As bizjet operations rebuild, so does industry optimism

For the FBO business, 2013 may go down as the year the industry truly began its slow, tentative climb out of the trough. U.S. business jet activity, both domestic and international, rose over 2012, which in turn saw a modest gain over 2011. At almost 3.4 million operations, domestic activity last year increased by 2.4 percent. According to the FAA, it’s an improvement of more than 79,000 operations but still 19 percent lower than the record high of 4.191,602 operations set in 2006. International operations last year recovered reach 67,822, an increase of nearly 26 percent over the previous year.

In its annual review of business aircraft activity, industry data provider Argus indicated that Part 135 flight activity alone rose 11.3 percent last year, with an increase in each month year-over-year. The company flight activity alone rose 11.3 percent last year, with an increase in each month year-over-year. Argus' 2012 Annual Report To Industry indicates that Part 135 flight activity alone rose 11.3 percent last year, with an increase in each month year-over-year. Argus indicated that the company flight activity alone rose 11.3 percent last year, with an increase in each month year-over-year. Argus expects the trend to be robust all this year.

As bizjet operations rebuild, so does industry optimism. "It's a continual remolding cycle," explained general manager John Tary, who noted that the company last year updated its conference rooms, which out 25 and 25, respectively, adding audiovisual capabilities. Based for this year is a $100,000 redo of the FBO's front desk.

FBO’s mission statement reads in part, “to deliver a superior, innovative and continually improving customer experience,” and its top score of 9.7 in passenger amenities made it clear that our survey respondents believe the facility to be the mark. The company’s ability to make sure its terminal is equipped with the latest passenger conveniences, from wireless printers that can be accessed by FBOs are facing with higher cost of fuel, which drives up the base price. At the other end is the more savvy aircraft owners were waiting for an uptick so they could see their fuel’s Air Elite network, the company's mission statement reads, “Better service makes it worth the trip.”

AirFite, a Doral-based FBO is one of the first to introduce à la carte pricing as grounds to avoid an FBO. “There’s a noticeable difference,” he said. Indeed, more than a quarter of the respondents in this year’s survey listed à la carte pricing model for items that are traditionally covered. "It’s a good week and a bad week, so the only thing I would say is that the latter half of 2013 and the beginning of 2014 have been more stable." AirFite is evidence that you don’t need a brand-new facility to achieve high recognition by customers. The Southern Californian FBO this year garnered the highest overall score in the history of the AIN FBO survey. The company, which is being quoted like a proverb in a lawyer's press.

To counter this, AFB has noted a trend in which FBOs are considering charging customers on a à la carte pricing model for items that are traditionally provided free. Customers have come to expect such "treasuries" as newspapers, ice and coffee, but those amenities do add up for the FBO. They throw in extra costs, such as insurance, which we would run as $1,000 a day for some locations, said Enticknap, and it becomes imperative for FBOs to seek revenues from sources other than fuel.

While this model has existed successfully outside North America, notably in locations where FBOs do not have any control over aircraft fueling beyond possibly scheduling the arrival of the tanker truck. Enticknap said any U.S. FBO that implements such pricing should expect backlash from customers. "In the U.S. there is much reluctance to reimburse services, because no FBO wants to be the first,” he said. Indeed, more than a quarter of the respondents in this year’s survey listed à la carte pricing as grounds to avoid an FBO.

The Top 4 FBOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>FBO Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AirFite</td>
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<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Million Air Burbank</td>
<td>Burbank, Calif.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Galaxy Aviation</td>
<td>Orlando, Fla.</td>
<td>8.7</td>
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</table>

By Curt Epstein

FBO SURVEY RULES AND METHODOLOGY

This report of AIN's 2014 FBO survey covers fixed-base operators in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, South America and the Caribbean—in other words, the Western Hemisphere. Last month we reported our FBOs in the Eastern Hemisphere. The participants in conducting surveys asking about the service that FBOs--provide their customers and reporting results of the results from these surveys since 2001. Initially, we sent a paper survey questionnaire by mail to qualified subscribers in the U.S., these being pilots, flight attendants and dispatchers. The people put on a make arrangements with FBOs. In later years, qualified subscribers in the rest of North America and the rest of the world. In 2008, AIN revised the FBO survey online. AIN has continued to add more and more FBOs each year and over the last two years a number of editor's competitions have been held. The survey questionnaire is done annually in AIN's in-house newsletter and the January issue of Airline International News. AIN invited all qualified FBOs to participate in the survey, each FBO was sent a direct link to enter the website, we received a number of individualities from filling out the questionnaire more than once.

