

The international guide to business airports, FBOs and ground support partners

# Business Airport

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

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Discover new partners, routes and destinations



## MILLENNIALS

How to attract a new breed  
of business jet traveler

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# Youth



**M**illennials are a new breed of private jet flyer. These experience-driven young professionals expect their journeys to be high tech – from booking systems through to inflight services and connectivity.

Many people assume that the typical private jet customer is aged 50 or over, but that is simply no longer the case. Private jet charter company PrivateFly's latest quarterly insights report revealed that the average age of its passengers in the last quarter of 2017 was just 38. This is a figure that is steadily lowering, down from 40 earlier in the year.

Statistics from other organizations within the sector corroborate these findings. Consulting its database of members, private jet booking service Stratajet found that the fastest-growing customer group was 18- to 24-year-olds and that the most active segment was the 25 to 34 age group. These carried out nearly one-third of all searches on the site, while more than two-thirds were performed by customers aged 44 or under. And it wasn't just searches – these translated into bookings, too.

How millennials are driving change within the private jet business

Words | Keri Allan

# movement

**“This new breed of flyer is experience-driven, living for the moment and with very high expectations of the brands they choose”**

Adam Twidell, CEO, PrivateFly



Above & right: Digital transformation is changing the way customers get access to private jet services



“This new breed of flyer is experience-driven, living for the moment and with very high expectations of the brands they choose,” notes Adam Twidell, PrivateFly CEO. “Tech-driven business models are leading the way in appealing to these next-gen business aviation customers. On-demand charter is particularly well served to appeal to this ‘live for today’ audience, which is looking for a private aviation solution that doesn’t come with the ongoing commitment of ownership costs or annual membership fees.”

Millennials are making their presence known to the sector with increasing confidence, demanding a different approach to private jet travel than the industry is traditionally geared to deliver. They want choice and personalization throughout their aviation journey, from the process of searching and booking a flight, through to transfer, aircraft and inflight services.

Millennials demand instant access to services and support and have driven accessibility to private jet travel dramatically. They expect booking and pricing to be as up-front and effortless as possible via a unified platform, modeled on car rideshare apps such as Uber.

“They want to go from point A to B at a specific time with as little human interaction as possible and to know the cost up-front without any surprises,” explains Kevin Flynn, director of aviation maintenance at AbbVie.

### Searching and booking flights

In response to this, the industry has changed to better cater for this market by providing a wider range of easily accessible booking services, as Ian Moore, chief commercial officer from private jet charter and hire firm VistaJet points out: “The business aviation industry has had to adapt rapidly over the last decade and now digital transformation is changing the way private operators work – and a lot of that is owing to millennials’ preferences. We see a growing demand for booking more quickly and all through a unified platform – whether the flight itself, ground transportation, catering or payment.”

“Groceries can now be delivered, taxis hailed and takeaways ordered at the click of a button. There exists a mindset among youngsters that they have a right to previously inaccessible services and products,” continues

## Say hello to YoPro

First established by the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) in 2014, the Young Professionals in Business Aviation (YoPro) group has developed into an influential community for young industry professionals.

Started to create opportunities for early-career professionals to network and build relationships at an NBAA event, it is now helping up-and-coming millennials to become more actively involved in, and influence, the work of the NBAA, as well as gain access to high-level members of industry.

“YoPro is continuously evolving,” says Sierra Grimes, YoPro founder and NBAA manager of registration. “Organically over time, our original networking event evolved to include an opportunity for attendees to find mentors, as NBAA executives and the board of directors attended. Not only did you get to meet with your peers, you got access to industry experts,” she enthuses.

“This grew in a way that saw us begin to support professional and leadership development and then we established the YoPro Council. This was because we had an influx of inquiries from young professionals asking what they could do or how they could become more involved. NBAA has a bunch of committees and councils for different subsets of the industry and we thought



this would be a perfect way to give another benefit to younger members and add more meat to the YoPro program itself,” she adds.

The council now helps put on education sessions and networking events throughout the NBAA’s conference season and also works on engagement, partnering with local or regional groups to meet and engage with young professional that might not otherwise have access to the NBAA.

