



Resources for the Small Flight Department

You don't have to do it alone.

There's help out there — all you have to do is ask for it.

By David Esler

So-called “flight departments” run as an afterthought by the boss’s secretary and, in one case, a flight attendant. Jet-powered heavy iron flown exclusively by part-time pilots and temps retained as-needed on a per-flight basis. Revolving doors for “chief pilots” and “maintenance supervisors” and, thus, no operational continuity. A total absence of operations manuals or any form of written SOPs setting out safe and consistent operating policies and, therefore, virtually no adherence to standards. Little or no accountability and neglected or falsified maintenance.

Yes, they're out there on business aviation's

fringes, and they're more numerous than anyone wants to believe.

“I have seen pilots who've accepted positions with wealthy individuals who have no experience with aviation or how to judge whether an operation is safe and legally compliant,” confessed a business aviation professional after assurance of anonymity, “and then they [the pilots] don't want to tell the boss how much it will cost to operate or maintain the aircraft for fear he'll shut them down and buy a fractional share.

“The OEMs and brokers have sold these rich people airplanes, haven't told them how much they cost to operate, and then just walked away,” the speaker continued. “Even worse, there are chief pilots who aren't maintaining the airplane for fear of losing their jobs if the owner ever found out how

much it really does cost. Some people think they're bulletproof, but this is really living in true denial. . . . Then there are the operations that, for 'some reason,' always have a chief pilot opening. I wonder why?”

These ad hoc operations represent worst-case scenarios of how not to manage a complex air transportation endeavor. Fortunately, they're also in the minority among one-aircraft flight departments, which themselves represent the vast bulk of business aviation operators. Just among the membership of the NBAA, some 85 percent are small, single-aircraft operations often staffed by two or three professionals, usually a pair of pilots and a maintenance director.

Chances are if you're reading this, your operation falls into this category. And so you

know that there are few activities in professional life more challenging than attending to the range of disparate responsibilities implicit in managing an FAR Part 91-regulated business aviation flight department. Toward that end — assuring a safe, reliable and legally compliant air transportation service for your company's executives and employees or for an independent aircraft owner — is all about resources, and the smaller you are, the fewer in-house resources you're likely to have available.

Distracting From Safety

"One or two people running a flight operation with no support are challenged, and this can distract them from running a safe operation," Don Baldwin, president of Baldwin Aviation, Inc. (BAI), in Hilton Head, S.C., said in an interview with *B&CA*. Baldwin is in an unusually adept position to make this observation, having served as aviation manager for Texaco and Coca-Cola, as well as having been an NBAA board member for nine years and the organization's interim president for several months in 2005. Since retiring from active flight department management, Baldwin has founded BAI, a service company set up specifically to assist small operators in meeting their various regulatory responsibilities and establishing safety-oriented operating standards.

"When I was acting president of NBAA," Baldwin continued, "I heard the concerns of many small operators on the subjects of budgets and fiscal management, operations manuals, safety management, trip planning, and regulatory issues such as DRVSM." (Of the last, Domestic Reduced Vertical Separation Minimums, the FAA was initially concerned that small operators might not be compliant.)

Meanwhile, the NBAA's President, Ed Bolen, pointed out that, "It's always about time and resources. [Small flight department personnel] are in the air a lot and don't have the time to address all the other aspects of management. They typically don't have a lot of employees and so have a broad scope of responsibilities." To address this, as we'll see later, Bolen has directed the NBAA to better serve its small-operator members through a growing panoply of resources and management programs.

Obviously, the larger the flight operation — and the parent corporation behind it — the more resources and personnel there are to support it.

A multiple-aircraft flight department would typically have access to the corporate resources of its parent, as well as those unique to flight operations. "To put it another way," Baldwin said, "larger flight departments with multiple aircraft usually

receive preferred treatment and discounts, while smaller operations are hard pressed to receive any considerations unless they belong to a 'buying club' or are associated with an organization with established access and discounts."

Unclear on the Concept

Baldwin claims that among many companies and individuals purchasing business aircraft today, there is no clear understanding of what it takes to run a safe operation, as aviation isn't their core business. "Just look at personal

Safe Ops = Low Risk = Reduced Insurance Premiums

"What we bring to the table of our clients is that one of the best ways to keep their insurance rates down is for everyone to be safer." The speaker is Eric Barfield of Hope Aviation Insurance, a broker based in Columbia, S.C., who also serves on the NBAA Safety Committee.

