

Nulli secundus

Q & A

World Commerce Review spoke with David Briggs-Wilson and discussed business aviation as a corporate tool



Hermes Executive Aviation is an exclusive private aviation management company offering a bespoke, discreet service fully tailored to clients' requirements and expectations. *World Commerce Review* spoke with the Managing Director David Briggs-Wilson

What are the benefits of using a provider like Hermes?

There are a myriad of benefits for a private owner using a provider such as Hermes, whether that private owner be an individual or a corporate identity. One of the many benefits Hermes provides a private owner is anonymity of ownership, Hermes being the face of ownership, responsible for accounting for all billings and the payment of invoices for the operational costs of the aircraft.

Other benefits include such important factors as security. These days security is more and more important to both individuals and corporate entities; Hermes provides security in that the flight crews are not only vetted but are dedicated to the aircraft and the customer, ensuring that everyone on-board the aircraft from the flight crew to the passengers are known to each other.

A very important factor for an owner whether a corporate entity or an individual is that they are dealing with a known professional operator, which consistently goes that extra mile to deliver an exemplary service.

One of the most important benefits we are frequently told by our clients is that we integrate with them providing that bespoke service they want tailored to their exact and often changing needs; this is what Hermes provides and delivers.

Please describe the business aviation advantage

Contrary to popular view, business aviation is more of a precision tool than a profligate luxury. The reason business aircraft are so immaculately equipped and furnished is principally to retain their value. But then again, why

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shouldn't they be providing it can be afforded? High specification generates high capability, in turn delivering high reward. The aircraft is therefore less of a status symbol but more of an organic business capability: a commercial 'force multiplier' if you like. So consider business aviation as a crucial aspect of an enterprise, much like a finger to a hand. Successful companies rarely sub-contract their key capabilities such as finance or operations departments to third parties, so why should 'projecting' your company's key resource (its people) be any different? If control, discretion and independence are important, then private business aviation is purpose developed for it.

Business aviation is a unique tool, providing security and a secure environment for personnel, allowing key personnel to work whilst travelling, key meetings are not determined by travel itineraries or the constraints of train or airline timetables, the aircraft is ready and available to meet all contingencies at a moment's notice. It can take you from continent to continent, from point to point night and day. The more you use it the more useful and indispensable it becomes to your business.

Please describe the range of capabilities within Hermes Aviation Group such as aircraft types

Hermes principally operates what are known as Large Cabin Jets, such as the Gulfstream G550, Bombardier Global 7000 and the Super Mid-Size Jets, such as the Embraer Legacy 600, 650 and Gulfstream G450.

The Hermes Aviation Group has an impressive range of capabilities from the simplest of tasks to the most complex. We provide the Owner(s) with a fully integrated bespoke tailored flight department, to meet exactly his criteria we are very flexible and adapt to any and all changes as they occur and they do, we have to be not only fleet of foot but also nimble on our feet, whilst being on call and to operate 24/7 365 days a year.

We can advise owners and their staff on medical requirements and medical risks at all destinations around the world, as well as providing an overview on any security risks that could affect the flight and their time at the des-

tinuation. We carry a number of medical kits on-board to cater for most eventualities and have direct phone links to doctors and medical staff on the ground should it ever be required. Fortunately we have never had to use them except once when a flight attendant tripped over and fell in the street; we were able to provide the doctor with a clean syringe, needle and dressing to get her back on her feet quickly.

We provide 'in-house' full International Trip Planning, which cuts down on third party outsourcing, provides almost instant response to any and all requests including the inevitable last minute changes to plans and timings, again this is all 24/7 and 365 days a year. We can also provide a Concierge Service, which has been used a few times to arrange football VIP stands and tickets, hard to obtain opera seats and boxes.

We are frequently asked to obtain limousines at destinations for the passengers; anything and everything can be thrown at us and it is for us to provide the necessary in the time required. Failure is not a term we recognise. It can be scary at times but the feeling is great when we make the impossible not only possible but a reality.

What types of clients do you work with and how do they benefit?

There is not really any particular type of client: however in reality we work specifically with corporate clients and high net worth individuals flying our clients in their own aircraft. We are not a commercial operator so the aircraft we have are not available to third parties to charter, they are strictly operated for and on behalf of their owners.

The owners benefit from a provider like Hermes as we provide a niche that is exactly tailored to the owners' requirements and needs. We provide a more personalised service to an owner than any commercial operator would provide.

A dilemma often facing an aircraft owner is how best to operate the aircraft: private or commercial? A private operator is foremost service motivated, providing the owner with their own 'in-house' flight department delivering an exclusive 24/7 flight availability and flown by known and trusted crews. The commercial operator is foremost financially motivated, using the aircraft through provision of flights for hire and reward. Since the commercial operator makes money using a fleet, consisting of multiple aircraft owned by different individuals and organisations, it is challenging for them to give an owner that personal dedicated 'in-house' service that many owners crave.

Additionally, placing an aircraft into the fleet of a commercial operator can add tax risks; as the revenue streams quoted by an AOC are more often than not exaggerated. To give an analogy, why would you lend your personal Bentley to the local taxi company to operate and hire out to strangers? Private operations equate to trust, loyalty, discretion, and the exclusive use of an asset as a business capability to precisely match the needs of an owner. Why then would you want to settle for anything less?

Is there a thing as a typical day?

I could answer that by simply saying YES, it is called change. Each day is different fortunately as if they were not they would quickly become boring and less interesting. What is typical is that no day is the same as another, each day has its own challenges, be they small, medium or large; we have to rise to them and find solutions. There is neither room for mistakes nor for failure. We have to find the right solution, and for the owner his flight is on time (meaning his time not ours and he arrives on time at his destination with all services in place), handled with a smile. It is our duty to ensure that the aircraft and trip are totally seamless to the owner from the moment he leaves home or his office to the time he arrives at his final chosen destination.

How do you see the industry developing?

As aircraft become more and more complex and air navigation more autonomous the industry is constantly developing and evolving, with new regulations coming into force on an almost daily basis. The private operator such as Hermes is now required to meet greater and greater standards and to be accredited to meet IS BAO and EASA NCC requirements. These are, in my opinion, essential steps in the right direction. It may mean that some small private operators may not be able to meet the requirements, but operators such as Hermes will and this can only be good for the industry. There will always be a need for private operators as we provide a very specific need; we are complementary to our close cousins in the commercial world but we are not competitors. We provide a different very specialised service, which they are ill equipped to deliver, but we can work hand in hand and we both give our all to this aviation industry of ours 'business aviation'.

Hermes is well on the way to both IS-BAO and EASA NCC Approvals, so we are ready to meet the all of the future tasks, challenges and to grasp the opportunities that will open. ■