and there was some future proofing built into that. After more than 120 customer deliveries the aircraft is established in service, we're getting great feedback and it's showing good reliability. Most of the aircraft are on our Smart Link Plus programme, gathering data and providing a really good sense of how the fleet is performing. The engineers crunch those numbers and that also helps unlock potential."

But how is that potential realised?



Éric Martel, President and CEO, Bombardier, models the Nuage seat and Nuage Cube in Orlando

“Predominantly software changes in multiple areas,” McCullough explains, “and we’re looking at a minor engine thrust increase for cruise, although take-off thrust is already sufficient.”

And what about the mystery of how a jet can carry more fuel in the same space? “Fuel quantity is not just about the ability to store fuel. It’s also about what you do in terms of the space above the fuel, the ullage space. A lot of fuel management is about making sure the fuel vent system, for example, works properly under all conceivable conditions. It’s also about the repeatability from building a number of aircraft, knowing you can guarantee consistent fuel quantities. There’s quite a bit of science around managing fuel quantities too.”

Moving on to discuss the supersonic test flights, McCullough clearly enjoys explaining how an essentially routine trial was performed, even after confirming that modern flight test is really about validation. “We have a predicted outcome and, in that sense, it is validation, but we hadn’t been beyond Mach 1 before and we needed to go into that regime. Our demonstration of compliance meant we needed to go beyond the normal envelope and to clear the Global 8000 to Mach 0.94 we had to go Mach 1.015. It was a

challenge to find an aircraft that could keep up and provide a calibrated airspeed indication. We ended up going to NASA and asking for an F/A-18 Hornet.”

The supersonic flight occurred a year before the Geneva reveal and while McCullough admits that keeping it quiet was perhaps more challenging than the test itself, Mark Masluch and Mathieu St Cyr, Bombardier’s Manager, Sales Engineering, were happy to relate the internal debate that went on at the time. Should they go public with the fact that the Global 7500 had untapped performance that could take it beyond the ‘sound barrier’, or should they wait until a complete package announcement for what would become the Global 8000? The latter argument won through.

McCullough was happy with the decision. “The Global 8000 story is more than the supersonic test. It’s about taking a mature product to market, and we’ve done several more tests and used 7500 fleet service data to be able to do that. It means we can provide a robust demonstration to show that what we say we’ll do is what we’ll deliver.”

Executive cabin

With the Global 8000 programme in full development and the first

Challenger 3500 delivery in September, 2022 has been a busy year for Bombardier, but it has not forgotten the incremental improvements that make so much difference to its customers. At the company’s Orlando press conference, Bombardier President and CEO Éric Martel was very pleased to reveal a new Executive cabin configuration for the Global 7500 and 8000. Optimised for corporate customers and created in direct response to their feedback, it provides a three-zone cabin and ‘open office’ feel for better collaborative working and conferencing. Non-structural cabin bulkheads are moved to facilitate the Executive cabin, which is offered as an additional choice alongside the more conventional four-zone configuration.

At the same time, Martel unveiled the Nuage Cube, an unusual piece of furniture closely following the design ethos of the sublime Nuage seat. Its light weight, evident in the way Martel handled it during a pre-press conference photo session, gave the superficial impression that the Nuage Cube was an oversized plaything. In fact, it is multifaceted and surprisingly stable. Easily rotated onto different sides to form a stool, foot rest or table, it is delightfully easy to move around the cabin and supplied as a pair. It can be stowed for landing, take-off and taxi, and when otherwise not in use, in a purpose-designed credenza.

When the Global 8000 is delivered, its type certificate will show the same BD-700-2A12 model number as the Global 7500, but ‘Global 8000’ will appear on the type certificate data sheet as a subset designation. A service bulletin will apply to Global 7500s modified to Global 8000 standard, defining and verifying the upgrade, with implications for aircraft resale value. St Cyr says Bombardier’s worldwide service network will be responsible for the work.

He also explains that the first production Global 8000 will appear slightly before the retrofit programme begins and that service entry is on track for 2025. Like Stephen McCullough, he exudes confidence in the Global 8000’s capabilities and excitement over bringing an extraordinary aircraft to market. “You’re only a leader when others follow,” he says. “Otherwise, you’re just going in another direction.” ■

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Ambition Un-Czeched

ABS Jets is realigning after losing many of its traditional clients to Europe's difficult geopolitical situation, as Marketing Manager Petr Wessnitzer explains



People have been meeting to discuss aviation at Hendon, in North London, since the 1860s, after the area became popular for hot air ballooning. Heavier-than-air flying began around 1909 and from 1910, Hendon Aerodrome took a central role in the UK's nascent aviation industry. Later a military airfield, it supported regular flying until 1957 and gliding until 1968. Today, Hendon is home to the London branch of the Royal Air Force Museum, presenting a world-class collection on a site awash with aviation heritage.

There could therefore be no better place to meet with aircraft enthusiast Petr Wessnitzer, ABS Jets' Marketing Manager. He was in London on business and keen to talk about the company's expanding capability, as well as its support for a new movie, *Good Old Czechs*, which uses archive footage to detail the exploits of two Czech pilots serving in the Royal Air Force during World War II.

ABS Jets is headquartered at Václav Havel Airport Prague in the Czech Republic, operating across the country and at airports in its neighbour, Slovakia. Our conversation inevitably begins with the war in Ukraine. "For us in

the Czech Republic it is still quite far away," Wessnitzer says, "but it is much closer for our colleagues in Slovakia, which shares a border with Ukraine. It has impacted business across the whole of Europe, most significantly in maintenance. We had maintenance customers from Russia and Ukraine and the war and sanctions mean that work can't continue right now. We were very positive at the beginning of 2022, with plans for investment, but the war has changed the shape of that investment."

Deprived of a main customer base, ABS Jets has looked to consolidate and expand in other markets. "We have clients in Africa, other European countries and from other, larger business aviation companies when they need extra capacity. They trust that our brand means quality and they are confident sending their customers to us. Our main focus now is on reorientating our maintenance business to markets without sanctions and to grow the type approvals we can offer in our Czech Republic maintenance centre."

Wessnitzer freely admits that Central European companies need to work a little harder to demonstrate extra value since the region is perhaps not at the top of a western European business jet operator's list when they are looking for an MRO.

Perhaps that's a result of residual Cold War thinking or simply from a lack of understanding, but he says visiting auditors and regulators frequently cite the ABS Jets operation as a role model for others, a fact he finds difficult to promote without it seeming like a boast.

Aviation heritage

The foundation for this excellence goes back more than a century. Other European nations may have a more obvious aviation history, but Czech aircraft production reaches back at least to 1918 and the Letov company, while Aero Vodochody was established in 1919 and still manufactures military aircraft and aerostructures today. Add to this the 100th anniversary of CSA Czech Airlines in 2023, and the air-mindedness of the population, and the quality not only of the ABS Jets' product but also its people is assured. "All our employees are aviation lovers," Wessnitzer confirms. "This isn't just a job for them, it's a passion. We are a community of aviation enthusiasts."

Among them, two members of the Flight Dispatch and Flight Planning Department, or Operational Control Centre (OCC), recently qualified as FAA-licensed dispatchers. Jan Marx, Deputy Flight Planning Manager at ABS Jets, described the licensing process.



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“I started in February, with access to distance learning – online lectures, exercises, lots of tests. Then I travelled to Cincinnati in June, for two highly complex entrance tests, each lasting almost three hours and containing questions as well as specific examples; all I was allowed to use was an ordinary calculator, pencil and paper. Next came a week-long, ten-hours-per-day course with additional ‘homework’. A further test and oral exam on the Friday preceded the final test with the FAA examiner on Saturday. It lasted six hours straight and included manually calculating a complex flight plan, something that might take a few minutes on the computer but which we must also be able to do by hand if the computer goes down.”

Extra training is also allowing ABS Jets to expand its maintenance offer to include additional Gulfstream models, while three newcomers to the managed fleet between autumn 2022 and the end of 2023 will include a Bombardier Challenger 605, for which more maintenance expertise will again be added. The company also operates aircraft from Dassault, Embraer and Airbus Helicopters.

“Our response to the crisis has been to look elsewhere for work, to add new capabilities and improve our offer. I don’t know if the work we traditionally had will ever come back,” Wessnitzer says, “but

we are recreating ourselves as a European service centre in the centre of Europe.”

Brazilian connection

As if that wasn’t ambition enough and seemingly in contradiction to its Eurocentric plans, ABS Jets exhibited at the 2022 Latin American Business Aviation Convention and Exhibition in Brazil during August. Moving a team and their

promotional materials halfway across the world required a major effort.

“We have a significant connection to the country, with lots of clients there,” Wessnitzer explains. “Our presence is such that we felt we had to be there, meeting with our customers. Our 24/7 OCC and charter offer means we are always available to them, and they use our flight planning service a lot; it has become even more important now that we have our FAA-licensed dispatchers.

“The connection between our flight planning department and Brazil goes back to the delivery of our first Embraer, when we worked directly with the company. Our Brazilian and wider Latin American clientele grew out of that, as did our status as an Embraer-authorized service centre, alongside those in France and the UK. We still provide flight planning for Embraer deliveries into the region.”

ABS Jets’ MRO capability extends from line maintenance through base maintenance including C-checks and the deepest level of overhaul. Trusted partners are available for paint and cabin refurbishment, but most Embraer customers come to ABS Jets for deep maintenance.

Future planning

Looking ahead, Wessnitzer sees ABS Jets successfully navigating the current geopolitical situation as it becomes stronger



and reaches into new markets. “I’d like to see our maintenance offer established and respected among western European operators, and the ability of our charter operation to satisfy complex requirements recognised throughout Central Europe. Lots of charter providers expanded during the pandemic and we had specialised in large and ultra-long range aircraft, but the new Bombardier is midsize, allowing us to offer a wider variety of services and making us the dominant charter provider in the region.