Barfield's message to small operators is fly safe, document your best practices and adhere to them, and you can expect favorable premiums for your operation's insurance coverage. But if this privilege is to be enjoyed across the board, the business aviation industry as a whole has to collectively pull itself up. "If we have fewer accidents," Barfield said, "then the insurance companies have to make fewer payouts, and so over time the rates go down.

"So we tell the small operators to stay informed on safety and best practices, and encourage them to adopt the IS-BAO safety standards. Some of these operators don't know what is available out there, as they're so busy flying their airplanes. So we try to open their eyes. . . ."

Toward that end, Barfield takes what he learns on the NBAA Safety Committee back to his practice and disseminates it among his insurance customers. "On the Safety Committee, we promote safety in the industry and promote the IS-BAO standard in the community," he said. "For example, right now we're working on the dangers of hypoxia, and I will publish what I learn in our quarterly newsletter at Hope Aviation."

Barfield also cited the work the Safety Committee invested in very-light-jet training guidelines, a collaborative effort that included insurance issues. "What we're trying to do here is be proactive before the industry starts selling VLJs, and in my case, to address the insurance concerns that the underwriters have so everyone will know about these aircraft, what their capabilities are, and what the underwriting issues will be. In years past, the OEMs put airplanes in the field and then realized they had an insurance problem; so this way, we're trying to be more proactive."

Some 50 percent of the Hope brokerage's clients are small operators, most of them regional businesses fielding a single King Air C90 turboprop or entry-level jet. Barfield believes that by serving on the Safety Committee, he's representing them. This service "has been important to us because we can impart this information to our clients and it helps them with their insurance issues," he told *B&CA*.

"The members of the committee represent different disciplines. Each member is from a different background, and you return to your circle of influence and communicate those [safety] ideas with the people you do business with. In our case, we come back and share it with our clients. What that does is (1) achieve the goal of getting people to buy into the safety culture, and the safer we all become, the less we pay for insurance, and (2) for any given operator, what we can do is . . . demonstrate that the operator without large resources can still subscribe to best practices, as embodied in IS-BAO."

And the payoff is that adoption of safety best practices provides the small operator with what Barfield termed "underwriting clout." One of the frustrating aspects of aviation insurance is that, unlike auto insurance, it is devoid of line-item discounts for safety items or initiatives. So, in aviation insurance, all this must be negotiated. "What we do is paint the overall picture to the underwriter of what a client does above and beyond the minimums required to be a safe operator and try to negotiate his insurance program with an underwriter, both for good coverage and a reasonable premium," Barfield said.

"We are brokers, not the actual insurer, so we touch a lot of people in this business, and anything we can do and give back to the operator will have a positive effect on the entire industry. It's a tickle-down exercise."

use/tax issues — it's really complex stuff that needs to be navigated," he said. (If you don't believe him, read "The Problems and Permutations of Personal Use," *B&CA*, October 2006, page 32.) "There isn't a clear understanding of what it takes to purchase and operate an aircraft. Ideally, you'd like to see the OEMs and brokers spending more time with their clients to teach them what it takes."

Baldwin said he'd observed some erstwhile operators with no prior aviation experience "who might have been better off chartering, buying into a fractional program or placing their aircraft into management where they would have the resources through the operator to ensure safety and access more resources. But it's the ones bringing aircraft in-house where the industry is most challenged."

Lucille Fisher, president of Quality Resources, a manual-editing and preparation service, claimed the majority of small flight departments she sees are "doing most things right," but don't have a standards set in place to back them up. "One of the things we often find among operators is that they have great processes and procedures already in place but aren't always documenting them in the form of a good ops manual," she said from her office in Cleveland. "Often the existing manual is outdated so that it doesn't match the operation. By and large, they want to do things right but need to know that they're conforming to accepted best practices. So they ask, 'What's everybody else doing?' First you have to admit that you need help."

And that is the crux of the situation — admitting that the job of running a complex flight operation with two or three people and no in-house resources is a challenging proposition that merits outside assistance. Often, for many older, highly experienced pilots, the hardest thing to do is ask for help. By nature, training and experience, aviators like to be in control. Over time, we tend toward autonomy, believing we can do everything ourselves and that asking for outside assistance — or even advice — is a sign of weakness.

