

Global Jet: Service On Another Level

Bjorn Naberhuis,
Global Jet Vice President
for Business Development

Established in 1999/2000, Geneva-based Global Jet has weathered three financial crises while maintaining growth. Bjorn Naberhuis, Vice President for Business Development and a 14-year veteran with the company says its success is down to how it takes care of its clients. “It’s about looking after the elite of the elite, not just saying you’re the best, but being the best, and never saying no unless flight safety is affected.

“We have an open-door policy, which means everyone, including senior management and the founders, has worked directly with clients. As we’ve grown we’ve assembled teams and departments, but we still see people who were here at the very beginning working hard in the office; sometimes even harder than the rest of us – which is admirable and contributes to the continuous development and growth of the company – it shows that Global Jet management really cares.

“For us it’s not only about managing an aircraft, which today is more and more challenging to do, it’s still mainly about managing clients. Customers are unlikely to stay with one aircraft their whole life, they’ll have their ups and downs and we’ll adapt to that. Whenever we’ve seen an economic downturn, our management has always filtered to us, ‘Think of the future, think long term. Clients may look to buy an aircraft when they’ve previously chartered. They might want to go smaller, or bigger, but whatever happens, we’ll be trying to keep them with us.’”

As a direct result, Global Jet manages 28 different aircraft types, with a willingness to take on more. It generates obvious maintenance and training challenges that Naberhuis readily acknowledges. “People say it’s not really a clever way to work. And it’s true in a way, it makes for a complex operation and there’s a reason why we aren’t the cheapest, but then again, we can handle anything. If a BBJ2 client decides to buy a Mustang, we can manage it. If a Mustang owner wants a new aircraft, we’re likely to already have the type in our fleet, we’ll have had it in the past, or we’ll simply adapt. We’ve developed perhaps the most difficult way of doing business for ourselves, but for the client we’re the best, because we always have the answer.

“Many of our clients, just like the company, which started out as a charter-only operation, don’t have an aircraft at all. Historically, if they

do step up to ownership, we manage the aircraft for them. As regulatory control has tightened, it’s become increasingly difficult for smaller companies to manage aircraft, while we’ve evolved to offer not only management, but also purchasing advice and help with cabin design, so our clients don’t have to go anywhere else.

“Where we differ from many competitors is that we outsource our maintenance and handling to other organisations. We’re also one of the few companies that’s not married to particular providers. If a client wants to use a certain handler in New York and different provider in Europe, that’s not a problem. We’ll have company-preferred providers, but it’s the client who decides. Ultimately, we know exactly what’s required, but leave it up to our fellow professionals.” We audit our service providers on a regular basis, keeping their work with our clients up to our standards.

In-house Expertise

Although Naberhuis says Global Jet is content to leave handling and maintenance to other organisations, the company retains a wealth of experience and expertise in-house. Almost a dozen maintenance managers ensure its aircraft are kept in perfect condition, while several members of the management team have been with Global Jet for many years and amassed huge frontline experience.

“This brings real benefit to our clients. Let’s say we have someone who wants to charter a Phenom 300, for example, and the operator says it’ll do the trip non-stop. Our operations experts might say, ‘We’ve used those aircraft and non-stop is only 80% guaranteed.’ We have the deep product knowledge required to give accurate advice and answers.

“The company has huge know-how, huge experience and a name that is representable. Whenever I speak to a client I can be proud of what Global Jet’s done in the past and give honest, expert opinions. Because we aren’t linked to any particular OEM or provider, we don’t say which manufacturer is better than another, we just advise on what’s best for each client.

“But we can also use our ‘position’. If we see one OEM providing great customer support and another falling behind, we can say, ‘Hey guys, look at this.’ And it’s because of this openness and expertise that people respect us and recognise Global Jet as unique.”

Dassault’s Falcon series takes a prominent position within Global Jet’s managed fleet, which is nonetheless surprisingly varied.

Aurélien Bergot/Global Jet

Of course, what really keeps the folk at Global Jet busy is satisfying their customers' need to fly. "A client might call because they want to fly tomorrow and we start planning immediately. If it's to a destination we haven't flown to before there'll be a series of emails and calls to check and double check various aspects, along with constant interaction as we keep the client up to date, with a crew change perhaps, or an airport that's closed.

"On the day of the flight we brief the whole team, connecting all our offices into Geneva by video call. We brief on weather and other operational aspects for the entire Global Jet fleet and chartered aircraft. It means we can pre-advise clients if it's going to be very foggy in London, or the winter weather is going to cause issues in Moscow, and we can prepare by loading extra fuel and revising flight plans.

"It's crucial to delivering our service. For whatever reason our clients are flying, they need to reach their destination at the time they planned. I never think about whether they're meeting someone important or just traveling for leisure. It's important they're on time – one minute late for an appointment and they might miss out on a deal or a political decision for their country. So, whatever the client or destination, whether they choose a Mustang or a BBJ, there's a reason why these people fly privately.

"As a company we also have lots of safety systems in place to protect our clients'. I know that everyone has systems in place, but I've worked for other companies and in all honesty, I believe that Global Jet has its safety policy really well worked out. Safety starts with the flight feasibility checks in the Operations Control Centre, followed by crew training in our specially adapted ground and flight safety training facility. Even our cabin service focusses on safety, through food quality and so on. Then we have our company standards, set out, well vested and enforced, often ahead of future regulations. This safety culture is

reflected in training across Global Jet's 28-type fleet. "We train to Category II/100ft. It means our crews can land in very low visibility and you could argue that it's something they might encounter no more than twice a year and they could divert. But look at it the other way around. If they've had that training they feel more confident, safer in the cockpit. They'll make better decisions, they'll fly safer. It means our training programme is perhaps a little more intense, a little more expensive, but that's how it has to be.

"We've also introduced crew resource management training for everyone in the company. Whether they're the sales people on the phone, key account managers, cleaners, cabin crew or pilots, they come into the office once a year and we go through real situations that have happened on flights. You can see people understanding the importance of flight safety. As a result, our people provide better service because they never sell a flight short. They'll say, 'Let's take a fuel stop to be sure, just in case of... because then if an airport closes, or the weather's bad, we'll know you're going to be safe.'

"Our quality control is external, it's not part of Global Jet, it's a separate company that audits us. And if we don't

know an operator or jet, we won't book it. It's the only way to be safe and for us safety goes everywhere." It's an easy boast to make, but in fact, Global Jet has extended its safety net, equipping its crews to care for clients far beyond delivering exceptional service. Flight crews have 24-hour call-in access to an emergency operator for real-time medical assistance through a deal with MedAire, while every flight is subject to risk analysis. "We have contracts with specialist companies that deliver these services. They're costly contracts, but I believe they help make us the safest company in the world.

"Sometimes people tell me we're expensive. I don't believe that. We do everything we can to give our clients the ultimate travel experience. We ensure everything is ready, we're always well informed and always ready to react if there's an issue. I think the business in general has just become too discounted; we offer high-quality, exclusive luxury travel at an appropriate price. It's not about selling a product and taking the money, it's about keeping a client long term because every time they fly with us they think, 'Wow, that was a great experience'." ■



Global Jet takes pride in recognising and discretely satisfying its clients' needs.

Aurélien Bergot/Global Jet