“We won’t lose sight of our position in the aviation community either. We’re involved in several projects, partnering other organisations in promotional activities and events. The company currently has 250 people, so we are aligning that support with a strong business plan that may involve new hangar space in Prague and Bratislava, where we have waiting lists for aircraft accommodation.” ■



ABS Jets offers a comprehensive maintenance capability in the Czech Republic and is working to expand its type approvals



Good Old Czechs

Around 2,500 Czech airmen flew with the Royal Air Force during World War II, while others served alongside French and Polish comrades and elsewhere. ABS Jets worked with the British embassies in Prague and Bratislava, other UK organisations and experts supporting *Good Old Czechs*, the

movie celebrating the service of Czech pilots František Fajtl and Filip Jánský. It also hosted a gathering of their families in one of its Václav Havel hangars, a structure dating from 1937.

Produced by NOW Productions and distributed by PILOT FILM to selected cinemas in 2022, *Good Old Czechs* will be available on TV channels in 2023 and can be previewed on YouTube, where a trailer

is available. “We’re very proud to have supported the film. Even when we were repositioning the business in response to the latest war in Europe, we believed it was important to find the time and resources to support the community and celebrate our heritage,” Wessnitzer enthuses. “We want to be more than a successful aviation company. We want to be part of the region’s aviation community.” ■



The AW139 offers the ultimate in cabin flexibility

Inimitable Agusta

Leonardo's Agusta VIP helicopter brand is expanding its options and service offer, with Interior Moods, the Agusta for YOU service plan and a dedicated Agusta section in the Leonardo Customer Portal

With a global fleet of more than 900 helicopters carrying out a range of passenger missions, including private, corporate and VIP/government transport, charter and scheduled services, and a 40% share in the multi-engine VIP helicopter

market, Leonardo is the global leader in the sector. The launch of the Agusta VIP brand in late 2021 confirmed Leonardo's commitment to provide its private transport helicopter customers with distinguished characteristics and to stay at the forefront of the sector, with the fastest helicopters, the latest technology, highly customised solutions and configurations, and inimitable Italian

style. Agusta is a brand that represents the values of Leonardo VIP/corporate customers and embodies their desire for excellence and quality – including during their flight experience.

Based on elements introduced by the A109 light twin helicopter in the 1970s and continued into subsequent successful passenger transport-configured helicopters over the years, the AW609

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Florence Interior Moods option for the AW169



London Interior Moods option for the AW169



New York Interior Moods option for the AW169

tiltrotor – which in a few years will become the world’s first tiltrotor approved for civilian use, initially in the US and later Europe and other regions – will become the highest expression of the Agusta brand. It will revolutionise point-to-point air travel, uniquely combining helicopter-like vertical take-off and landing and hovering capability with fixed-wing turboprop performance, including speed, range and altitude.

The new Agusta brand, extensively promoted at major business aviation events in Europe, Latin America and North America this year, updates its sought-after, distinctive look by adding more solutions and services, accompanied with technological advances. Plans for new Agusta options and services dedicated to VIP/corporate helicopter operators include the Interior Moods layouts, a new integrated maintenance service plan and a dedicated Agusta section in the Leonardo Customer Portal.

Interior Moods, initially created for the AW169, AW139 and AW189 helicopters, consists of three all-new layout options, inspired by the names of iconic cities. They are designed to allow customers to create their ideal environment, mirroring their personality while meeting their needs – from the sense of warmth, harmony and purity of ‘Florence’, to the juxtaposition of opposites like tradition and innovation in ‘London’ and the energy and passion shown by ‘New York’ with its cosmopolitan cross-fertilisation of habits and behaviours.

Leonardo’s design team, which has worked for years with customers around the world, has the expertise to advise clients on the perfect mix of features and high-quality furnishings for its helicopters, designing the exterior and interior to create a bespoke aircraft with a distinctive signature. Customers can enhance their flying experience by selecting seat configurations and options, colours, materials and moods, with technology at their fingertips. Every detail is brought to life through the finest Italian craftsmanship, creating an environment that expresses luxury, style and refinement.

The new Agusta for YOU service plan, developed specifically to meet the needs of corporate rotorcraft operators, is

The AW609 tiltrotor will become the pinnacle of the Agusta aircraft offer



intended to increase aircraft availability and reduce inventory costs, while optimising expenses by covering both scheduled and unscheduled maintenance of airframe/avionics components and other items. Types initially supported include the AW109 GrandNew, AW169 and AW139; the plan will extend to other platforms in the future. The package includes complete coverage for scheduled and unscheduled events, delivered when and where needed. It covers Agusta-branded helicopters for a five-year period or the specified maximum number of flight hours after delivery, whichever occurs first.

In addition, on the Leonardo Helicopter Customer Portal, VIP operators will have access to an area where they can check on the progress and status of their aircraft's manufacturing and testing, with images and in real time.

Overall, these advancements are aimed at delivering exclusivity and making ownership and operation of an Agusta helicopter a true 360-degree experience from day one. ■

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Faciens Universa Simplex...

Making Everything Simple

The Mente Group and Four Corners Aviation, its aircraft management arm, are looking towards expansion in 2023 and beyond as they build on Freedom, a unique proposition for corporate jet customers

Now its President and CEO, Brian Proctor founded Mente Group in 2009. An organisation of unexpected depth and surprising capability, Mente Group bears a name that warrants explanation. “When we were setting the company up, three of us sat in a conference room for a couple of days brainstorming a name. We had my attorney on speed dial to see if we could register the name, Jetnet up to see if the name was used in the industry, and we were checking the web to see if we could get the domain. On the first day, we looked at every possible combination of ‘jet’, ‘aviation’, ‘solution’...

“There was a problem with every name we tried. I’d had enough by the end of the day. But I’d studied Latin for four years in high school and I still had my dictionary, so I brought it in next morning. We started looking at ‘air’, ‘bird’, ‘flight’, anything aviation related. Then we looked at ‘speed’, ‘quick’ and other adjectives before I suggested looking at thought, because we’re a thoughtful company. The root word for thought in Latin is ‘mentis’. The ablative case is ‘mente’, meaning ‘with thought’ or ‘with intellect’, and it worked.”

Fast forward to 2022 and Proctor says Mente is all about customers. “We are aviation enthusiasts, we love airplanes and we love flying, but aviation is just the tool we use to help make the world

smaller for our customers, to help them enjoy life and live more abundantly.”

Making the complex simple

Look closer and it’s obvious that Mente’s focus is on easing its customers’ transactional journey through aviation. “Around here we like to say that we take the complex and make it simple. When we were working the concept for our recent Four Corners Aviation acquisition, we stopped for 15 minutes to think how many contracts an owner would need to enter into to buy an airplane, operate it for five years and then sell it. We came up with 56 contracts. Mente clears that complexity away; we make clients aware of the costs, eliminating as many of the

potential surprises upfront as we can. We want to give them a better ownership experience without taking the fun out of buying an airplane.”

Another important aspect of the Mente philosophy is to ensure the customer is buying what they really need, even if that means not securing an aircraft deal. “It does nobody any good if they discover six months down the line that the airplane’s costing way more than they expected,” Proctor says. “Worse, they could discover it can’t do the things they wanted. We spend a lot of time checking airplanes can operate safely from the airports clients want to use while meeting all their other needs. Then we put the best acquisition method in front of them, whether charter, fractional, whole ownership or fleet.”

Over the 20 years of his aviation career, Proctor says clients have become smarter and aviation more prevalent, so the major part of the educational process is now around understanding cost. “Interestingly, we’ve tracked residual values for a long time – our database has more than 1 million data points – and to us that’s the primary cost driver. We present our clients with the best, worst and most likely value they’ll see after five years so they can build the best business case around those scenarios.”

Mente Group is therefore with its clients from the moment of their first enquiry, through the full complexity of acquisition, to aircraft delivery. And the journey doesn’t need to end there. Proctor explains: “We can also manage their entire airplane operation, either through our Four Corners management arm, or Mente 360, which provides an ongoing, retained consulting arrangement.”

Four Corners Aviation

Mente Group’s customers have the option of placing their aircraft with Four Corners as a complete management platform, including charter if they desire. Proctor expects the managed fleet to be close on 20 aircraft by the end of 2022 and reports sustainable growth targets for the organisation. “We’ve built out infrastructure and feel we could manage up to 30 airplanes. We don’t ever want to be in a position where the infrastructure is chasing the fleet, so we’ll add more people when we go beyond 30. Right now, we’re perhaps a little overstaffed, but when you think of everything that

goes into managing an airplane, I’d rather be overstaffed than even a little bit understaffed. It’s too critical an asset to ever get it wrong. Our policy is to find the best people in the industry and give them what they need to drive a very safe, client-focussed operation.”

The management platform has aircraft across the US and that national footprint is set to expand. Proctor is confident that 2023 will see Four Corners exploring possibilities for managing aircraft in Europe too. “We’ve found people like the ethos we present and we’re able to leverage what we’ve been doing well for so long at Mente into Four Corners,” he says.

Freedom

Charter or, more accurately access to business aviation, is an important component in the Four Corners management offer. Its website claims to offer ‘a new way to fly’, but that’s a sentiment relatively commonly expressed among operators. Proctor is expansive in response when challenged to justify the claim.

“We invest a lot of our energy in de-commoditising charter by working very closely with our customers and we believe we’ll make inroads with our new Freedom programme. It turns corporate jets from an ownership model into a

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services model. Think of Microsoft Office... 15 years ago we bought discs and loaded the software, but today you have a subscription with Microsoft. We think that's where the corporate jet industry will go for multiple reasons, but primarily because it changes the capitalisation structure behind the delivery model.

