

# PROFESSIONAL PILOT



OCTOBER 2012



## Travel Management Flight Dept



With 24 Hawker Beechcraft 400XPs and 29 Hawker 800XPs and 850XPs, Travel Management has emerged as a significant force in the on-demand charter market. (L-R) Chief Pilot David Emmitt, Dir Ops Scott Henely, Owner Pete Liegl, Gen Mgr Scott Wise and Dir of Mx Steve Purvis at EKM (Elkhart IN) base.

**NBAA Convention**

# Travel Management flies all-HBC fleet, reaps benefits of aircraft standardization



In the course of 7 years Owner Pete Liegl has built Travel Management into a world-class charter business with a fleet of more than 50 aircraft.

## Indiana-based firm provides premium charter service using 24 Hawker 400XPs and 29 Hawker 800/850s.

**By Mike Potts**  
*Pro Pilot SW Associate Editor*

**W**hen Elkhart IN entrepreneur Pete Liegl (pronounced “legal”) needed to charter a business jet some years back he found himself disappointed in the service.

As he recalls it, the aircraft that arrived to pick him up at EYW (Key West FL) was dirty, there was material hanging loose around the entry door, and when he sat down in the cabin the seat back gave way. One of the pilots, Liegl says, told him that the seat had been that way for a while and suggested that he sit elsewhere.

It was not the first time Liegl had found charter service wanting. Between sometimes unreachable providers, unreliable aircraft and seemingly uncaring flightcrews, he



had formed the opinion that on-demand charter was something of a cottage industry with little or no focus on customer satisfaction. To be sure, there were some great operators out there, but there were also lots of unhappy customers, and for Pete Liegl that represented an opportunity. What if there were a charter operator with a total focus on customer satisfaction? An operator with 24/7 dispatching, with a fleet of matching airplanes in like-new condition and plenty of back-up, so the customer would always fly on the airplane that was expected? And with crews trained to focus on the total customer experience?

Surely, Liegl reasoned, charter is a premium product purchased by discerning customers who would respond to quality service with repeat business and referrals. Conversations with potential customers and professionals in the field convinced Liegl he had a workable business model.

He was also well positioned to put his plan into action. The time was late 2005 and Liegl had just sold Forest River, the recreational vehicle business he had built since 1996, to Berkshire Hathaway. (As part of the deal, Liegl continues as CEO at Forest River, reporting to Berkshire Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett.)

Coincidentally, at about the same time 2 Elkhart area corporate pilots were struggling to keep their jobs. Scott Wise and Scott Henely flew a Beechjet 400 for CTS Corp and the company had decided to sell the airplane. Wise was acquainted with





**General Mgr Scott Wise is responsible for sales and marketing. His effort to sell owner Pete Liegl a Beechjet helped to launch the company.**

Pete Liegl, although he was unaware of Liegl's vision for a corporate charter operation.

"I approached Pete, hoping he would buy the Beechjet so Scott and I could keep our jobs," Wise recalls, "but he wasn't interested."

But then Liegl asked a critical question: "How would the Beechjet do as a charter airplane?" Wise's answer—that "it would make a great charter airplane"—sparked Liegl's interest. What followed was the creation of Travel Management Company (TMC), the embodiment of Liegl's vision for a customer-focused on-demand charter company.

Wise assumed the role of general manager, with prime responsibility for implementing the program and setting up the company to operate profitably. Henely, who had previously worked for Raytheon Travel Air and in other charter operations, and had more background in the mechanics of launching a Part 135 operation, was named director of ops. A 3rd employee, Nancy Chupp, was added to run the office and handle administrative duties. All 3 continue to play key roles.

### A modest beginning

In Apr 2006 Travel Management bought an existing Part 135 certificate and began flying its first charter flights the following month with a King Air B200. Meanwhile, Henely and Wise were generating manuals, setting up proving runs, hiring pilots and lining up customers. The first Travel Management Beechjet charter flew in Jun 2006, using the former CTS airplane.

Following Liegl's vision and backed with his significant assets, Travel Management has grown rapidly. Initially it grew as an all-Beechjet fleet, but as demand increased and customers began to request larger aircraft capable of flying longer legs,

Hawker 800XPs and 850XPs were added.

Today the company operates 24 Hawker 400XPs and 29 Hawker 800/850s, and has 235 employees with 185 pilots. All of the current Beechjets were bought new from the factory. The company carries an ARGUS Platinum rating, attesting to the safety and quality of its operations.

As general manager, Wise is responsible for aircraft acquisition, identifying and hiring key staff members, generating new business, including all sales and marketing activity, as well as overall financial performance of the company. He continues to be the key interface with Liegl, and is charged with implementing new plans and programs.

