



INDEPENDENCE MATTERS

Thomas Chatfield, CEO of Camber Aviation Management, on the benefits of independence when providing completions management for clients

Camber Aviation Management delivers unique, custom-designed, world-class corporate and private aircraft solutions. Camber is a Canadian company specialising in corporate jet completion and refurbishment management. It is an independent and objective trusted advisor to clients, having no completion centre affiliation or aircraft trading agenda.

With clients all around the globe, the company aims to deliver the best corporate jet possible, individually tailored to the requirements of private, corporate, and heads of state clients.

AH: Tom, how did it all begin for you?

TC: We were involved, individually, with the very first BBJ with a VVIP interior. This was displayed at EBACE in 2016. Later, we supported the completions of a Boeing 747 and a 787 for two Heads of State. Things developed from there. In this business, it really is the case that one successful completions project leads to another.

As an aside, I would add that the completions market is changing yet again. We are seeing more and more clients who have never owned an aircraft before, who are now serious buyers. We are working with three individuals right now, two of whom are buying for the first time, and the other is making a very dramatic step up from his previous jet.

Working with someone who has never owned a jet before is very different from working with an experienced owner. The newcomer's nearest equivalent experience is probably going to be the most recent top of the range motor car that they bought.

A green aircraft completion or a major refurbishment is just not a comparable experience. The car, whatever it is, be it a Lamborghini, a Ferrari, or a Rolls Royce, is a production car.

The new owner will tell you that their experience when they bought that fantastic car was phenomenal and came with the best customer service. What they tend not to get is that no matter how fancy the car, it came ready finished off a production line. A big completions project is utterly different. It is unique, with a large number of parts and processes to it, and requiring a plethora of decisions and choices. Every moment has to be managed. It's not a matter of the showroom handing you an espresso and the keys.

When the prospective new jet owner approaches an OEM on their own though, what we hear is that the experience is incredibly frustrating. They have to put the whole ownership puzzle together piece by piece. The industry just expects that they are going to have advisors to tell them everything they need to know. What they find is that the lawyers, financiers, and accountants that they normally deal with have little or no expertise in this area.

With us, the guidance we provide to a would-be new owner starts right at the very beginning, as we look to establish whether they do, indeed, need a jet. I had a customer recently tell me that his friend Mike, who owns an ACJ319, told him he really should get himself a jet. It would be great both for leisure trips with the family and for his business.

When we looked into the number of hours he flew, the family holiday was a twice-yearly thing to Nice, France, and the corporate flying was not much more extensive. Fractional or





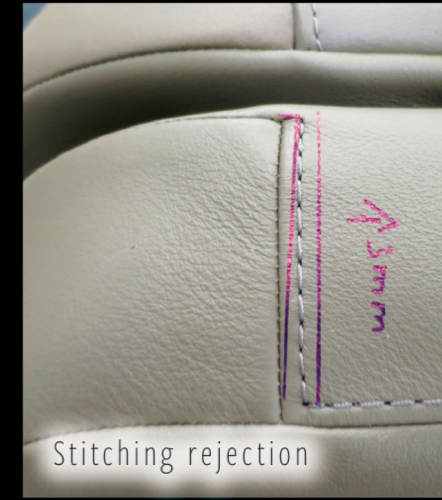
Green aircraft cabin



Engine maintenance



Leather wrapped divan armrest



Stitching rejection

charter were both far more sensible options at a fraction of the cost and with none of the ownership issues. He didn't need a jet and when he realised it we were able to put him in touch with a great charter broker and a fractional operation.

He went away happy. But we could only do that because we were not operating on behalf of a broker or completions house. Someone who would have tried to talk him into buying a green jet and getting a designer interior at a huge price, to cater for probably 50 hours a year worth of flying time. If he ever does genuinely need an aeroplane, he told us, he'd come straight to us.

AH: How badly can things go wrong if a client doesn't have a completions manager and leaves it to his pilot, say, and the completions house?

TC: Although everyone has the best intentions, that can be catastrophic. We had a client a while ago come to us. He had a narrow-body aircraft which he put to a completions house. The specification for the work, when we got to see it, was way too fuzzy and vague. The result was that there was

very little match up between what the client wanted, and what the completions house thought he wanted.