"If we look back to the mid-1970s, a Gulfstream II cost roughly US\$2.5 million and the operating cost would have been somewhere between \$500,000 and \$750,000 per year, about 20% of the capital. Today, if you bought a G700 at \$78 million, the operating cost is likely to be between \$5 million and \$6 million, so the capital has outstripped the operating costs by a significant amount. Where companies are thinking about a return on equity or return on capital investment, if you can return the capital back to the business and they can use it somewhere else where they're getting a significant return, it creates instant value.

"The Freedom programme gives clients access to an airplane with the same pilots and same facilities. We can basically outsource the whole operation,

including the capital, and provide them with an agreement that enables them to have a similar level of service without the capital involved. It moves the airplane from a balance sheet item to a profit and loss item, takes away some of the potential ownership stigma because they are no longer the registered owner, and they know the monthly charge and hourly lease charges are going to be the same over five years when they sign the contract. It eliminates lots of the variability in aircraft ownership and it is primarily for the client's use although if they want, we can charter it when the scheduling works."

At the end of the five years, the client can simply end the agreement if they want to, but Mente Group's expertise has been integrated with Four Corners to provide an ongoing dialogue that ensures the programme continues to evolve with their changing needs, meaning they are more likely to stay with an optimised solution.

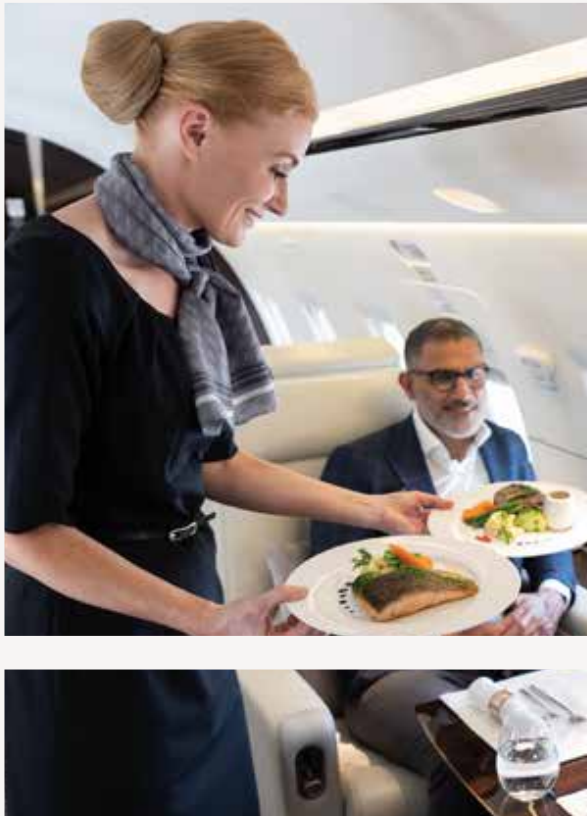
Aquila Aviation Ventures

Mente Group partnered with a private equity company to kickstart the Freedom programme, forming Aquila Aviation

Ventures as a holding company. Proctor contributed Mente to the arrangement, while another partner contributed Millbrook Air and Pioneer. Four Corners was created as a new operating company with Pioneer beneath it and just prior to the NBAA-BACE show in October, Ultra Air was acquired, also for incorporation under Four Corners – its integration should be complete by year end.

The combination of Mente Group, Four Corners and Aquila as an investment vehicle is powerful and Proctor is planning for continued growth. "Right now, we're targeting several other companies in terms of acquisition and this time next year I wouldn't be surprised to see information companies, real estate, FBO and MRO assets under the umbrella."

Mente gives every appearance of becoming a one-stop business aviation shop. Proctor says the team is even studying the possibility of acquiring a pilot placement agency, but reckons some elements, especially in the aviation legal space, will remain outside its interest. "We want to be a broader solutions company, that's the fundamental premise of who we are and where we want to go." ■



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Gateway to Mallorca

Working from its newly refurbished FBO at Palma de Mallorca Airport, Mallorcair is looking forward to expanding its well-established customer offer, as Sales & Safety Manager Xavier Mudoy reveals

The Mallorcair FBO is located well away from the main Palma de Mallorca Airport (ICAO: LEPA) buildings in a dedicated general aviation area. Does this provide easy access to ramp space?

We are located inside the general aviation terminal, adjacent to the ramp where most of our traffic is parked. The FBO can accommodate around 50 aircraft, although the largest, and those staying for a longer period, may park in other areas.

What aircraft types do you see?

We are most familiar with the Citations, but we also see Embraer products, while Gulfstream, Challenger and Global models usually represent the big jets.

What facilities can passengers expect to find at the FBO?

We have free high-speed Wi-Fi available for all customers. They also have access to drinks – soft and alcoholic, including wine and champagne – and we offer snacks. Our VIP bathrooms have showers, and we have a private meeting room and big screens on which passengers can watch any sporting event or film. We began offering free ice cream two years ago and this has become a major attraction, especially for crews and children.

What facilities do you offer crews?

They have a choice of beverages and snacks, and we have tables where they can meet or have lunch. Wireless printing is available as required for those briefing on our computers or their own.

What aircraft handling facilities do you offer, and do you operate your own ground support equipment (GSE)?

Aircraft cleaning, toilet and water services, catering, security, maintenance and hangarage are available, most of it using our own capability and the remainder subcontracted. Our equipment includes ground power units, aircraft tugs, baggage belts, tractors and trolleys. Other GSE is provided through agreements with the major handling providers at LEPA airport.

What is your fuel provision? Is sustainable aviation fuel available?

We are evolving the fuel situation, but LEPA does not allow us our own fuel truck, so we rely on the existing fuel suppliers, working with them to ensure good service and good prices. We also have a contract with

Air bp, through which we offer fuel at very competitive prices.

Covid seriously affected the industry and remains a challenge in some regions. Spain (and Europe more widely) were badly hit. How did Mallorcair work through the crisis and how is your business looking now?

Although 2020 was difficult for everybody, Mallorcair never closed completely. We kept the FBO open as an essential business and kept all our customers updated on the Covid situation and the legal requirements for entering Spain.

We also had some based aircraft that needed maintenance and we handled a few movements, including ambulance, transplant and repatriation flights. The two months when general traffic was permitted were very busy, but overall, 2020 was very bad for business. We had a good year in 2021 though, as traffic picked up because so few commercial flights were available.

You have a network of trusted suppliers through which you offer VIP services across Spain. How are they selected and how do you ensure they maintain the standards your customers expect?

We only work with the best. They may cost a little more, but we know this is the only way to ensure service meets our standards. Aire Catering; Marques VIP Transfers; Melia; Iberostar; AC Marriot, for hotel bookings; and Europcar and SIXT for car rental, are just some examples among many. They know what we need and how we want things done.

What can you say about your FBO staff?

Our core team has been with us many years, some as long as three decades. We work hard to attract new talent and retain it, because we understand that really knowing our customers is key.

Are you aviation enthusiasts?

Yes, of course. Mallorcair was established at a time when general aviation in

Europe, and in Spain, was just beginning. We have grown with it and general aviation is now a very important part of LEPA's traffic.

You have an aircraft charter offer. How does it work?

Our broker department takes care of this side of the business, working on demand. We consider ourselves more like 'aircraft finders' since this is not our core business but rather an area where we like to assist our clients. Mallorcair also works with charter companies to help meet clients' needs.

What's next for Mallorcair?

We have almost finished completely refurbishing the FBO facilities. Once this is done, we will focus on acquiring more GSE, to make us more autonomous and able to provide even better service to our customers. Our staff remain our most important asset, their wellbeing and training our primary goal. We were already IS-BAH Stage 1 certified and we will work to get Stage 2 accreditation soon. ■

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Food is critical to VIP cabin service and therefore an essential component in cabin attendant training. DaVinci Inflight Training Institute

Elevating Service

In the first of a series examining training in business and VIP aviation, *EVA* looks at cabin service training, through the eyes of Debbie Elliott, Training Manager at TAG Global Training and John Detloff, COO at the DaVinci Inflight Training Institute

“Cabin service involves the delivery of food and beverages onboard, the aesthetics of the cabin and any service recovery the inflight crew needs to address,” explains Debbie Elliott, Training Manager at Farnborough, UK-based TAG Global Training. While this type of service training is the focus of this article, Elliott emphasises the importance of safety to cabin attendant training: “Safety is paramount on every course we deliver. Crew resource management was devised decades ago to heighten the awareness of the role human factors play in aviation safety and is covered extensively under our Standard Operating Procedures and Safety Emergency Procedures and Security courses. Pre-Covid, we did

deliver Global Service Excellence, a course covering only service training, but the landscape of training requirements has changed and most operators now deliver this element of instruction in-house, with their own teams, to create a unique selling point for their clients.”

TAG Global Training delivers its courses under TAG Aviation’s Approved Training Organisation status. They include initial and recurrent training for TAG Aviation crew and the company’s 138 third-party operators. The choice of course depends on the student’s needs, since some crew coming to Farnborough are moving between operators and have previously completed a degree of training; others may only need to refresh their qualifications. When crew arrive at the Farnborough facility, they already have business aviation experience and commercial-to-private aviation training

is therefore not high on TAG Global Training’s agenda.

Florida’s DaVinci Training Institute does, however, deliver such courses, and ab initio instruction, as Chief Operating Officer John Detloff explains: “We offer initial flight attendant training, commercial-to-corporate flight attendant training and recurrent training. Although we have to teach to FAA Part 135 and Part 91 guidelines, our instruction provides students with more hands-on training and a different approach.

“Our Initial and Commercial to Corporate classes give students that hands-on training in their job duties as well as preparing them for the higher level of service that is needed in corporate aviation, while also providing them with a real understanding of what it will be like when they begin their career.”