For the AIN FBO survey, each FBO's rating is calculated by totaling the scores from all the respondents who participated in the survey for that FBO. An FBO's overall score is calculated by adding all the individual category ratings received by that FBO and dividing the resulting sum by the total number of all category ratings received by the FBO in other words, a total of 35 categories. An FBO's overall score is calculated by adding all the individual category ratings received by that FBO and dividing the resulting sum by the total number of all category ratings received by the FBO in other words, a total of 35 categories. An FBO's overall score is calculated by adding all the individual category ratings received by that FBO and dividing the resulting sum by the total number of all category ratings received by the FBO in other words, a total of 35 categories.

The Top Rated FBOs in the Americas (By Overall Average)

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<td>Galaxy Aviation</td>
<td>Orlando, Fla.</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Top Rated FBOs in the Americas (By Region)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>FBO Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>AirFite</td>
<td>Long Beach, Calif.</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Million Air Anchorage</td>
<td>Anchorage, Alaska</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Million Air Burbank</td>
<td>Burbank, Calif.</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>Galaxy Aviation</td>
<td>Orlando, Fla.</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The Top Rated FBOs In The Americas By Region Pages 22 & 24

In 2012, AIN conducted the survey, which was mailed to qualified subscribers in the rest of North America and the rest of the world. In 2008, AIN revised the FBO survey online. AIN has continued to add more and more FBOs each year and over the last two years we have received a number of competitions. The survey questionnaire is done annually in AIN's in-house newsletter and the January issue of Airline International News. AIN invited all qualified FBOs to participate in the survey, each FBO was sent a direct link to enter the website, we received a number of individualities from filling out the questionnaire more than once.

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By Curt Epstein
Los Angeles Metro Area
AIRFLITE AVIATION SERVICES
KLGB 9.6
MILLION AIR BURBANK
KBUR 8.7
MAGUIRE AVIATION
KMEM (NOW SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT)
KVNY 8.6
ATLANTIC AVIATION
KBOS 7.9
SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT
KSN 8.4
San Diego Metro Area
LANDMARK AVIATION
KSAN 6.8
Los Angeles Metro Area
LANDMARK AVIATION
KIAD 8.0
SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT
KIAH 8.2
LANDMARK AVIATION
KHT 8.8
SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT
KBNA 7.9
Washington D.C. Metro Area
WILSON AIR CENTER CHARLOTTE
KCLT 9.0
LANDMARK AVIATION
KEDU 8.0
WASHINGTON D.C. METRO AREA
SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT
KAD 8.2
LANDMARK AVIATION
KAD 8.0
SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT
KBWI 7.8
Orlando/Tampa Metro Area
TAMPA INTL JET CENTER
KTPA 9.5
GALAXY AVIATION
KMCO 8.7
SHOWALTER FLYING SVC
KORL 8.7
SHELTER
KORL 7.7
Palm Beach/Fort Lauderdale Metro Area
BANYAN AIR SERVICE
KFXE 8.1
NATIONAL JETS
KFLP 8.1
STUART JET CENTER
KSUA 8.1
JET AVIATION
KPBI 8.0
SHELTER
KFLP 7.6
SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT
KPBI 8.6
Fort Myers/Naples Metro Area
BASE OPS AT PAGE FIELD
KFMY 8.9
PRIVATESKY AVIATION SVCS
KPSE 8.2
NAPLES AIRPORT AUTHORITY
KAPP 8.0
Miami Metro Area
LANDMARK AVIATION
KAMA 8.4
MIAMI EXECUTIVE AVIATION
KOPF 8.2
ORION JET CENTER
KOPF 8.7
Florida Panhandle
DESTIN JET
KDS 9.1
Memphis/Nashville Metro Area
WASHINGTON D.C. METRO AREA
SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT
KMEM 7.5
LANDMARK AVIATION
KMEM 8.0
SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT
KMEM 7.9
SIGNATURE FLIGHT SUPPORT
KMEM 7.5
The facility, which is six years into its 40-year lease, requires little in the way of upgrades, according to **AIN** readers, as its 12,000-sq-ft terminal shared top honors for facilities in this year’s survey. Flight crews particularly like the spacious 1,800-sq-ft crew lounge, which includes a theater-style TV viewing area, attached workout room with bathroom and shower, computer work stations, a pair of snooze rooms and separate video gaming room.