They weren't trying to cheat him. The spec they were working off was simply too ambiguous. The gentleman's designer was a phenomenal designer, but he was not a technical engineer.

AH: What is your ideal method of dealing with a new client?

TC: What we bring to the table is time and a deep knowledge of aircraft engineering. We start by spending time to understand the client's vision, helping them to articulate that vision properly.

It starts with the real basics, the classic questions like how many people will be flying in the jet and how many of them the owner expects to sleep during a flight, whether there will be fresh food made on the aircraft, requiring a well-equipped galley, or if the catered food will simply be heated.

For us, this is the most important time, where we invest time and effort to ask all the right questions. Then, in the follow-

on meetings, we can get the right trades together and create exactly what the new owner expects from his or her aircraft.

AH: How do you approach the decision between new and pre-owned?

TC: These are two very different things. A pre-owned aircraft has its own unique advantages over a new, green aircraft. You can acquire it relatively quickly, and if it has a good pedigree and 'good bones', the refurbishment process

will turn it into a dream aircraft for the owner. You can make all the changes required to meet the client's expectations and to give the pre-owned aircraft a real 'wow' factor. The pre-owned route will be less expensive and the aircraft will be completed and available far faster than would be the case with a new jet completion.

If that is the way the client decides to go, we find the best pre-owned aircraft available in their price range, preferably with an



Boeing BBJ 787 flight deck



- Air Charter Service
- Aircraft Management
- Air Ambulance Transport Service
- Air Cargo Service
- Catering Service

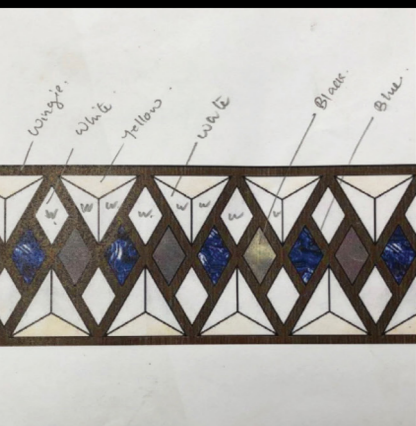
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Marquetry for Head of State aircraft



“Then we go and find the designer if the client does not already have one. We develop the layout, get the renderings of the new interior done, and, together, we specify the fabrics, monuments, and all the interior elements, using our extensive engineering expertise.”

interior that is already relatively close to what they are looking for, which preserves value. We go deeply into the records and we make sure that it is a great aircraft and we support the client through the entire transaction process. We put together a budget and a timeline, so the client knows that it will cost x and how long the project will take, say four to six months.

The difference between us and an aircraft broker is that the broker will struggle to give the client an accurate picture of what the refurbished interior is going to add to the cost of the jet. Even if the refurbishment is modest, it is still going to take time and generate costs, and we can be very accurate about these elements.

Then we go and find the designer if the client does not already have one. We develop the layout, get the renderings of the new interior done, and, together, we specify the fabrics, monuments, and all the interior elements, using our extensive

engineering expertise. We also make recommendations on the communications side, the IFE, and how the latest hygiene protocols will work.

The final set of recommendations are very detailed. Our 787 project, for example, had a 200-page cabin specification manual for the completion that the client has signed off.

AH: I imagine that makes things a lot easier for whatever completions house wins the tender?

TC: Absolutely. That is why completions houses love working with us. We are tough, but it is not an antagonistic relationship. They have confidence that we have clarified all the ambiguities in the design, and we are very clear with all parties that if the owner comes up with late changes that they insist on, once the specs are finalised, that these will generate extra costs and may impact the schedule.

We are forthright and honest, we stick to the specs and we do not ask for a constant stream of freebies from the completions house. It makes for a good relationship. Importantly, complete clarity around the deliverables dramatically reduces the likelihood of conflicts. It lets all parties focus on creating the best possible aircraft. As a result, the finished jet will be exceptional and completed on time and on budget. This will result in a happy client and that is everyone's goal. |BAM



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