Like Elliott, Detloff also expresses the fundamental importance of safety: “Many commercial flights, for example, have

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more than one flight attendant on board and an individual may not be in charge of the catering. We strive to give them catering service knowledge and the range of skills necessary to be the only crew member in the back, able to deal with emergency situations including medical, decompressions, fire and much more.”

Farnborough facility

In March 2022, TAG Global Training moved its operation from classrooms within a hangar, to a new facility inside TAG Aviation Europe’s Farnborough Airport headquarters. Elliott masterminded the move and defined how the new facility would look, ensuring it presented a modern, comfortable learning environment while reflecting Farnborough’s historic aviation past. “It has been well received by our students,” she enthuses, “with its amazing airport views and so much natural light. TAG Aviation invested significantly in the move, not only to develop the training we offer TAG crews, but also in recognition of the continued support of our loyal third-party clients from all over the globe.”



DaVinci Inflight Training Institute founding partner **Paula Kraft** specialises in culinary, catering, food safety and catering safety management systems. *DaVinci Inflight Training Institute*



Debbie Elliott (left) at the opening of the TAG Global Training facility that she designed. *TAG Global Training*



Both DaVinci Inflight Training Institute and TAG Global Training offer possibilities for butler training. *DaVinci Inflight Training Institute*

The facility is now the central point for TAG Global Training, and includes a specialist course available to the private staff of ultra-high net worth individuals. Elliott continues: “We recognise that aircraft with 19 seats or less do not legally require cabin crew and the principal passenger will therefore often travel with the staff from their home or yacht providing onboard service, since they are well versed in the individual’s or family’s preferences. Our interactive course does not fulfil the requirements that would qualify these staff as cabin crew, but it does provide them with essential aviation skills, equipping them to better deal with an emergency, assist in an evacuation and be extra sets of eyes and ears for pilots during an onboard situation.”

Of course, the DaVinci Training Institute also offers a variety of courses intended to elevate an individual’s skills beyond what might be considered the basics required for business and VIP aviation cabin service. Its Protocols & Cultural Differences course, for example, has a specific remit of helping students “enhance their cultural awareness, understand global differences and improve their cross-cultural communications”, while



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DaVinci uses this cabin services trainer. DaVinci Inflight Training Institute

several other course options are dedicated to aspects of food preparation and presentation.

They include a Butler Course and an online Private and Business Aviation Food Safety Course that takes around five hours to complete and concludes with a 50-question test in which a student must score at least 75% to pass. In addition to noting that DaVinci is working on more online classes, Detloff also explains that, surprisingly, it offers some free courses, including How to Order Catering and Knife Skills. “However, hands-on training is critical for culinary and service courses and since we want to ensure students walk away with the highest knowledge and skills, these will not go online.”

Hands-on training

Detloff says DaVinci’s culinary courses are designed to the highest industry standards and attract customers from around the world. “Food is the only thing that hits all five senses on the aircraft,

and food is very personal,” he notes. “Our training teaches students how to elevate the palate and about easy items they can use on the aircraft in a pinch. We focus on plating techniques, cooking on board, tools of the trade, and more. Food safety is also very important and that’s why we developed the Private and Business Aviation Food Safety Course, which we do also deliver in person as a class.

“It amazed me when I started in the industry that there were no food safety standards in aviation, yet we serve the top 1% of the world’s population. The course focus is on how to keep food safe on the aircraft and mitigate the risk of someone getting sick from a foodborne illness or allergy. Knowing how to cook, plate and handle food properly is critical in this industry.

“Our Culinary Elite course gives the student an understanding of proper service levels in the cabin and tips on how to elevate the level of service. Our passengers now are much more informed

of proper service levels as the culinary experience and service in the US has evolved to a much higher level. For example, 20 years ago, the most common restaurants were chain restaurants and now the industry is more about farm to table restaurants in which service levels are raised. We train our students in more of a European style of service, so they are able to give their passengers a better experience.”

This higher level of service is also reflected in DaVinci’s Butler Course, which Detloff says, “provides more detail for students looking to elevate their service and show skills in caviar, mixology and white glove service. It is for higher education in growing service confidence and levels.” It is also remarkable that graduates from the DaVinci Inflight Training Institute and TAG Global Training deliver these elevated service levels while retaining potentially life-saving safety skills. How that is achieved will be examined in a subsequent article. ■

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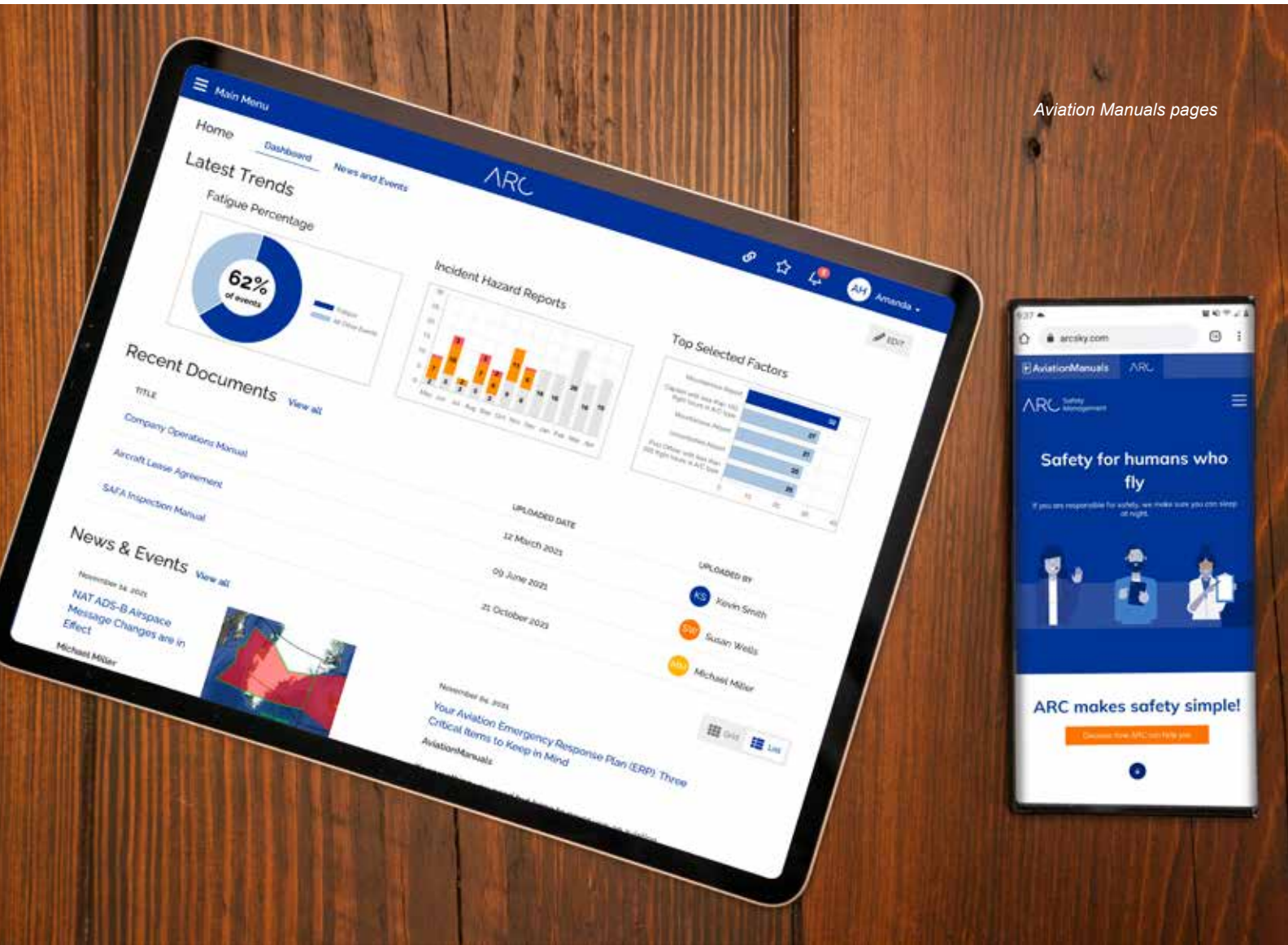
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Proactive Safety

Aviation Manuals positions itself as an extension of the flight department, with an emphasis on safety and regulatory document management, as CEO Mark Baier explains



Aviation Manuals pages

At its foundation in 1996, Aviation Manuals set out to provide physical, paper manuals every quarter, with intermediate bulletins and updates supplied by email attachment. Today, CEO Mark Baier says: “We handle everything from document

management to content changes, updates and more. We’re almost an extension to each flight department, as if they are outsourcing their regulatory document management and safety management system [SMS].”

Customers pay an annual subscription and set-up is quick. There is an initial training period and ongoing support,

including training videos, while the system identifies when a customer is not inputting sufficient new data – at which point the Aviation Manuals team reaches out to them.

Baier continues: “Many of the operators we support are much like a smaller airline in that they are subject to a lot of regulatory requirements, but they

just don't have the bandwidth to stay on top of it. A large airline has its own regulatory department that takes care of it, doing the research and keeping the operation compliant; we take care of that for our customers.

"We do the research and push content out to them. Some of the research is automated, where the system picks up new regulatory content, but we also have a team of researchers, who read publications and regulations regularly. The system flags changes and we are notified of others, but some information is buried in documents that are distributed regularly, some is provided to us via a notification from the regulator, and all of it has to be integrated into the content we provide our clients to keep their manuals accurate."