JA also operates a Part 145 repair station, parts department, an interiors completion shop, an aircraft detailing business that serves many surrounding airports, and one of the country’s largest avionics shops (the FBO draws its initials from Joliet Avionics), as well as a flight school and an aircraft charter/management division.

## Tampa International Jet Center
Tampa International Airport (KTPA), Tampa, Fla.  
9.5

In operation since 2005, **Tampa International Jet Center** (TIJC) has spent most of its existence in the upper echelons of **AIN**’s annual FBO Survey, and according to company president Philip Botana, the explanation for that success is simple. “There’s no rocket science to what we do in the FBO industry, but I think it’s the execution, over time proving to customers and flight departments that the same things they like will happen each time they arrive.” That consistency was noted by our readers, who awarded TIJC the highest rating of 9.7 in the category of customer service representatives—a new category in the survey—and reflects the company’s philosophy of providing the same level of attention to all customers, from the smallest piston-powered airplane to the largest business jet. “You never know who is in that airplane,” noted Botana. “If we treat everybody the same all of the time, we’ll never regret an opportunity to expand our business.”

Part of that successful equation is the retention of employees, several of whom have been with the company since its inception. “We have a small staff who’ve all been here for a long time, and they are invested in how well they do their jobs every day,” Botana told **AIN**. “I’ve had hundreds of pilots say it’s so reassuring to walk in the place and see the same faces behind the counter as they did the last few times they were here and know they can count on them.”

**TIJC**, which claims a market share of 60 percent at the airport, saw a modest fuel volume gain last year over 2012, which actually translated to more of a statistical increase, as **Tampa** hosted the Republican National Convention in 2012 and the FBO saw an 80,000-gallon boost in jet-A sales as a result.

The facility has nearly 110,000 sq ft of occupied hangar space and is home to 50 turbine-powered aircraft, ranging from several King Air 200s to a **Global Express**. Encouraged by a recent increase in tenant requests, TIJC is in negotiations to add a 33,000-sq-ft hangar. Also slated is an interior refresh for the terminal. “Now that we’re nine years old, we’re getting a

### Table: FBOs Showing the Largest Increase in Overall Average from 2013 to 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FBO</th>
<th>Airport Code</th>
<th>Airport</th>
<th>2014 Overall Average</th>
<th>2013 Overall Average</th>
<th>Change 2013 - 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maguire Aviation (New Signature Flight Support)</td>
<td>KMWY</td>
<td>Van Nuys</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napa Jet Center</td>
<td>KAPC</td>
<td>Napa County</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe Air Center</td>
<td>KSAF</td>
<td>Santa Fe Municipal</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson Executive Airport</td>
<td>KHND</td>
<td>Henderson Executive</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Million Air Anchorage</td>
<td>PANIC</td>
<td>Ted Stevens Anchorage International</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature Flight Support</td>
<td>KSTP</td>
<td>St. Paul Downtown Holman Field</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay Lacy Aviation</td>
<td>KNVY</td>
<td>Van Nuys</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landmark Aviation</td>
<td>KNEW</td>
<td>Lakefront</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landmark Aviation</td>
<td>KMA</td>
<td>Miami International</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature Flight Support</td>
<td>KSGA</td>
<td>John Wayne Airport-Orange County</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*FBOs with the same increase are listed in alphabetical order. Source: **AIN** 2013 FBO Survey*
With its origins as a private club for Denver-area jet owners, XJet has earned high rankings in the AN’s survey for the past four years. The company, which opened its doors to transient aircraft in 2009, prides itself on “5-star” service, with potential employees undergoing a three-month trial period before acceptance. As the backbone of its customer service, XJet maintains extensive dossiers on its customers’ preferences. “We’re kind of database crazy,” explained company president and CEO Josh Stew-

“Fargo Jet Center”

...art of our facility “feeling like they’ve just been there before.”