It recently announced the inaugural NBAA Top 40 under 40, with the winners set to be announced at the 2018 NBAA Business Aviation Convention and Exhibition in Orlando this coming October. It is also currently partnering with a collective of NBAA committees, the Mentor Networking Group, to establish a structured mentorship program to support professional development.

The aim of the scheme is to help people new to the industry to learn from established professionals and the NBAA was overwhelmed with responses from potential mentors. Twenty were selected for this starting ‘semester’, with young professionals chosen that were following similar career tracks. At the end of the program, feedback will be analyzed and the Mentor Networking Group hopes to expand the mentorship program to help those just joining the sector to gain support and hone the skills they need to have long and successful careers.

Find out more about the work of YoPro by visiting [www.nbaa.org/prodev/yoopro/](http://www.nbaa.org/prodev/yoopro/)



Jonny Nicol, founder and CEO of Stratajet. "The private jet industry has been woefully inaccessible to a wide audience of prospective customers for too long now. The inefficient means of booking a private jet, which has relied on brokers liaising with a fragmented network of aircraft operators, has prevented private aviation from being seen as a viable means of transportation for the mainstream traveler.

"Private jets are the last form of transportation to be made available online and this has been sparked by an increasing demand for immediacy in all aspects of our lives – driven by millennials. Affordability is driven by accessibility and this surge of innovation has finally made its way into the last luxury service to benefit from the digital revolution – private jet travel."

When it comes to how they search for and book flights, millennials are increasingly looking for private jets while on the go, with the use of smartphones soaring. Stratajet has seen mobile searches for flights growing at twice the rate of desktop usage; PrivateFly's mobile bookings increased by 5% between 2016 and 2017, now making up 39% of searches and bookings.

According to Twidell, once a booking has been made, millennials also expect 24/7 communication channels on platforms they know and love. "Personalization and speed also apply at the post-booking stage – we see an increasing number wanting to express their inflight requirements and looking for operational updates via messaging systems such as WhatsApp or Telegram," he says.

As for how passengers pay for flights, Twidell believes that this year digital payment solutions and cryptocurrencies will be a big growth area, as this is a payment option that appeals to younger customers. "In 2014 we were the world's first private jet company to accept Bitcoin, and blockchain financial technology is now starting to be adopted more widely by the industry," he points out.

In terms of specific aircraft types popular with millennials, Kevin Flynn, director of aviation maintenance at AbbVie, believes that the Gulfstream brand remains popular due to its reference in music and TV. However, Michael Amalfitano, president and CEO of Embraer Executive Jets, believes millennials put a lot of importance on how socially acceptable their flight experience is, and look for sustainable aircraft that offer low noise and emissions levels.

Above: **The average age of business aviation customers is decreasing**

Below: **Millennial customers want quick, easy access to the luxury afforded by private jet travel**



**"The private jet industry has been woefully inaccessible to a wide audience of prospective customers for too long now"**

Jonny Nicol, founder and CEO, Stratajet

"Highly efficient flight paths that generate significant fuel savings and environmentally friendlier operations are more important than ever to customers," he explains.

### Transfers and FBOs

When transported to and from their airplane, this new generation of private jet passengers continues to expect the process to be simple and straightforward.

"The interface passengers have with FBOs has decreased over time. The expectation is that the traveler can get door-to-door, as efficiently as possible," says Catrina Capistrant, a safety manager and international captain for a multinational financial services company. "The typical millennial will find it most convenient to arrange his or her own ground transportation via Uber or Lyft and drive straight to the jet. The fussing around in the lobby of an FBO is more of a hindrance than a luxury for a traveler on the go.

"Prudent FBOs have shifted their focus from primarily passenger-based customer service, to aircraft and crew support," she adds.

### Inflight preferences

Regarding inflight preferences, the biggest expectation the industry has seen from – but not only limited to – millennials has been around connectivity. "Connectivity is key," says Sheryl Sarden, CEO and president of recruitment firm Aviation Personnel International. "Ten years ago it was the service and the food that was really important when on an airplane. Today, it's all about connectivity."