The same is true of SMS. Baier comments: "An SMS is already mandatory for the airlines and we expect that for Part 135 commercial private aviation soon. It's about using SMS to provide predictability so that rather than waiting for something

to happen, analysing what happened and changing behaviour after the fact, risky behaviour is identified and changed before it becomes an incident." Just like predictive maintenance, SMS is about watching patterns and observing trends.

Hosting

Documents are hosted on Aviation Manuals' ARCdocs platform, and the company constantly highlights to its customers where regulations have changed and where other updates to their manuals have occurred. Baier explains: "We discovered that many operators were using non-aviation specific document hosting sites, like Google shared drive or Dropbox, so we developed ARCdocs as our own hosting platform. Everything is uploaded to ARCdocs. It has version control, auto-updates and push notifications built in, so operators are constantly aware of changes and they can log in and request changes to their documentation, which we then handle for them."

Some customers use the ARCquiz facility, which sets test for relevant stakeholders ensuring they have seen, and been tested on the content of, updates. There is also provision for read notifications and initial version control tracking, and when a customer logs in, the app checks to ensure they have the latest version of the documentation. There is even an internal audit option.

Considering the types of data customers might add, Baier says some derives from specific risk analysis. "It could be based on the risk they associate with redeploying an aircraft after maintenance or flying a particular mission and it's likely to differ between operators. A company flying regularly into a mountainous airport may not see that type of flying as carrying an elevated risk, but for a company not regularly flying into mountains it would involve a risk they needed to assess. It doesn't mean they wouldn't fly there, just that they would add parameters to the manual to bring that risk down."

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Mark Baier, CEO, Aviation Manuals

Other data reflects risk outside the operator’s control: a new, awkwardly placed lighting stanchion at an airport, for example. “Here they could use our Reporting Tool, where they can identify hazards, incidents or management changes that could impact risk levels. The information can be made available to everyone in the organisation and any necessary changes to the operation prescribed. These then flow back into operating procedures and so the organisation has changed the way it operates to mitigate the risk.”

SMS analysis

Some customers have analysed Aviation

Manuals’ SMS data to identify the causes of non-safety related trends and act to remove those causes in a way that benefits their whole operation. Baier provides the example of a small company where the pilots had been trained to hangar the aircraft at the end of missions using an electric tug.

“They were seeing increased incidents of hangar rash, so the pilots were given more training. It was also noticed that the post-flight debriefs were taking too long to be submitted to operations, so they were given extra support and training there too. The SMS showed that both types of incident were occurring after the same sorts of flight. The data showed the issues

had nothing to do with training, but were fatigue related.

“So, after long flights they had technicians hangar the aircraft and gave the crews an extra 24 hours to file their reports. When those long flights started to occur more often, the crews went to the management and explained they were making fuel stops and running up against their duty times, so they needed either an aircraft that could go non-stop or an extra crewmember. They changed the way they operated based on the platform’s SMS.”

Aviation Manuals has several customers with large fleets, but Baier says it is equally applicable to companies flying just one aircraft – and perhaps even more so, because these operations are likely to have fewer staff. “They don’t have the bandwidth or resources, they’re busy flying and, quite frankly, they don’t want to have someone dedicated to worrying about the regulations; it’s not what they do best. I’d say the majority of our clients operate between one and three aircraft, with no more than eight people in the flight department, but then we do have some with more than 300 aircraft. We support around 4,500 tails worldwide.”

Many of those tails reside with general aviation operators flying mixed fleets in different market sectors. Jets, helicopters and turboprops commonly share hangar space, while drones are becoming increasingly important, and Aviation Manuals is applicable across them all. Recently, it has become a useful FBO tool too. “We’ve had people in the food safety, energy management and other industries approach us because they recognise that aircraft operations are so far ahead from a safety compliance and regulatory perspective,” Baier reveals.

“It’s the same for FBOs: they benefit from all the knowledge and experience from aircraft operations. What we’ve built for them is based on aircraft regulations and SMS, but adapted to include procedures for fuelling, how catering is ordered and food stored, customer service and customer success. It’s important because FBOs are part of the safety chain, and because operators are starting to request policies and procedures before they choose to use an FBO. On a field where there are three FBOs, those without good policies and procedures are at a competitive disadvantage.” ■



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The Cirrus Vision Jet G2 is the cornerstone of Verijet's operation

Disruptive Vision

Richard Kane, CEO of Verijet, applied his AI routing technology and deep industry knowledge to create a new business aviation concept based on the Cirrus Vision Jet

Even in an industry as innovative as business aviation, Richard Kane, CEO of Verijet, stands out. Also Founder and Chairman of Coastal Technologies Group, which he created in 1996, he is a mathematician and expert in high-speed computing, AI and telecommunications. Inspired to learn to fly after a visit to the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon in North London,

UK, he is also a pilot. Those factors combined, led him to establish Verijet.

“I was offering software as a service for call routing, handling 100 million calls per hour, and my patents were also cited by aviation entities,” he recalled. “It was clear there was some overlap with fleet and route optimisation and Dr Peter Diamandis, one of my board members, and I got to thinking about what else we could do with this routing firepower. We were both pilots, so we had a natural bent for combining our passions.

“We found that business jet operators were flying 40% empty. They were making money by charging customers for the aircraft flying out and back, and wasting incredible amounts of fuel. For the past 15 years, some US floating fleet operators have been running my AI platform and it took them from 40% empty down to 20% empty, saving enough energy to charge 98 billion cell phones per month and tons of carbon.”

Kane also calculated that for flights of

less than 600 miles, the average passenger load was 1.8 people. And the average speed was only 243kt because, over short routes, jets were not reaching cruising altitudes and airspace restrictions were keeping speeds down. Kane uses the 200-mile trip from Santa Monica to Las Vegas as an example and it is immediately obvious that a conventional business jet cannot be efficient under his average calculated conditions. The runway at Santa Monica is also too short for many jets.

Vision Jet

Ever logical, Kane saw an opportunity for an operator flying an optimised jet using his routing AI. Ever resourceful, he established Verijet to deliver that service. It required a unique aircraft and Kane identified that in the Cirrus Vision Jet G2, a small, distinctive machine capable of the shorter flights he envisaged.

The Vision Jet is inherently safe, but for those rare occasions when emergencies happen, it is equipped with the Cirrus Airframe Parachute System and safe return autoland equipment for lesser emergencies. Passengers and pilots like to know their aircraft is safe, but the Vision Jet is also small and has an unusual look compared to more conventional jet designs. Customers could be forgiven for being sceptical at first glance – and Kane says that in

addition, as much as 20% of Verijet’s customers are afraid of flying anyway. He reckons the best way to overcome their fear is to fly them.

To make the point, he read an email he received just prior to speaking with *EVA*. The customer wrote: “I completed my first flight this weekend. I brought with me my wife, my five-year old son and my mother-in-law so they could experience Verijet. I had precious cargo travelling with me. I can’t say enough positive things about our first experience. One of us was a bit unsure about flying in such a small plane prior to the weekend but felt totally comfortable by the end of the return trip thanks to our pilots and the smooth flights we had.”

‘Smooth’ is an adjective passengers frequently apply to the Vision Jet, which features active turbulence suppression via the strakes on the fuselage underside, which appear as continuations of the butterfly tail and give a truncated ‘X’ shape. “It’s the right machine for the job, Kane said. “It’s made of carbon fibre, so it doesn’t suffer metal fatigue on multiple short hops. And it’s very quiet, burns very little fuel and we are carbon neutral through 4AIR.”

Today, Verijet has a fleet of 23 aircraft in the US, of which 18 are Vision Jet G2s in revenue service; two more are scheduled to be available by the end of December. Kane anticipates operating a fleet of 120 by 2025 and confirmed that



Richard Kane, CEO, Verijet

Verijet is coming to Europe soon. “We’re building our team and getting ready,” he said. “It’s the next big step.” ■

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*Krister Genmark,
VP of Sales, Web
Manuals*

“The younger generation is not going to be ok with taking three minutes to find what they’re looking for. They want more than a Word file or a PDF, they want a modern tool that can be learned quickly and is easy to use”

Go Digital!

Web Manuals delivers a digital product, but VP of Sales, Krister Genmark, says people – customers and staff – are the vital element in its success

“Manuals are often static documents that don’t really live. It’s so complicated to make changes that operators refrain from doing it. If it’s approved and ok with the authorities it’s easy to think ‘we’re good, we can put it on the shelf’. Web Manuals gives operators a tool to continuously improve. From a safety management perspective, being able to change continuously is the key,” says Krister Genmark, Web Manuals’ VP of Sales.