“Destin Jet Center”

...one of the three most important factors you look for when choosing an FBO?”

The company ended last year with fuel sales (Airfuel) up 9 percent, to 1.65 mil-

“Fargo Jet Center”

...the only thing FBOs really have to sell is service and image,” he told AN. “Everything else takes care of itself.” Black-

“Destin Jet Center”

...to be followed later this year by a location in Europe.

“Fargo Jet Center”

...33% of scores of nine or above in every category that AN’s annual FBO Survey for 2014 ranked XJet 11th, with a

“Fargo Jet Center”

...the FBO takes care of those things.” On holidays, XJet takes care of everything its customers expect.

“Fargo Jet Center”

...the customer refreshment area, last year was a remodeling of the customer service reception area. “We’re constantly pushing our-

“XJet”

...service reception area. “We really are trying to realign the space, and we

“XJet”

• April 2014 • Aviation International News

The company has 450 ten-

“Fargo Jet Center”

...a ramp-side café, a pilot shop. According to director Bill Moltenbrey, BJC expects a boost to service the location to better accommodate their needs on their next visit. Night or day, a flight-support concierge meets each arriving aircraft on the ramp. “The idea behind that is she’s got a radio, she coordinates with the line ambassadors and we can handle any request right at the steps,” said Stewart.

“XJet”

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“XJet”

...service reception area. “We really are trying to realign the space, and we

“Fargo Jet Center”

...a Cessna to several Falcon 2000s, the company is in full capacity in its 47,000 sq ft of hangar space, spurring it to launch a phase-two expansion this year—a $10 mil-

“XJet”

...the company plans to open XJet Dubai next month, to be followed later this year by a location in Europe.

“Fargo Jet Center”

...to be followed later this year by a location in Europe.

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“Destin Jet Center”

...the customer service reception area. The facility has 100,000 sq ft of hangar space, housing more than 30 turbine-powered aircraft ranging from a Bombardier BD-100 to a Challenger 300, and the company plans to open another hangar on its 23-acre leasable this summer.

“Fargo Jet Center”

...the only thing FBOs really have to sell is service and image,” he told AN. “Everything else takes care of itself.” Black-
Purchased at the end of the year by Atlantic Aviation, this location is no stranger to AIN’s FBO survey, having raised the bar at MKC when its newly built facility opened in 2010. This past year, the location saw a 30-percent gain in business over 2012, according to general manager Kyle Eiserer. To accommodate that growth, the company extended its parking lot last spring.

In this year’s survey, the FBO saw its highest rating in the facility category, and among its favorite attractions is a well-equipped exercise room, located prominently rather than shunted to a remote corner of the building. “Since most crewmembers spend at least a few hours at an FBO, the fitness facility provides an outlet for folks to exercise and stay healthy, which we feel is important,” noted Eiserer. The pilot area also features locker rooms and sleep rooms where crewmembers can spend the night.

The location’s 28,500-sq-ft hangar is currently home to 10 turbine aircraft, the largest a Challenger 300. It can accommodate aircraft the size of a G650. Another 7,000-sq-ft hangar is under construction.

Given that Kansas City renowned for its barbeque, the FBO has been known to favor crewmembers and passengers with bottles of BBQ rub so can they take the KC flavor home with them.
Monterey Regional Airport, dwarfing even the airline terminal. Home to approximately a dozen turbine aircraft, including a Global Express, the location’s hangars are occupied each year by aircraft heading to major events such as the annual Pro-Am golf tournament and the Concours d’Elegance, one of the crown jewels in the automobile collecting circuit, at nearby Pebble Beach.

Offering discounted fuel for Hawaii-bound aircraft, the Avfuel-branded location suits operators seeking quick turns with no congestion. Despite its name, the FBO treats all customers equally, according to operations manager Michael Heilpern.

“Just because somebody comes in in a small single-engine airplane does not make them any less important than the guy who rolls up in a Gulfstream,” he said.

The location earned its highest score in the customer service representative category. “Great customer service is not only about executing the requested services, it is also about fulfilling the unspoken needs of our customers as well,” said customer service manager Kawai Lopez. “By taking the time to really talk to our customers, we are able to develop these relationships, thus allowing us to take our service to another level.”