"Among small operators, we've observed that there is clearly a need in two different areas," Baldwin said. "The first is the flight department itself. The pilots who manage them strongly believe that they were hired to take care of everything concerning the company's aviation needs. There is also a sense that they don't want to spend a nickel on any outside services of a support nature. They were hired to do the work and to manage the aviation activities, and that's it — period. Typically, they have one airplane and two or three people in the flight department. And they cover the full gamut of industry, from the small company fielding a C90 King Air to the *Fortune* 500 firm operating a Gulfstream or Challenger."

Added Fisher, "The issue they have is that they lack time, don't want to admit that they need outside help, and then, of course, they haven't budgeted for it. I just talked to a small operator with two pilots and no maintenance guy, and the chief pilot wanted to know how much working time would be tied up in doing a manual. He needed this information, he said, because he wanted to report it to the company's internal business practices department and have them write the manual. . . . I had to tell them it wasn't just the hours but the expertise, that the business practice team was probably very good at addressing the company's internal business issues, but was probably not qualified to tackle an aviation standards issue. Not surprisingly, I didn't get the job."

On the other hand — and somewhat ironically — Baldwin and his colleagues in the business aviation services industry often find that individual, high-income owners and the executives of corporations operating small flight departments tend to be amenable to outside assistance. “It’s a cultural attitude,” Baldwin said. “Among the executives, there’s more open-mindedness to bringing in help, because in many cases, they’re accustomed to outsourcing when they need to do it.”

Not in My Hangar!

The second characteristic Baldwin has noted in his contacts with small flight departments is an unwillingness to be audited or even examined from the outside. “So there’s a reluctance there,” he said, “a feeling of being policed from the outside versus the approach that they should want to improve what they’re doing through the lens of outside observation.”

Asked to recount a worst-case scenario, Baldwin said, “Let me put it this way: I’m working with one now that owns a large-cabin airplane with continental range that doesn’t even employ full-time pilots — they hire temps to fly the airplane. What I’m seeing are individuals and companies buying airplanes, and they don’t know what to do with them — they are trying to manage them themselves, and for whatever the reasons, they have not sought help. They know they need to call the FBO for fuel, and that’s about it. They are completely unaware of their now-mandated responsibility for security or any of the myriad details implicit in properly managing a safe and FAA-compliant operation. As things pop up, they attempt to deal with them, but they have no overall plan or management structure.”

Baldwin claims a representative of another operator told him, “We’re so messed up, we wouldn’t dare have anyone look at us. We don’t want to have anyone look at us until we straighten it out.” This attitude, Baldwin told *B&CA*, is “prevalent” among operators that have not adopted safety-management programs. “That is, they’re really flying by the seat of their pants,” he concluded.

It’s this reluctance to ask for outside help and advice and, especially to eschew audits or even informal examinations by third-party experts that business aviation is “challenged to overcome,” Baldwin said. “There needs to be a sense of trust and capability built into the industry to be readily open to outside scrutiny and accepting of a set of standards like IS-BAO, which I might add, is the only standards program written by the business aviation industry for the industry.”

IS-BAO has been slow to catch on among all categories of operators, primarily because it represents a lot of work in terms of preparation and, for full registration with IBAC (a

la ISO 9000), requires a soup-to-nuts audit performed by designated auditors. However, in the last couple years, IS-BAO has increased in popularity, with a total of 450 programs sold and 71 operators registered.

The bad news is that only eight registrations represent single-aircraft operations. While IBAC would like to see a tighter ratio of programs purchased to operators registered, the Council’s standards manager,

Ray Rohr, believes that operators simply completing the standards program and adhering to it religiously in their daily operations in and of itself represents a huge contribution to safety.

The point is that completing the IS-BAO manual provides the operator with a framework of proven best practices which, if followed, promote safe operations on a consistent basis.

Help is On the Way

Among the resources available supporting the small flight department, especially the single-aircraft, two- or three-person operation, are services offered by Baldwin Aviation, Inc. (BAI) and Jet Aviation.

The former, a small entrepreneurial business in its own right, draws primarily on the extensive flight department management experience of Donald Baldwin, a corporate pilot who headed the in-house operations of Texaco (prior to its merger with Standard Oil of California, or Chevron) and, later, Coca-Cola, as well as serving on the NBAA board and as interim president of the business aviation advocacy group. The latter, formally titled Flight Support Solutions, leverages the broad purview of business aviation services giant Jet Aviation to provide a menu-based selection of support services for flight departments of all sizes.