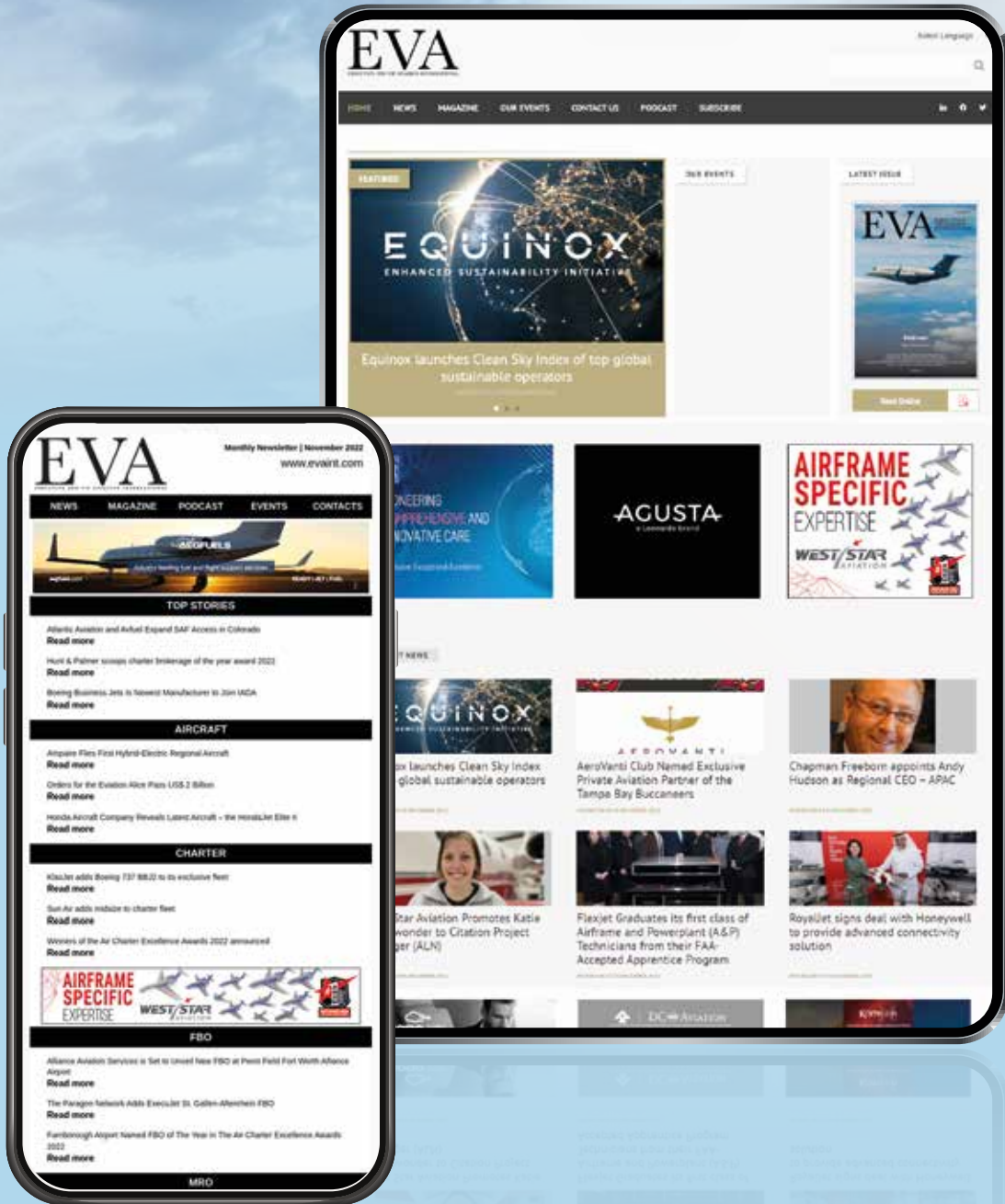
Safety is imperative, and Web Manuals provides its customers with the tools to incorporate regulatory change – as well as updates from all aspects of their operation. “It could be security, flight operations, maintenance, even employee handbooks, strictly HR-related content,” Genmark notes. “Many of our customers start with a specific need; let’s say they need to amend their flight operations manual ready for approval, and then they realise how easy the tool is to use for any type of content. That’s when they incorporate ground operations manuals, safety manuals, employee handbooks and more.”

Web Manuals is then involved in managing changes to those incorporated manuals through three routes. “We’ll tell them when there’s a regulatory change and they’ll be able to see where it’s connected to their content. When a regulator changes a rule, it triggers a warning and the operator knows where it affects their manuals, and we even highlight how that change was expressed. Internal changes are handled differently, but if an operator makes an internal change the system notifies them if it also impacts on a regulation.

“To illustrate the third instance, imagine a safety manager who has

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received several reports involving ground incidents with tugs. As a result, they make a change in the ground operations manual content describing how to operate the tugs. That work flow, from change request to the change, and approval and distribution, is also included in the system.”

Once a changed document is published, it is distributed to users through the Web Manuals web interface or app, with a read and sign receipt helping compliance managers ensure everyone who needs to has seen the update. Essentially, internal changes are created within and approved by an operator, always considering regulation, while the Web Manuals team keeps a close eye on the regulations and ensures customers are informed of changes.

Digital discovery

Web Manuals delivers a robust, proven system that is in use with private aviation customers including ACI Jet and DC Aviation, airlines and offshore helicopter operators. In March 2022 it achieved its tenth anniversary and Genmark reflects that how customers interface with it has changed considerably during the decade. “The biggest change is the mobility factor – they can work anywhere now, on content, on regulatory changes and just reading the manuals.” But technology moves rapidly and a new generation of aviation professionals who grew up with iPads is now emerging.

Genmark enthuses: “There is so much we can do and it’s pretty exciting. A manual today is still a manual, based on the concept of the original paper manual. We’ve taken the paper manual into a digital format, but it looks more or less the same. I think that’s where we’ll see a lot of change moving forwards.

“And as the regulatory authorities evolve, we need to consider how we approve a document. Is it page-by-page, heading-by-heading, or chapter-by-chapter? How does that work? Some authorities are exploring how this can be done differently and with them and our customers we’re trying to be on the edge of pushing change.

“Then there’s the possibility for incorporating other media and thinking about distribution. Video and 3D graphics, especially in maintenance manuals, could be useful, and we need to think about how people are viewing the content. It used to

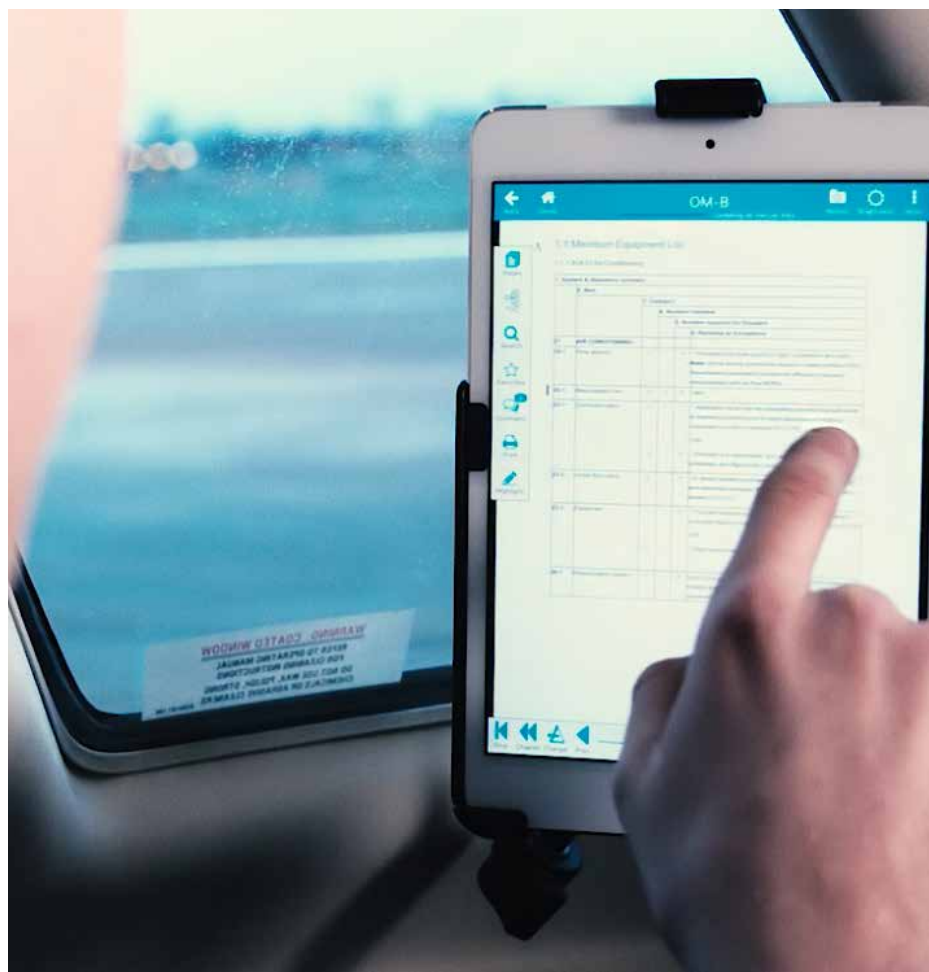
be that the iPad was the only option for the cockpit, but then cabin crew began using Android tablets, and there are phones, smaller tablets and larger tablets and we need to consider how best those can be used.”

It is also true that young aviation professionals are not satisfied with an essentially digitised paper manual. They expect to fully interact with an easily accessible, searchable document and Genmark sees manuals moving away from the essentially folder-based structure used today. “The younger generation is not going to be ok with taking three minutes to find what they’re looking for. They want more than a Word file or a PDF: they want a modern tool that can be learned quickly and is easy to use. We see that during the buyer’s journey and during training. Today’s buyers are already very educated when they come to us and then, when we get to the training, they are all ‘let’s go!’ Expectation has been the biggest change over the decade.”

People first

‘Digitize Before Flight’ says Web Manuals’ marketing material, but it is the people behind the slogan that make the product what it is. Even before Covid, it was not unusual for IT companies and app developers to employ a dispersed workforce, spread globally and often working from home. During the worst of the pandemic, homeworking became essential for many people, and several companies stepped almost seamlessly and very quickly away from the office.

Web Manuals was among them, yet it has a headquarters in Sweden and offices in the US and Singapore. And its people go there to work. The obvious question is why, when the company could avoid paying for all that space? “I love working for Web Manuals because of the team feeling of our tight-knit community,” Genmark begins. “When the pandemic hit, we had to close the offices. We were global and we had all the tools to work remotely; I was already



The Web Manuals product



Web Manuals has more cause than most to celebrate International Women's Day. This image is from the 2021 event

using Zoom and Teams to communicate from the US office with the Swedish office, customers and prospects.