National Jets
Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport (FLL), Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

While its overall score increased by only 0.4 from last year, that was enough to catapult Fort Lauderdale-based National Jets from the top 30 percent in AIN’s 2012 FBO
Survey to the top 10 percent this year. The family-owned and -run company received excellent scores for both its line and customer service. “Outside safety, customer service is our number-one priority,” noted general manager Russ Boy Jr.

In operation for 46 years at KFLL, the company traces its aviation lineage back to the mid-1940s, and in addition to FBO services the provider also operates a Part 135 aircraft charter/management business, a Part 145 maintenance station, an avionics shop and even its own air ambulance service using four company-owned
Pentastar Aviation
Oakland County International Airport (KPTK), Pontiac, Mich.

While some might consider it an accomplishment to be the highest-rated service provider at an airport with six FBOs, Pentastar Aviation at Detroit-area PTK regularly ranks among the top FBOs in the country, according to AIN readers. The company, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, began as Chynyder’s flight department and has grown over the years to include five hangars providing 130,000 sq ft of space, a Park 145 Class IV repair station, an aircraft charter management department, aircraft brokerage and the in-house “Five-star Gourmet” catering kitchen. The FBO specializes in handling large charter aircraft such as those bringing professional sports teams to town to challenge the local Tigers, Lions, Pistons and Red Wings. Such flights are processed through the “Star Gate,” a recently refurbished smaller private terminal with its own jetway, a remnant of Chrysler days.

The company has 26 based turbine aircraft from a Premier to a private MD-83, and while traffic and fuel volumes at PTK have fallen slightly over the past year, Pentastar logged a 5-percent increase in fuel sales as well as an increase in market share. “Our mission is to exceed our customers’ expectations by adhering to the highest standards of safety and quality,” said company president and CEO Greg Schmidt.

Signature Flight Support
St. Paul Downtown Airport/ Holman Field (KSTP), St. Paul, Minn.

It’s rare for one of the locations from a large chain to land amid the top performers in the AIN FBO Survey, but this year Signature Flight Support’s facility at St. Paul Downtown Airport earned that honor. The location well represents the “safe, personalized and consistent customer service” that the company’s Signature Service Promise focuses on delivering, with scores of 9.5 for line service and 9.6 for its customer service representatives. “The group at STP has developed a safety and service culture that has resulted in exemplary performance and customer satisfaction for several years,” said general manager Clint Kummer. “As a group they are proactive and focused on safety and the needs of our customers.”

The location occupies 38 acres at the airport, with 12 of them devoted to ramp space and 200,000 sq ft of hangars that shelter some 20 aircraft, from a King Air to a G550. According to Kummer, the location has seen business grow over the past year as the economy shows signs of recovery.

Infrastructure improvements over the past year include installation of LED lighting in all hangars, and the roof on one of them will be replaced soon. With this year’s Major League Baseball All-Star Game slated for the twin city of Minneapolis, the location expects to see a boost in traffic for the Mid-Summer Classic.

Stuart Jet Center
Witham Field Airport (KSUA) Stuart, Fla.

This family-owned and -operated business, which has been at the airport for the past 34 years, made a jump from a top-30-percent finish in last year’s survey to the top 10 percent this year, attributable in part to its survey-leading 9.6 score for line service. The company is a firm believer in NATAs Safety 1st Professional Line Service Training program, with each of its line technicians conducting annual recurrent training.

The FBO’s leasehold occupies 53 acres at Witham Field, including more than 15 acres of lighted ramp space and 250,000 sq ft of hangars (a new 24,000-sq-ft hangar opened over the past year), which are home to more than 20 turbine-powered business jets ranging from Eclipse 500 to G550. Its 5,000-sq-ft terminal offers a pilot lounge with sleep room and showers, a 16-seat AV-equipped conference room, crew cars and on-site car rental.

In the past, SJC has sent its customer service staff for Ritz-Carlton training, a factor that might have contributed to the FBO’s 9.5 score in the CSR category. Manager Jeff Capen told AIN that the company, located in the heart of baseball’s spring training “Grapefruit League” towns, tasks its CSRs with anticipating the needs of its customers, to under-promise and over-deliver, and to “become familiar with our customers with the same professional, friendly faces year after year.”

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