Henely continues as director of ops, with duties that have evolved significantly since the early days



**Ops Dir Scott Henely was instrumental in launching Travel Management's flight operation, setting up all the original manuals and procedures.**

when he did virtually everything on the ops side himself. Today he delegates duties to directors of maintenance, training, safety and standards, flight tracking, scheduling and a chief pilot, as well as others.

Issues involving FAA, TSA, US Customs, and the company's operating certificates and manuals occupy his time today. Henely is currently working to improve TMC's ability to access DCA, and serves as liaison with ARGUS and Wyvern.

A major part of Wise's responsibility as general manager is generating new business. His team works closely with a bevy of charter brokers and individual customers to keep the fleet busy with revenue-generating legs. Wise says, "Minimizing dead-head legs is the name of this business"—a task that becomes easier with a larger fleet. Critical mass, his experience shows, is 12 airplanes of a single type. "Below that number, you don't have enough backup."

Wise says his job is made easier because TMC owns all its airplanes. "Many of our competitors operate managed fleets, and sometimes the owners want to use their airplanes on short notice. That can leave a charter flight without an airplane or without the airplane the customer was expecting. My customers know that never happens with Travel Management."

Another advantage, Wise notes, is that TMC is financed entirely through Liegl's assets and carries no bank debt. And, while Liegl expects the company to be profitable, he is willing to forego earnings in some quarters if investment is necessary to support operations or fleet improvements. "Last year we installed Wi-Fi in all of the Hawkers," Wise says. "We did the whole installation at once because we didn't want customers to find some Hawkers with Wi-Fi and some without. That was very expensive, but Pete thought it was the right thing to do, so that's what we did."

Although it offers all types of charter service, TMC has built a reputation for providing cost-competitive 1-way charter to points throughout the US, Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico and South America.

Henely says one of the key roles that sets TMC apart is played by Christopher "Chip" Schultz, who is director of safety and standards. Schultz joined TMC has a line captain on the Beechjet in 2008, at about the same time the company was beginning to develop its safety management system (SMS).

Schultz came from an airline background, having previously flown for Mesaba, Comair and Frontier, and was familiar with multiple aviation safety action programs (ASAPs). Schultz knew that TMC's SMS would have to include some kind of hazard reporting system, and he approached Henely and Chief Pilot David Emmitt with a plan for an airline-



**TMC Crew Scheduling Mgr Nancy Chupp is responsible for making sure 185 pilots are in the right place at the right time.**



**TMC's flight tracking department operates 24/7 to keep track of the company's fleet of more than 50 aircraft and deal with any issues that will affect their schedule performance.**

style ASAP program tailored to TMC's operating requirements.

As the program began to come together, Schultz was named ASAP manager and began working closely with FAA to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) necessary to support an open and candid ASAP program. The MOU allows TMC pilots to disclose safety information voluntarily without fear of enforcement action.

The result, Schultz says, is a healthy program that currently produces 25–40 reports per month concerning issues that arise on the line. Four line pilots are assigned to compile and analyze the reports.

"Sharing this information between management and the front-line employees has helped us to steer the company toward an environment of safer operations," Schultz says. Along the way to developing the ASAP program, Schultz was given added responsibility for TMC's overall SMS program.

"For me, ASAP is the eyes and ears to our safety program," Henely says. "Combined with WBAT—the online reporting system we use to track incidents and issues—it allows me to learn about problems so I can fix them. It's been an incredible asset for us."

Other safety-related duties for Schultz include a company-wide internal audit program conducted monthly to identify areas for poten-

tial improvement, and the emergency response program that would be activated in the event of an incident or accident. A safety committee consisting of all department heads meets quarterly to discuss safety issues and implement improvements.

The standards segment of his responsibilities can also be traced to Schultz's airline background, with the development of published SOPs and checklists designed to ensure that TMC operations are consistent throughout the company. "We run a very standardized organization that allows the flightcrews to have a very predictable experience in the cockpit," he says. "The same procedures are used by every crewmember."

A team of approximately 30 line captains and first officers are designated to conduct initial operating experience (IOE) and other line training as required and promote adherence to standards. Issues are addressed in a quarterly conference call.

### **Maintaining the fleet**

Steve Purvis is director of maintenance for TMC. He was recruited to the new company in 2006 by Henely, who had worked with him previously at the Corporate Wings operation at SBN (South Bend IN), where Henely was a pilot and Purvis a mechanic in the 1990s. A Kansan native, Purvis got his A&P at Kansas



**Maintenance Dir Steve Purvis uses a combination of inhouse maintenance and Hawker Beechcraft service centers to keep TMC's 2-type fleet operating at peak efficiency.**

Technical Institute (now Kansas State University) at SLN (Salina KS) and moved to Indiana in 1989 to work at SBN Aviation, which soon became part of Corporate Wings.

