HOW TO SET UP A BIZAV OPERATOR IN "ONLY" 10 YEARS?

News / Business aviation, Personalities

GainJet CEO recipe.

Last month, GainJet celebrated its 10th anniversary in a chic resort of Athens, "Amaltheia the place". With over 300 guests joining the celebration, people gathered from all parts of the world including Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Americas. Especially for 50skyshades, we met Captain Ramsey Chaban, the company who transported the teams of Portugal, England and France during the last Euro Cup. Ramsey Shaban, spent most of his career in commercial aviation, and in the early 2000s made the move to private aviation, before becoming the CEO of GainJet in late 2005, where he has led the company to grow from a one aircraft operation to a current fleet of 12.

Q1: Do you remember day 1 of GainJet? How can you describe the productive atmosphere of these days?

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A lot has happened over the last ten-year period, the company has evolved a great deal, but I can certainly recollect the first days. We were a small team, only about 7 people, and everyone was working day and night to complete the AOC application process. We literally lived in the office those days! It was great team spirit. Everyone was excited with the project. Despite the really hard work and long hours, everyone seemed to be happy working at it. And I think that excitement and enthusiasm helped the process move along very quickly. We were able to complete the AOC work in 4 months!

Q2: Everybody think about Greek turmoil lately, how did it impact the growth of GainJet?

The Greek economic crisis has indeed been a major talking point over the last several years and has caused a lot of anxiety, however although being a difficult situation, we still have full faith in Greece and the advantages it offers us. Ten years ago, this led our shareholders to choose and invest in GainJet and in Greece. GainJet itself does not depend totally on generating its business in Greece. This marketing diversity we implemented insured we were not affected by the different economical events.

Our main target market is the EMEA region. Incidentally, our business and growth was more affected by the 2008 global recession and the European economic crisis, than the actual Greek turmoil, as you put it.

In 2006 when we first started and through until late 2008, there was plenty of business to go around and we were quite busy. However, after the 2008 global recession, and the pursuant consequences, the work environment got a lot tougher and our business did take a hit. However, we adapted a diversified working strategy, and since 2011/2012 have seen a significant but slow and steady growth.

Q3: Does fleet size/versatility are the reasons of GainJet's success?

Since 2006 we have operated 33 aircraft, a combination of our own and managed planes. We have registered 26 of these aircraft in Greece and seven were registered abroad on private registers. The fleet number has shifted up and down and is currently 12 aircraft.

Our fleet is reasonably sized. More importantly we offer a good selection of different upper-end aircraft types, ranging from our long range & ultra-long range jets to our VIP executive airliners. We also offer long-range medevac aircraft as well.

We provide our clients a choice of aircraft to best suit their requirements. Customers appreciate the versatility we offer and it certainly is one of the reasons behind our success.

We are proud of our staff, whether pilots, engineers, operations, cabin crew etc. they are very dedicated and highly skilled professionals.

Q4: As a captain, have you seen a complete change of customer profile in 10 years?

We have two sets of customer bases: The ***end user*** (passenger) and ***the broker***. In both cases,

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whether dealing directly with the end user or indirectly through a broker, what we deliver remains the same.

We have always dealt with high-end passengers. Their expectations and requirements are also high and have remained so. Hence we strive to meet those expectations every time, always improving on them and we've gotten better at it over the last 10 years.

The passenger profile has not changed much. However, on the other end of our charter base, the brokerage profile has changed, which can mostly be attributed to technological developments. The online marketplaces and easy access to information have opened up the door for all types of brokers, which can be positive yet can also be negative.

The positive side is that healthy competition is always desirable. However, the negative side is operators can end up into price cutting wars that dwindle their already fine profit margins. We have avoided the temptation to be dragged into such competition. Sadly, some desperate operators have been tempted to go into such price cutting, which affects standards of services across the industry. We have stuck with the high-end customer base, and it has been working for us.

Q5: How do you see the up-coming 10 years for GainJet?

As I look back at the last 10 years, I'm proud of our accomplishments and we have indeed set up a strong foundation which we hope will insure further future growth for the next 10 years and on.

We have focused on a strategy of serving the high-end of the market. Our fleet has been developed to do just that. We have spread out our assets into different zones and niche markets. We have the 20-64 passengers market being covered by our VIP executive Airliners, the 10-16 market being served by our Gulfstream G650, G550, and G450s, and Legacy 600. And finally, the 8-12 passenger market being served by our Challenger 605 and 604s, as well as our medevac aircraft.

We have plans in place to add one or two more VIP executive airliners to the fleet, while also adding additional ultra-long range jets as well, like our Gulfstream G550 since it's proven to be one of our most reliable platforms so far.

We are in the process of further developing our medevac operation. We're basing one of the medevac planes in Athens, which ideally is centrally located between Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. We also plan to establish a base in Africa focusing on medevac operations in that continent.

Recently we established our second AOC – GainJet Ireland at Shannon, which is a subsidiary of GainJet Greece. This gives us more flexibility, especially in Western Europe.

We are also involved in additional projects, like Long Range (our partners in Seattle). They are the leaders in the market for the design and manufacture of "quick change" auxiliary fuel tanks. We have contributed one of our Boeings to this project. Testing and installation is now complete, and Long Range now has the STC to fit up to six tanks. We are expecting the EASA approval anytime. This will increase the range of the 737 classic from five and a half hours to nine hours. The system offers range and most important the flexibility thru adding/removing tanks in just 1-2 hours. We can configure the plane to suit the mission requirement in terms of baggage space versus range.

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Picture : Andrew Hallak, Marketing Director of GainJet ; Captain Ramsey Shaban, CEO.

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