IS-BAO Assistance

The core of Baldwin's program is the operations manual and a validating safety-management program. Through an arrangement with IBAC, Baldwin is essentially licensed to not only use the IS-BAO manual template but assist the operator/client in both qualifying and registering in the program. When IS-BAO was in development, Baldwin approached IBAC about participating in the program through his planned aviation services company. "They approved a policy, which is posted on our Web site [at www.baldwinair.com], that would accept a program like ours with a slightly different approach," Baldwin said.

That difference is that when an operator registered in IS-BAO through BAI discontinues its subscription, the registration is nullified. "This is because there is a continuous link between BAI and the client," Baldwin explained. "As long as they're with us, we're overseeing their standards and risk management. [In other words, BAI is acting as IBAC's agent in terms of standards oversight and compliance.] We license our manuals to our clients — they don't own them — so when they leave, they're leaving both the manuals and the oversight behind. In our case, we do 90 percent of the work required for IS-BAO participation while our clients focus on conforming to the program."

As any operations manual is a "living document" (or should be), Baldwin has set up the program so that clients can continuously modify their manuals as conditions change through their link to the proprietary section of BAI's Web site. "Because we own the template and license it to our customers, this allows us to keep it current and inform our clients of changes via a page on the Web site," Baldwin said.

While the system is set up to be accessed via the Web, portions of it are available on CD. "Whenever clients log on, they will see a note on the home page that changes have been made to the manual," Baldwin continued. "We recognize the need for strong SOPs as specified in the ops manual. You have to have a standard to start from, and that's the manual. Then you need a safety-management program to validate that you're operating to the standard."

The safety-management validation program consists of three

components. The first involves ensuring conformance to the program through online self-evaluation every six to eight weeks, while the second is the aforementioned site visits by BAI personnel. The third component, based on input from a series of online forms and reports

completed and filed by operators and e-surveys circulated by BAI, is a mechanism intended to rate the operator's safety and risk-management status in comparison to other participants in the program.

Online Risk Assessment

"We have provided an easy method to file a safety report into our system that can then be reviewed [by BAI personnel] and posted on the Web site," Baldwin elaborated. "Then there is a risk-assessment form that a client can use

to investigate and resolve safety issues." For example, an SOP for minimum runway length can be modified if the aircraft is capable of handling a given minimum length, and the form walks the operator through a risk-assessment process. "If the risk is too great, then you don't attempt to land at a particular field. This gives you a process for making a risk assessment. There are three forms distributed to our clients covering the policy waiver [as in the minimum runway length example], hazard reporting and risk assessment.

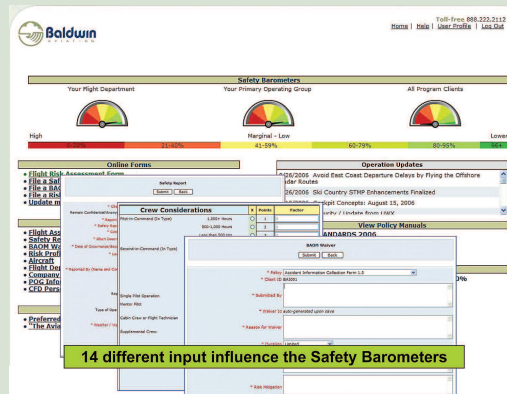
The shared-services component of Baldwin's program is delivered through partnerships with a variety of contracting companies able to provide BAI volume discounts. Two essential shared services cited by Baldwin are dispatching and maintenance. "We contract with dispatchers to deliver services to groups of clients," Baldwin said. "Another example is maintenance services, which we are able to contract to repair stations, a very unique concept, as the goal is to pair our clients with the best services for the most attractive prices."

Among BAI's partners are Universal Aviation for online weather and flight planning, and Private Jet Mech of Florida, which provides what Baldwin described as "a Triple-A-like service" to coordinate maintenance support for AOGs, as well as maintenance oversight as a separate service; Air Care Crews and Aviation Personnel International for both temporary and full-time crew support; Guardian Jet for sales, acquisition and market research for aircraft valuations and sales support in case a client wants to sell an aircraft and purchase another; Exclusive Air for charter brokering; and Lucille Fisher's Quality Resources, which writes and maintains the IS-BAO standards manuals. "Those are our key partners," Baldwin said. "And we also partner with Clear Compliance, a software vendor that provides the Web-based application that drives our site."

