



ACJ Prestige Cabin layout

An inside job

When you have spent millions on an aircraft, you want to make sure the interior meets your requirements exactly. FlyCorporate Senior Writer **Liz Moscrop** asks those in the know the best way to make that happen in today's completion-centre capacity crunch.

Beauty, they say, is in the eye of the beholder. However, it can be important to balance personal tastes with what is acceptable in the marketplace, depending on how you intend to use your jet. What your aircraft looks like inside not only affects your experience, but also the resale value of your asset. But selecting a workable design, cabin layout, seats, carpets, side panels, galley, in-flight entertainment (IFE) and avionics, lighting and exterior paint can be a daunting list for anyone, especially someone buying a plane for the first time.

Take heart. According to Mark Anderson, Director of Sales for PATS Aircraft, what you want to do with your aircraft should lie at the heart of your decision

making. "It is important to understand your mission profile and what comfort level you are looking to have. If your jet is for a corporation, look at the number of people likely to be onboard. If a regular mission is 2,400 km (1,500 miles) with several people, the requirements will be very different compared to missions for a CEO who regularly flies around the world and who will need more amenities and a greater comfort level."

It is also essential to involve everyone who is likely to use the aircraft, including passengers and pilots, as well as your family if you are using it for personal trips. Says Ed Harris, VP of Sales and Marketing, Aircraft Completions at the Indianapolis Jet Center: "Pre-planning

is crucial. Have a solid list in mind. Talk to your chief pilot about maintenance needs and get opinions on what would work well."

Eugen Hartl, Jet Aviation's VP of Completions and Modifications at Basel, recommends looking through magazines, as well as manufacturer and completion centre websites. He says: "We often establish an onboard environment by looking at our customers' houses, boats or other aircraft. Our people are trained to generate concepts by looking at clients' homes or palaces to get a sense of the offices they inhabit. This helps to establish their tastes in colours, furnishings and fabrics."



Choosing your centre

The next step in turning your dreams into reality is to select a completion centre you feel comfortable with. Apart from Airbus and Boeing who sell their aircraft green (that is, without an interior installed), most manufacturers have their own in-house completion centers and a list of facilities they recommend.

Hartl urges thorough research. Ask questions like: Does the facility have experience with this type of aircraft? Is it an authorised service centre in case there is a complicated engineering problem? What kind of workload does it have? He says: "Go to an established centre where you go through design milestones, such as the preliminary design review, the critical design review, and the final review."

Manufacturers and completion houses will usually have expert in-house staff to help you. They will show you samples of leathers, carpets, textiles, veneers, cabinetry and other furnishings, and will frequently offer three-dimensional (3D) renditions of interior configurations, either in mockup or computer form. Peter van Oostrum, Business Development Manager for Fokker Services in the Netherlands, advises asking about additional airworthiness regulations your preferred layout may require. "Work closely with your designer before you absolutely finally settle on your floor plan. We like to show 3D renderings of aircraft to the utmost detail. This is typically a great help in shaping customers' final requirements."

It can also speed up the installation. Dassault Falcon Jet's Arkansas-based Little Rock facility fuses ultra-modern technology and traditional highly-skilled practices with a system it calls the Product Lifecycle Management process. Says Christian Sasso, SVP and General Manager: "We create a very accurate virtual model. From that we know what we have to do in manufacturing. With a full digital model of the specification we can expect that when we build a cabinet and wiring, for example, the digital model will be compliant with the aircraft."



Timing

Even an established and highly-skilled interiors house needs time to learn an aircraft. When Lufthansa Technik set up its Bombardier Challenger 850 line, the first aircraft took around six months to complete, although subsequent aircraft have been turned around more quickly. Said Bernhard Conrad then Completion Center SVP and Head of Approved Design Organization: "The first one is always part of the learning curve. You can't hurry the craftsmen on the team. They are perfectionists and love what they do. It is best to leave them to get on with it. They will deliver on time and take their time to get things exactly right."

It is wise to allow time for the exterior paint job. It typically takes nine coats of paint to spray a bizjet. If there are lines on the fuselage, they will be drawn to precision using special masking tape and will usually be hand painted.

Other key pieces of advice are the same as in any building project, set your costs and stick to your budget. Get at least three estimates, including timing and scheduling windows. It is essential to factor in extra time for complications. What if stripping your aircraft's old interior reveals hidden structural problems? Aircraft on-ground (AOG) costs can add to the bill considerably.

Ensure, too, that you stay on top of the project throughout the process. Hartl cautions: "You must stay focused and be personally attached to the process." Harris adds: "Once the process starts, listen to your key aircraft people, especially if you are not aircraft savvy yourself. If you have an elaborate material or configuration request, it will have to pass all airworthy and fire tests and be within limits." If you do not have that expertise yourself there are consultants who can help. Finally, you might want to consider the resale factor, consider what you are putting in and what you are leaving out.

Ultimately, however, it is your aircraft and should be beautiful to you in as many respects as possible. ■



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