Purvis directs a staff of 30 from TMC's EKM (Elkhart IN) headquarters, where his task is largely managerial and logistical. Purvis has 2 deputies, a maintenance manager who coordinates scheduling and a quality manager who makes sure all the paperwork is accurate and complete.

Only very basic maintenance is performed at EKM. Instead, TMC operates a maintenance shop in a facility leased from Signature TEB (Teterboro NJ), where a team of about 20 mechanics and support personnel perform mostly scheduled maintenance. The TEB facility has mobile units on site to support maintenance requirements at other airports in the New York City area. Mobile units are also dispatched to areas or events where a significant number of airplanes will gather. Earlier this year TMC had a mobile unit standing by at the Super Bowl at IND (Intl, Indianapolis IN).

Overflow for scheduled (and most unscheduled) maintenance is subcontracted largely to Hawker Beechcraft service centers and facilities with extensive Beechjet and Hawker experience. Purvis cites multiple Elliott and West Star locations as well as Emery at RFD (Rockford IL) and ADI at PTK (Pontiac MI) as preferred providers.

All TMC aircraft are maintained in accordance with the Hawker Beechcraft factory recommended program. TMC does not subscribe to any service plans for airplanes it acquired new, which includes all the Hawker 400XPs in its fleet. Some of the 800/850s were bought used, and whenever those aircraft came with Honeywell MSP programs on their engines, TMC continued with MSP to recoup the equity.





Members of Travel Management's headquarters staff at EKM with one of the company's 29 Hawker 800/850s.

A team of a half dozen maintenance controllers is based at EKM with responsibility for managing maintenance for aircraft requiring work in the field. They coordinate with suppliers and arrange whatever service is required to return the aircraft to service.

Engine overhauls and hot sections are sent to multiple Dallas Airmotive locations. The company recently purchased 2 Pratt & Whitney JT15D spare engines, which it keeps at TEB to reduce the impact of having engines out for major maintenance.

Chief Pilot David Emmitt joined TMC in 2006 during the company's 1st year of operation. A native of Ohio, he attended Bowling Green State University in the aero technology program, earned all his flight ratings through to CFI, then knocked around for a few years building flight time with jobs that included crop-

dusting, banner towing and flying skydivers.

Emmitt's big break, he says, came in 1998 when he was hired by Cheyenne Charter at ASW (Warsaw IN) to fly SIC in a Citation II. This didn't last long, but with a jet type rating and experience he joined Aerodynamics at PTK where he flew Beechjets and Hawkers.

Returning to Warsaw to get married and settle down, Emmitt was flying a Beechjet 400 for Image Air Charter at ASW when TMC approached him about becoming chief pilot. At first he declined, opting instead to join the new company as a Beechjet captain. A year later, when the job came open again, Emmitt accepted the chief pilot slot.

Today his duties are largely administrative, although he tries to fly the line for at least a few days each month. He recently oversaw the introduction of iPads for charts and revisions in the cockpits of TMC's aircraft, working with Jeppesen to ensure a smooth transition from paper.

Emmitt is responsible for pilot hiring, which has been an almost continuous activity for the past 3 years as the company has continued to grow. Pilot hiring at TMC starts with a review of applications, with basic minimal requirements for a first officer slot being 2500 hrs total time,

500 hrs PIC, 500 hrs multi-engine, 150 hrs instrument, 100 hrs of turbine time and an ATP. A Beechjet or Hawker type rating is desirable but not a requirement since TMC type rates all its pilots.

Emmitt contacts candidates who meet the basic requirements for a 45-min telephone screening. Successful candidates are then called in for a formal interview at TMC headquarters at EKM. While there, potential new-hires are given a simulator evaluation at C20 (Andrews University Air Park, Berrien Springs MI) to evaluate basic airmanship, crew resource management techniques and general knowledge. Emmitt says the 30-min sim ride features a high-workload departure and includes holding, approach work and equipment failures.