The program should be attractive to aviation insurers, Baldwin claimed, as it reduces risk by supporting the small operator with resources not otherwise available in-house.

BAI's full program is marketed on an annual subscription basis for \$28,000, which Baldwin claimed averages close to the cost of a one-time audit from one of the established auditing agencies. "While the cost of some audits can run as high as \$35,000 each," he said, "I'd like to point out that, in a sense, under our program, you are being audited once a day."

To counter the kind of resistance from some small operators



described in the main text of this report, Baldwin announced at last month's NBAA Convention a less-expensive, truncated version of the program dubbed BAI Lite. "To attract more small operators, we are offering a new option in our program that essentially eliminates the annual audit, which hitherto has been a roadblock for some small operators," Baldwin said. "We figure that with this program we can at least bring them the kernel of the full program, the IS-BAO-based ops manual and safety-management components, and that in and of itself will be an improvement over what some operators are doing."

BAI Lite eliminates POG directors, site visits and the annual audit. "So the BAI Lite repackaging we believe will be more attractive to the small operators who will not be threatened by the prospect of an audit," Baldwin said. "We're hopeful that once exposed to a standards program based on IS-BAO they will ultimately go for the full program." The BAI Lite annual subscription will be offered for "under \$7,000."

A Jet Aviation Solution

Far from being a newcomer to flight department assistance, Jet Aviation's Flight Support Solutions program has been in existence for 20 years in Europe but was brought to North America only this spring. According to Jet Aviation's David Deitch, who markets the service, it offers flight departments "the opportunity to supplement and enhance their range of services from a menu of choices including scheduling, dispatch, crew requirements, maintenance, tax issues and FAA, DOT and NTSB requirements. It allows the department to work with Jet Aviation to basically develop a customized, personalized approach to enhance and supplement their own programs. It will optimize their time and energy and in the end, save them money."

The program is divided into two main areas, operations support and sourcing, and users can choose from a single service or a bundled package. Deitch described the sourcing component as "assistance at a lower cost than doing it on your own to increase the value of the aircraft" and listed areas covered as insurance, fuel purchasing, crew training, maintenance support and negotiations, and OEM parts. He added that Jet Aviation maintains relationships with all the major business aircraft manufacturers, according to the advantage of volume discounting on parts and the ability to pass savings on to Flight Support Solutions customers.

Under the program expense and financial reporting can be sent to one Jet Aviation location through the mechanism of a branded MasterCard backed by ComData of New York. This includes the aircraft chartering function, as well, which can be secured through the Jet Aviation MasterCard.

Deitch claimed the operations support function is available anywhere in the world for catering, hotels, cars and reservations. "We outsource quite a bit of the work to handlers and also have a full-time international planning department at our Teterboro office that can arrange for customs, handling, airport reservations and flight planning, both in-house by Jet Aviation and outsourced to Universal Aviation," he said. "Flight following and reporting the aircraft's location and status to the customer's headquarters is available, as are crew briefings, travel and entertainment."

Economies of Scale

Maintenance support is one of the program's keystones. "We allow our customers to benefit from economies of scale," Deitch said.

"We do the maintenance coordination, outsourcing, work-scope evaluation and bidding it all to the providers. We do the negotiations with the repair stations, analyze, evaluate and critique the providers, then present the bids to the owner." After the aircraft is ferried to the chosen facility, Jet Aviation then monitors the process to ensure that the repair station meets the quote. "We help manage the asset and maintain a higher value, constantly monitoring the process," Deitch said.

Jet Aviation can also arrange flight department audits, as well as handling HR functions such as personnel reviews, background checks, job training, and salary and benefit package determination. "We can do conformity inspections of the aircraft from date of delivery for either [FAR] Part 91 or 135 operations," Deitch said, "and can prepare ops manuals or review existing ones and perform safety inspections. We send teams to the location as well as our Jet Aviation division heads."

These might include the company's safety officer to perform an audit, a standards supervisor to oversee preparation of an operations manual, the vice president of maintenance to review a customer's maintenance program and record keeping, a quality assurance inspector, a flight attendant trainer, even the Jet Aviation chief pilot to examine standards and crew qualifications and training. "Our flight department is an extension of their flight department," Deitch said, "and operators can have access to these services throughout the world."