"Internet still remains the most important inflight service for our millennial passengers," agrees Flynn. "The days of chartering an aircraft without internet are coming to an end. I simply can't imagine a millennial booking a flight on something without a broadband system, so I imagine aircraft owners and companies are outfitting as many aircraft as possible."

This is very much the case. Millennials' intensive use and rapid adoption of new technologies for connectivity, social interaction and entertainment has driven the charter market to accelerate adoption of a range of innovative technologies for inflight customer use.

Amalfitano at Embraer Executive Jets says that key demands of the millennial generation include not only

## Millennials: key predictions

"I see big changes coming through improved apps continuously refining the booking process to the point where it's as effortless as a car service such as Uber"  
**Kevin Flynn, director of aviation maintenance at AbbVie**



"We will see progression toward complete automation in all facets of aviation"  
**Jessica McClintock, director of client relations, FuelerLinx**



"The private jet industry has opened its doors to a new market and is starting to become affordable to more than just the top 1%. It is also seeing a trend toward convenience over elitism, with companies offering private jet charter solutions that take advantage of the empty repositioning legs and semi-private flying"  
**Payum Abtahi, pilot at Trans-Pacific Jets**



"We might see success in air taxi services utilizing an app-supported shared ride concept. Although low-cost air taxi models have attempted and failed in the past, the emerging millennial traveler may provide a lucrative market for that in the near future, provided the application is well developed"  
**Catrina Capistrant, safety manager and international captain for a multinational financial services company**



"I think we'll see a move toward more efficient and cost-effective jet aircraft, a push led by millennials"  
**Jeremy Leonard, Virgin America first officer**



high-speed connectivity for unrestricted use of social media and communication apps, but also integration of mobile devices with IFE and mobile app-driven cabin management technology: "It's 360° ergonomic, entertainment and environmental control," he says.

Many solutions tailored to the demands of millennials are available in the market, with companies such as Embraer adopting several of these and even developing their own solutions.

"We use JetConneX, Inmarsat's advanced Ka-band high-throughput satellite network and Honeywell's 15Mbps JetWave technology aboard aircraft, such as the Lineage 1000E," Amalfitano notes. "Regarding in-flight entertainment and comfort, Lufthansa Technik's HD is aboard the Phenom 300E and Honeywell's Ovation Selection is on the Legacy 450 and 500. Embraer Aero Seating Technologies VIP seats have integrated app functions including acoustic therapy for gaming or entertainment, as well as thermal control."

### Inside help

However, it's worth noting that it's not just millennial passengers that are changing the way the industry does business. Millennials working in the sector are also helping to bring about change.

Working in recruitment, **Barden** has noticed that millennials within the industry are bringing a lot of new ideas and energy to the sector and challenging the status quo. "They're doing a lot with disruptive technology and we're seeing this in some of the new software coming out for our industry," she notes. "Technology is creating support for pilots and maintenance teams, helping people communicate. For example, an app has been developed

called ForeFlight, which really aggregates all of the different things a pilot needs. Millennials are really helping the industry to think differently, creatively and uniquely.

"From a flight department perspective, millennials want processes in place that are user-friendly and use a high level of technology as they assume that these processes will be more efficient through algorithmic advances and closely choreographed data tables, easily competing with – and crushing – the pen and paper method so heavily relied upon in the past," says Jessica McClintock, director of client relations at aviation software system provider FuelerLinx.

"FBO environments must have the same focus on technology, using social media and mobile apps as an unfiltered voice in the industry, but also maintain the VIP quality attention through well strategized white glove service," she adds.

Amalfitano notes that to drive growth in the sector, business aviation operators need to recognize, address and attract millennials – both as customers and industry professionals. Furthermore, it needs to embrace the technological changes this generation is pushing forward if it wants to keep pace with customer demand.

"With the acceleration of innovation, more disruptive technologies are on the horizon. In five years' time, we expect to be innovating at an even higher rate than today and expect we will have extremely agile collaboration and integration with partners, in order to ensure a key role in the development of new business models," he says.

"Business aviation needs to be agile and make preparations to ensure that disruptive innovation doesn't interrupt business, but rather becomes the base for solid and steady industry growth." ○

Below: Millennials look for sustainable aircraft like the Embraer Phenom 300E when booking a private jet