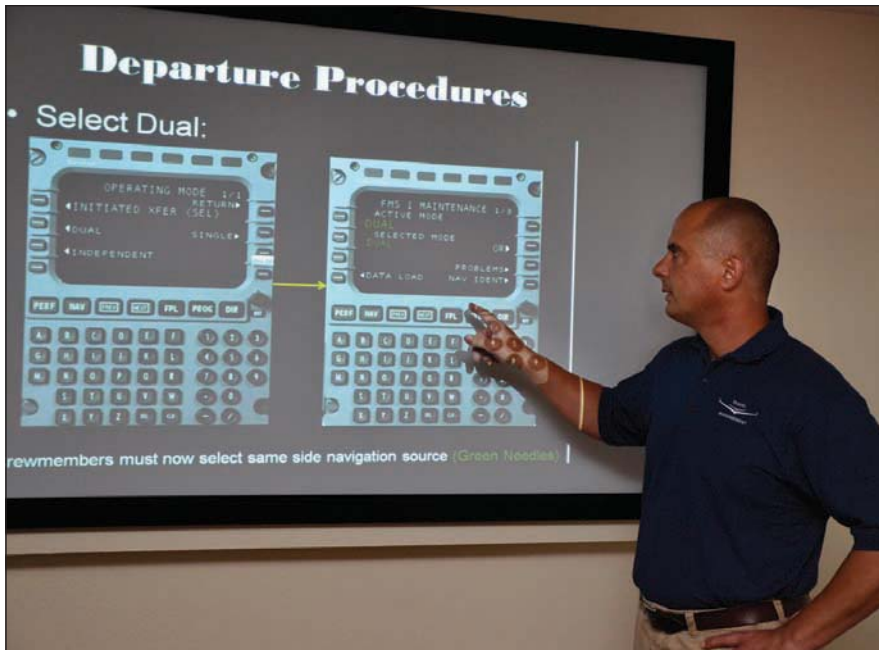
A final interview is then conducted that includes other company officers—typically the director of safety and standards, and the director of training or ops—to determine if a job offer will be extended.

The TMC pilot hiring process has evolved over the years, Emmitt says, and is continuously being refined. "We're looking for quality individuals," he says, "who will fit well into our system and be an asset to the company."

Nancy Chupp, who also wore multiple hats when the company



**David Emmitt started as a Beechjet captain and worked his way up to chief pilot. Emmitt has developed a comprehensive screening process that includes simulator evaluations for hiring new pilots.**



**Training Dir Marc McQueary**, seen here teaching a class, has developed a highly structured program to ensure that all TMC pilots understand and adhere to the company's detailed procedures.

started, is TMC's crew scheduling manager today—a full-time job in a department with 185 pilots. Regular TMC flightcrews work 15 consecutive days, followed by 13 days off, while reserve pilots don't have a set schedule. Crews usually travel by airline to and from assignments, and Chupp handles those arrangements as well as ground transportation and lodging.

Marc McQueary is director of training. He joined TMC as a Beechjet captain in 2006 after more than 15 years of corporate and charter flying, mostly in King Airs and Learjets. He quickly advanced to Beechjet check airman and assistant chief pilot, and began teaching classes for incoming pilots. In 2008, as TMC grew and the requirement for initial and recurrent training expanded, McQueary was named to his current position.



**Dir of Safety and Standards Chip Schultz** developed TMC's airline-style aviation safety action program. He is also responsible for the company's SMS.

### Online training

Initial training class for an incoming TMC pilot lasts 5 days. Before arrival, a portion of the training must be completed online. After the 1st full year, pilots take a recurrent basic indoctrination and hazmat procedures course online. At the end of the 2nd year, there is a more comprehensive review of TMC basic indoctrination, and hazmat procedures involves both online and classroom training. This cycle is repeated in following years.

Pilots also take a 3-day international initial training program that includes North Atlantic procedures. This has no online element.

In addition to operational subjects, TMC training has a strong customer service element, reminding flightcrews that the customer experience extends from the time they arrive at the FBO to meet the aircraft until they depart in their ground transportation at the end of the flight.

In addition to TMC's inhouse training, pilots attend initial flight and ground school training at FlightSafety Intl before they begin flying the Beechjet or the Hawker, and attend 3-day recurrent training at FSI annually. Beechjet training is done at ICT (Mid-Continent, Wichita KS), while Hawker training is at ILG (Wilmington DE).



**Flight Tracking Mgr Brian Walker** is an FAA-licensed dispatcher. He developed dispatching skills at Comair and Delta before joining Travel Management.

The final step for a new TMC pilot is a 15-day IOE with a check airman or a standards captain. After a successful completion, the new pilot is signed off to fly the line as a first officer with regular line captains.

### Tracking flights

A critical element in keeping the TMC operation flowing smoothly is flight tracking. Brian Walker, a licensed dispatcher, is manager of flight tracking. He directs a team of 7 trackers whose job is to monitor the progress of all aircraft and anticipate problems that will affect schedules and customers' plans.

The trackers work in a darkened room with an electronic map of the US and contiguous areas showing flights in progress filling most of one wall. They can call up air traffic control transmissions from anywhere in the country, and keep a constant eye on weather and air traffic progress in an effort to anticipate delays and develop solutions. The department has 3 shifts, providing 24-hr coverage.

As TMC approaches its 7th anniversary, Pete Liegl says he is pleased with the company's progress. "We're establishing a brand," he says. "We want an organization with a long history of delivering outstanding results. We keep the focus on our clients so we meet their specific goals and satisfy their precise wishes, thereby building lifetime relationships."



**Mike Potts** is an aviation consultant and freelance writer. He worked in corporate communications for Beech and Raytheon Aircraft between 1979 and 1997.