Jet Aviation's partners in the Flight Support Solutions endeavor include FlightSafety International, for training "at our pricing level," Deitch said; JSSI for fixed-price maintenance programs, bundled with Jet Aviation's maintenance coordination services; MedAire, for 24-hour emergency medical support and security assistance, medical training and custom-made medical response kits; AIG/Marsh for insurance coverage, which Deitch claimed under some circumstances, "because of Jet Aviation's level of involvement," may be able to provide lower premiums than currently available otherwise; and Merc Fuel, a "preferred supplier" under Jet's fuel program.

"If a client wants Part 135 charters," Deitch said, "we have an affiliation with New World Jet [through which foreign-owned Jet Aviation operates its charter program], and they can also place the owner's aircraft on their 135 certificate to charter it out if the owner wishes to earn some income on the aircraft to defray expenses."

Getting into the Flight Support Solutions program involves simply completing a customer information application, a credit card application and a service-selection menu. The customer can complete the application online or directly with a sales rep. After the completion of the application package, Jet Aviation will issue the branded credit card, which doubles as customer identification. "It's a very simple process," Deitch said.

Pricing is arranged by aircraft category — small, midsize and large. "Each has a program, within which is a menu with the services priced individually," Deitch explained. "Some are priced hourly and some monthly. The credit card is the subscription to the program: you can add, delete or bundle. We also offer Web-based expense reporting where you can report expenses through a data link." For operational support, for example, which includes scheduling, dispatch, flight following, fuel-purchase management and global trip support, the range for small aircraft is \$2,000 a month, \$2,500 a month for a midsize and \$2,800 per month for a large aircraft.

**One Size Does Not Fit All:
IS-BAO Is 'Scalable'**

Speaking from his home in British Columbia, Rohr emphasized that IS-BAO was designed to be scalable to the individual operation. "The IS-BAO was developed to be applicable to a broad range of flight departments from a single aircraft operation to the large multi-aircraft fleet operations," he pointed out. "In fact, the first operator that was registered in the program was a Canadian one with a Citation and three pilots."

Anticipating the impact of the new class of very light jets (VLJs) on the aviation industry, lately IBAC and the NBAA have focused on a supplement to the IS-BAO materials that addresses operating standards for small turbine-powered aircraft and the fact that the majority of VLJ owner/pilots will probably have little or no experience operating in the flight levels. Also addressing the controversial subject of single-pilot turbine operations, the supplement explains how the VLJ operator can implement a specially tailored version of the standards program, as well as containing a generic operations manual template specifically for single-pilot ops.

"Safety management could be a high priority for the owner/pilot getting involved in the new operating environment presented

by an aircraft like a VLJ," Rohr, a former Canadian DOT deputy administrator for aviation, said. "We have tried to build programs, as described in the materials, that will work in this regard. We've done a risk analysis and developed programs and procedures designed to keep both the workload in the cockpit down and establish limits, like duty time, which reduce pressure on the owner/pilot."

Examining accidents involving private aircraft of all classes, perceived pressures from passengers, such as executives or family members, to commit to a flight under a variety of stressful conditions — weather and fatigue being the most common — are often identified as major contributors. "The risk-management component of the VLJ supplement is designed to establish a standard such that you will not allow yourself to get into a position where you're under pressure to, for example, conduct a flight at the end of a long day when you're exhausted from a full day's work," Rohr said.

The VLJ supplement to IS-BAO also encourages owner/pilots to work with their support entities, such as repair stations, to develop written procedures promoting clear lines of communication. Such procedures can go a long way toward eliminating

problems later by avoiding what Rohr diplomatically described as "bureaucratic entanglements."

**NBAA Focuses
on the Small Operator**

Small operators that join the NBAA have a wealth of support available to them, especially in terms of training materials designed to enable them to fulfill their management responsibilities. "We recognize that companies that are operating one aircraft have some constraints, the most common being time and people resources," said Mike Nichols, the organization's director for tax, economics and operational services. To address this, the NBAA is re-evaluating its products and services with the goal of making them more useful to the small operator. This initiative has also culminated in the introduction of a new publication marketed through the NBAA Web site titled *Flight Department Essentials*.

"It's designed to give a high-level overview of issues that typically impinge on the flight department," Nichols said. "It serves two purposes: one, for companies that may be considering whether business aviation is right for them to set up an in-house flight department and, second, for those that already operate an aircraft and need to be more organized in order to properly face issues as they come up."