“So, I carried on doing that, but as soon as I could, I went back to the office. It was only me at the start, but then the sales manager came back and it was the two of us. As a company I’d say the big challenge was not being in the same room. Not being able to have the conversations that lead to so much, whether it’s development, productivity or anything else. Personally, I believe you can replace an in-person meeting, but you can’t replace the organic conversation that happens over lunch, during the walk from one place to another, or with a coffee. I think innovation generally will suffer if companies go from a previously close, collaborative environment to relying on remote working long term.”

But there are benefits. Web Manuals had offered a reasonable degree of flexibility to its employees, but many expressed their liking for the additional flexibility of remote working. Genmark confirms: “Now we have a policy for

working from home when it’s convenient and doesn’t take away the time we have together.” The Web Manuals staff is very close to a 50:50 balance between men and women, in part thanks to the flexibility the company already had, which enables people with child care responsibilities the opportunity to achieve a good family/work balance.

“Every team leader is able to work with their team’s hours to ensure that balance,” Genmark says. “Children are extremely important in that. No parent is happy if they feel they are neglecting their children.” He also agrees that appreciating an applicant’s family commitments and offering them a job that works with their family means Web Manuals opens itself up to a deeper talent pool and is more likely to find the very best people, regardless of gender. “We want the right person, whatever their circumstances are.”

What do those ‘right people’ ‘look’ like? Genmark is obviously proud when he replies: “It’s a real mix. We have sales people from Apple, ex-pilots who want to stay in the industry, current pilots who

fly on a private licence and people who are just crazy about aviation, including one who keeps me informed whenever she sees a real estate ad for airport offices with hangar space so we could have our own airplane! Then there’s the cultural mix – I think we speak close to 30 languages within the company. Overall, we have some extremely bright people who create this amazing product.”

Web Manuals also likes to look after and engage with its customers, long term. “We have initial training and then lots of resources in the tool and outside, plus the website. Then it’s about keeping them engaged, constantly producing new material and running webinars. We’re launching our community forum where we invite customers to enter a digital world of sharing experiences and the content we produce. And we have our Go Digital conferences, in the US, Europe and, recently, for the first time, in Asia-Pacific – in New Zealand. We’ll launch more next year. That’s when customers really engage with the product and we make sure they contribute to development moving forward.” ■

Shifted Perception

Just a few years ago, women were very much the exception in the aviation industry.

Although it remains male dominated, business aviation is attracting more women than ever before, and they showcase the diversity of opportunities it offers. *EVA* spoke with four women working in diverse roles across four very different organisations

Claudia Arnold
Senior Director of Marketing,
AEGFUELS

What was your route into marketing?

I've always been passionate about telling a story through branding and visual design. Ever since I was young, I've had my creativity inspired by designing logos and creating brand elements. That passion turned into my career because marketing allows me to tell those stories and connect with audiences through my work every day.

What brought you to the aviation industry?

I started working at Fontainebleau Aviation's customer service desk in college. After just the first couple months in aviation, I completely fell in love with it. I remember learning the phonetic alphabet and feeling so proud the first time a pilot called through ARINC and I could successfully communicate with them during approach.

I was eventually elevated to Marketing Manager and started travelling around the US promoting the FBO's brand. Along the way I developed strong relationships with industry mentors who took me under their wings and taught me the ropes. After a few years of fun and learning from my peers, I knew aviation was where I wanted to stay.

And what brought you to aviation fuel?

After I completed my graduate degree, I started looking for jobs in the industry that would give me a platform to create, from scratch, a truly global brand and visual corporate identity.

AEG Fuels had a brand that was just beginning to attract notice and operated with a dynamic, fast, start-up mentality. I've had the opportunity to be right at the centre of our brand's development as we created our corporate identity. Now I represent the brand all over the world at tradeshow, conferences and industry events as we work to serve customers on a global scale with a local touch.

Every aircraft needs fuel and every fuel company sells the same product. What makes AEGFUELS special?

We pride ourselves on being a 'solutions' centred organisation and customers rely on our services not just for fuel, but for a suite of offerings targeting every need a flight department could have.

Tax exemptions, on-demand fuel cards, rewards programmes, an international trip planning offering powered by Jeppesen, 24/7 dispatch, an AEG Connect Network of preferred FBOs, and green initiatives that include both carbon offsets and SAF programmes, are all among the solutions AEG offers, in one ready package.



*Claudia Arnold,
Senior Director
of Marketing,
AEGFUELS*

Ultimately though, the relationships we create with our customers have been the key to our success. This is what has made AEG special.

What aspect of the job is most fulfilling?

Seeing our team and business grow gives me great satisfaction. Also hearing customer, partner and vendor feedback after a tradeshow is rewarding.

We know the amount of work that goes into a three-day show that literally flies by and when people notice the little details you spent months organising, that's when you know the job was well done.

I also find passing my knowledge down to the younger generation of aviation professionals to be so gratifying. I am a member of the NBAA's YoPro Council, and we continuously work on advocating for the industry and coaching newcomers.

What do your friends and family think of what you do for a living?

My family and old friends are proud and have supported me every step of the way. New friends need a 30-minute explanation of what I do, because they have so many questions!

If you weren't a fuel marketer, what would you do?

I would still work in the industry, perhaps in customer experience or product/service development.

What do you want to accomplish next?

I want to create a Florida chapter of Women in Aviation International, with a couple of industry professionals that also live in the state, and do community outreach to promote the industry to younger generations.

Have you encountered/do you encounter gender-based bias? Has that changed since you entered the industry?

While I personally have not encountered gender-based bias, I do recognise that it's a problem for all of us in the industry to solve together. I've been fortunate enough to have been mentored by both male and female professionals in senior roles and all have treated me with the highest level of respect, dignity and professionalism. More than anything, I'm happiest to see more women overall entering aviation recently and to be a part of that shift.

Katie Bancroft Associate, Jaffa & Co

The journey to becoming a lawyer is long. What was your experience?

My route was longer than most because I worked full-time and studied after work and at weekends for the entire duration of my legal studies. It took me about ten years in total and it was a difficult balancing act at times. I wouldn't change it though, because the determination and discipline it gave me is invaluable. There's a lot to be said for the confidence and self-belief you gain from taking on, and completing, a massive undertaking.

You specialise in business jets. How did you find this legal niche?

My first firm was based in the busy, commercial maritime hub of Southampton, so it had a marine department. It dealt with everything from refrigerated cargo vessels to superyachts. I really enjoyed the quirks and foibles of that area of law but found the commercial side of marine work hard to get excited about. As my career progressed, I decided to focus on superyachts.

The legal principles underpinning the sale and purchase of superyachts and business jets are fundamentally the same and a client who has a yacht may well also have a jet (and a helicopter), so moving into business aviation was a natural progression.

A combination of the more corporate and organised way the business aviation industry works, the legal nuances of bizav transactions and my irrepressible fascination with the aircraft themselves made everything fall into place. I set about studying business aviation transactions and completed the Irish Law Society's Diploma in Aviation Leasing and Finance. I'd finally found my thing!

What makes Jaffa & Co special?

Our clients tell us we are nice people to work with and we understand that they want to get deals done. We are responsive, we make our clients feel that we are working together as a team and we're unruffled in high-pressure situations.

I've been told more than a few times that I'm a breath of fresh air in the industry and that pleases me. When Jaffa & Co was a very young company (I was its first employee), we were told we were 'industry disrupters'. I quite liked that label too.

What aspect of the job is most fulfilling? Any challenges?

My favourite type of transaction involves what we call a 'green' buyer, someone who has not owned an aircraft before. They are starting from zero and it is really rewarding to guide them through the process, using my network to put them in touch with all the people necessary to buy an aircraft. Then the deal progresses through to delivery and all the parts of the puzzle – the ownership structure, aircraft management, tax arrangements, delivery documentation, finance – fit into place. Then, eventually, the aircraft comes to Farnborough and I'm proud to see it on the ramp.

The challenges usually involve managing many different parties and their expectations. It is not uncommon for the reality of what is happening on the ground to drift out of sync with what the parties have agreed contractually to do. There are also certain tasks or steps in a transaction that are steadfastly immovable and impervious to any external timelines or transactional pressures. We want to find a way to make things work and when there is absolutely no way of making a process quicker or meeting a client's deadline, it can be frustrating.

What do your friends and family think of what you do for a living?

Most of my family have just accepted that I'm a jet geek! I really love when I can show them what I do up close. I remember the first time I completed an aircraft sale. I texted my mum: "I just delivered an aircraft!" and she replied: "How did you do that?"

Everything becomes more tangible when I bring them to Farnborough to see a private airport and the aircraft up close – one of my absolute favourite moments was taking my mum on a flight on a Global 6000 – that's when family members really start to understand why I talk about pre-purchase inspections, corrosion on leading edges and dark wood in a cabin.

My family are really understanding about me occasionally zoning out because an important email has come in or having to take calls at strange times (deals with the US West Coast can be fun).

If you weren't an aviation lawyer, what would you do?

I always wanted to be an archaeologist when I was little. Now, I think I would



*Katie Bancroft,
Associate, Jaffa & Co*

have liked to have been a pilot... business aviation, naturally.

What do you want to accomplish next?

I'm really keen to promote the work we do and I've been speaking with Farnborough Airport about their career days. I'm a big believer in 'you can't be what you can't see'. When I was a girl, I didn't even realise women could be pilots. I never saw a female pilot and

I never entertained the thought that I could do that. I want to tell the next generation that this is something they can do. There are so many different roles in business aviation. We're a fascinating, fast-paced and inspiring industry. I want people to see that.

I also want to become a partner at Jaffa & Co – only 25% of all partners in law firms in England and Wales are women, yet more women are entering the profession than men.

And I have a steadily growing curiosity about qualifying as a lawyer in the US. Something like 73% of business jets are there and I love the idea of getting involved in that.

One day I will start flying lessons too!