As flight operations are assumed to be the core competency of a chief pilot or aviation manager, they aren't covered specifically in *Flight Department Essentials*; however, training is addressed from a management, or overview, perspective. "For example," Nichols explained, "we touch on things like hiring pilots, a typical job description, and what to look out for, but not how many hours have been logged or schedule requirements, as these are issues specific to the individual operator."

IBAC's Rohr also pointed out that *Flight Department Essentials* is a direct complement to the VLJ supplement to IS-BAO. The publication "incorporates the work NBAA did on VLJ training issues," he said, and the two are designed to work together. "The NBAA Safety Committee addressed the first initiative; it worked with Eclipse Aviation and others to determine pilot typing, mentoring and management issues. That's when we [at IBAC] got involved to develop the VLJ IS-BAO supplement and template. It all comes together as an integrated package."

Learning From a Distance

Nichols also emphasized the NBAA's distance-learning program as a resource for the busy small flight department manager. "NBAA recognizes that it is not likely or practical for a small operator to stop oper-

NBAA Resources for the Small Operator

Among the resources available to small flight departments are products and services the NBAA makes available to member companies. The advocacy group's Connie Penne, who oversees membership services, provided this abbreviated list:

- ▶ The *NBAA Management Guide*, which Penne considers "the basic how-to book for all flight departments" and quotes a corporate member who claimed his firm joined the NBAA seeking "a professional source of information" to develop a flight department and that the *Management Guide* "helped set everything up." It is free with NBAA membership.
- ▶ *Flight Department Essentials*, a self-help workbook covering all aspects of setting up and running an in-house flight department described in the main text of this report. Sells to members for \$95.
- ▶ The Operations Service Group, essentially the NBAA's help desk for operators.
- ▶ The *NBAA Safety Journal*, a publication of the Ops Service Group, which is also free with membership.
- ▶ The NBAA Web site (www.nbaa.org), one of the most comprehensive Web sites in existence, consisting of thousands of pages of information covering every aspect of flight department management and operations. The proprietary section is open to members who receive passwords when they join the organization.
- ▶ NBAA "AirMail," an open forum on the proprietary side of the Web site for members to post opinions and experiences, ask questions, and share information. A networking tool free with membership.
- ▶ NBAA "Update," also part of the Web site with e-mailed weekly alerts to members, described by Penne as keeping "small business members current with news, trends, threats to business. . . ."

While not yet in existence, initiatives for small operators under consideration by NBAA management, based on recommendations from focus groups, include a mentoring program, possibly staffed by retired corporate pilots and other business aviation professionals, and a standing committee specifically to address services to small operators.

ations to send its people to a one- or two-day training program because of time constraints," he said. "You can't just stop the operation. So we have a distance learning program in development and have hired a video company to tape our conferences and seminars for those operators unable to attend them."

NBAA President Bolen wanted to make clear that "One of the things we're finding is that some people have misperceived us as being more about big companies and big flight departments and big airplanes, and while that's certainly part of the makeup of our membership, it is not exclusive. We want to make sure that we're addressing that misperception."

Bolen cited the NBAA's *Management Guide*; the "Air Mail" section of its Web site, which often serves as a forum for discussing issues impacting on small flight operations; and the NBAA Operations Service Group as not being exclusive to any one segment of the organization's membership. "It is difficult for some [smaller operators] to attend our seminars," he said, "so we offer podcasting and video conferences to address that. Companies of all sizes can use these resources," he said, "as they're oriented



Maintenance is the keystone of Jet Aviation's program.

Jet Aviation

toward the entire business aviation community. Everyone in the community has to understand that we are there for them."

Bolen also noted the representatives of small companies who serve on the NBAA's board of directors "provide feedback to us on their needs and the way we communicate to the smaller operator." Three of those directors are Jim Cooling of the Cooling & Herbers law firm in Kansas City, a board member for seven years who flies a Piper Seneca in his practice; Ron Duncan, CEO

of a telecom cable operation based in Alaska, whose company operates an Astra; and Mike Herman, who founded North American Communications and operates a Citation CJ3 out of San Diego.

"Unfortunately," BAI's Baldwin observed, "regulatory compliance and operational standards are difficult to achieve without the proper resources. If we don't find solutions to these challenges soon, the small, under-resourced flight department will be a thing of the past. Let's not let that happen." **B&CA**