Have you encountered/do you encounter gender-based bias? Has that changed since you entered the industry?

Yes, I've encountered gender bias. People working on deals have assumed my more junior male colleague was taking the lead. I've had people question how much I know and 'mansplain'. Silly or inappropriate things have also been said to me that wouldn't have been said to a man.

But I have excellent support from my colleagues, including James Jaffa, the firm's founder, and I if someone doubts me, I just let the deal speak for itself.

Natalie Rodríguez
VVIP Aircraft Interior Designer, Natalie Rodríguez Luxury Design

What brought you into VVIP aircraft cabin design?

I grew up heavily involved in the visual and performing arts, and I knew from a very young age that I wanted to do something creative with my life. I was a competitive dancer, my mother often enrolled me in art programmes for sketching and painting, and we went to museums often. Chatting with my friend in high school, I expressed an interest in interior design as a career. She told me her aunt was an interior designer, but for aircraft, which is when I knew aviation was where I wanted to be. I was 16 years old.

I ended up graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Interior Environmental Design from the University of the Incarnate Word, and during that time I completed my design internship with Gore Design Completions (GDC Technics), working for them as a staff designer while I finished my degree. Most colleagues at the completion centres I've worked in were industrial designers, so starting out I took extra engineering classes, worked to learn the software they used and adapted some of their ways of thinking to keep up with them.

How does one train to become a VVIP cabin designer? Are you as comfortable with yachts and residences?

In our corner of aviation everyone has a different story about how they've gained their knowledge. Speaking from personal experience, I believe it's good to complete a design internship or staff design position to start, with either an aircraft completion centre or OEM, as it's a good preview of what to expect for a long-term career.

Most of my interior design experience is in aviation, and this tends to dominate customer design service requests, although



*Natalie Rodríguez,
VVIP Aircraft Interior
Designer, Natalie
Rodríguez Luxury
Design*

*Rebekah Hill, Wellbeing
& Sustainability Manager,
SaxonAir*



residential design has played a role in my personal career development. Yachts are fresh territory for me – it's a sector I'm exploring more based on recent enquiries.

You previously worked with AERIA, Citadel and others. What made you go solo?

Going solo was not an aspiration of mine, and I would have been perfectly happy staying with one company for as long as possible. Things started shifting after the pandemic in 2020. Two years later I decided to take a leap of faith, and it is the scariest, most rewarding thing that I've done in my career thus far. Scary because of the uncertainties that come with running one's own practice, rewarding because there is something so special about engraving each experience with your name, brand and personal energy, whether it's a design package, presentation, business card or phone call.

How do designers and engineers work together?

In aviation, there is constant collaboration between design and engineering, and it's imperative that good communication and mutual respect is established. It is good for a designer to think ahead and anticipate what engineering might say about a certain design element and have a couple of solutions for how design might make the item work. It's also good for engineering to anticipate pushing the envelope when design suggests things that may seem out of the ordinary. Many times I'll communicate an idea concurrent with engineering, and I'll talk the customer request through with them and receive their input on what might be the best ways for us to go about achieving the goal.

How can you be expert in all aspects of cabin design and exterior paint schemes?

There are so many elements that go into bringing a design to life, but everything is interconnected in some way. For instance, space planning addresses the science of how the passenger will move through the space and how well the space will work, and architectural features and styling requests often affect the space planning.

The interior styling, interior functionality and aircraft mission affect the materials selected. Sometimes there are very specific requests for lighting, and these must also be considered when selecting materials. The

overall design can influence how the finishing touches are treated, including crockery, pillows, bedding and other amenities. Customers tend to be very specific about the customisation of these items too, and it tends to be a similar case with exterior paint.

What aspect of the job is most fulfilling? Any challenges?

The conceptual development phase is fun because it's a period of discovery and creativity, while refining to get to the final design is exciting because it's like carving the final details of a sculpture. When the design goes to build, seeing everything come to life and following the programme from start to finish is always rewarding and surreal, knowing some ideas that were originally sketched on paper are now being built, going through testing, and getting ready to fly.

Challenges come in many forms, from supply chain, to changes in the design post approval, or anything that comes up on the engineering or production side. I plan ahead as much as possible to avoid delays and work closely with team members to ensure everything stays the course. The most satisfying part is the customer's excitement when their final design is delivered. I just feel so blessed and thankful to be able to do what I love every day.

What do your friends and family think of what you do for a living?

My friends and family are proud and tend to think it's a very cool, unusual and specific job. I get lots of questions on what my day-to-day looks like, as well as what's the craziest thing someone has asked for, etc, but there's a lot I can't disclose and that's treated with respect within my circles.

If you didn't design VVIP cabins, what would you do?

I've found superyacht interiors interesting from the similarities with aircraft, and I also enjoy the thoughtfulness that goes into luxury automotive. If not design, then I'm certain my job would have something to do with dance or international travel.

What do you want to accomplish next?

I'm very much looking forward to growing my design practice, continuing my speciality in VVIP Boeing and Airbus aircraft completions and refurbishment, and providing design support for a variety of other business jets as well.

Have you encountered/do you encounter gender-based bias? Has that changed since you entered the industry?

I have yet to encounter true gender-based bias and I think it's a wonderful time to be a woman in the workplace – especially in the aviation industry. Gender differences are something I'm mindful of when working with customers in other parts of the world who might have a different outlook, although I've

seen a positive shift over the years. I mostly do my research to ensure that respectful gestures and cultural manners are put into practice, as well as researching the roles that women play in the given country.

Rebekah Hill
Wellbeing & Sustainability Manager,
SaxonAir

You hadn't planned for an aviation career. What's the story?

I started at SaxonAir as an admin assistant, thinking I'd find something fairly easy to do alongside my Open University psychology degree. Once I'd got a taste for aviation, and specifically SaxonAir, I realised this was an amazing industry to be in. I was promoted to Executive Assistant and then Admin Manager of a small team, and after being involved in several projects with Alex Durand, our CEO, I did a short course on sustainability and climate change. My role was then created around the work I was already doing.

You're Wellbeing & Sustainability Manager. Is there a pioneering element to the job?

I would say so. The wellbeing side is something I've always had a passion for, which is why I studied psychology alongside work, and here it's about considering people as individuals and not just employees, something that many businesses miss. Alex and SaxonAir's owners have always been

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SaxonAir's Rebekah Hill (left)

very much interested in and passionate about their people, and that has allowed me to be creative and unrestricted in the role. It's the same with the sustainability element, which is now a company value. It started as an interest and quickly became a focus and a role of its own, with the full support of both the owners and directors.

What does your day-to-day look like?

The job is as much about engaging internally with employees and departments as it is sharing what we are working on externally with our clients and partners. It's important for us all to really understand and buy into the work we are doing on sustainability. There is a responsibility right down to the individual level in considering how we can each carry out sustainable practices, from our commute in to work, through the waste we produce from food and plastics, right up to the emissions associated with the aircraft we fly. We've run workshops to fully embed our strategy and now have a department carbon budgets programme in place where everyone has individual accountability on our sustainability journey.

Overall, it's quite a creative role, mapping company emissions and researching and implementing the best methods to reduce them. There is a lot of collaboration involved and education pieces, including a yearly event involving local businesses with the same values as us.

What makes working at SaxonAir special?

There really is a sense of your career being almost limitless. The encouragement and trust of the directors and business stakeholders provides the freedom and ability for individuals to learn where their strengths lie and work to their best ability. We all have the

freedom to work in a role suited to us, train and be involved in a host of projects. We've also adopted flexible working, which means we aren't restricted by specific work locations or set hours. It all comes down to the people: they're what makes SaxonAir so special.

What aspect of the job is most fulfilling? Any challenges?

The most satisfying and fun parts of my job are when we push the boundaries and do something out of the ordinary – like installing beehives at the Business Aviation Centre. It was unexpected, informs research into the bee population and bee behaviour, and contributes positively to the environment.

It's also very satisfying securing new collaborations and partnerships, such as that with NeboAir, which operates the world's first certified electric aircraft. NUNCATS (which aims to provide a dependable lifeline for the world's remote communities, offer hands-on experience and STEM learning opportunities, and enable sports flyers to convert to cleaner, greener energy) and Explorers Against Extinction are other partners with which we share values and work towards the same goals.

The challenges are mostly with changing the narrative around private aviation. The media angle in particular is mostly negative – aviation is a high-emissions industry and people believe private aviation is unnecessarily bad for the environment, but it's about the bigger picture. The aviation industry is positive in many ways and there are lots of great things happening in terms of developing the industry to become greener and the positive contribution to economies as a result of travel.

What do your friends and family think of what you do for a living?

They think it's great! They're surprised at how

much freedom and opportunity I have. From the job title it's not immediately obvious what I do, and I love seeing puzzled faces when people ask. It's certainly unique and I would never have predicted this is where I would be when I started working at SaxonAir.

If you weren't in your role, what would you do?

I'd probably be doing something psychology focussed. I have always been interested in people, in mental health and especially in criminal psychology.

What do you want to accomplish next?

I want to keep pushing industry boundaries and challenging the norms. We have plans to get involved in some really interesting projects in 2023, including one to facilitate the infrastructure for electric flight. We will keep investing in the future of aviation and doing what we can for the local environment.

Have you encountered/do you encounter gender-based bias? Has that changed since you entered the industry?

The industry is male dominated. When I first arrived, there seemed to be very gender-stereotypical roles and perhaps also an age bias. However, both SaxonAir and the industry have changed in the five years since I joined and it seems a new generation is pushing forward with a very different way of thinking.

This is another area where SaxonAir is passionate – we are working with local schools to promote the diversity of roles within aviation at careers events and developing a 'pathways' programme internally that will also focus on diversity and inclusivity within the industry, because the next generation is aviation's future. ■



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