

## SERVICES IN BUSINESS AVIATION

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*Summary: The main aim of this article is to analyse services in one department of Business Aviation Company and try to think how to improve attractiveness for the client. The paper focuses on general description of services in Business Aviation and on top of that it offers definition of services of Operational Control Centre. Last chapter of the paper describes various weaknesses of the services provided by the aircraft operator. The paper reveals some interesting facts about business aviation.*

*Key words: Business Aviation, Operational Control Centre, Customer Services*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Business Aviation can be defined as an “on demand operation of aircraft in VIP configuration with high level of comfort and services”. There are many definitions of Business Aviation available looking at it from different points of view.

Business Aviation is one of the most dynamic fields of air transportation and there are many services connected to Business Aviation (mainly ground services). For example transportation services from/to airport, hotel accommodation, catering, aircraft cleaning service and other related services.

Services in Business Aviation:

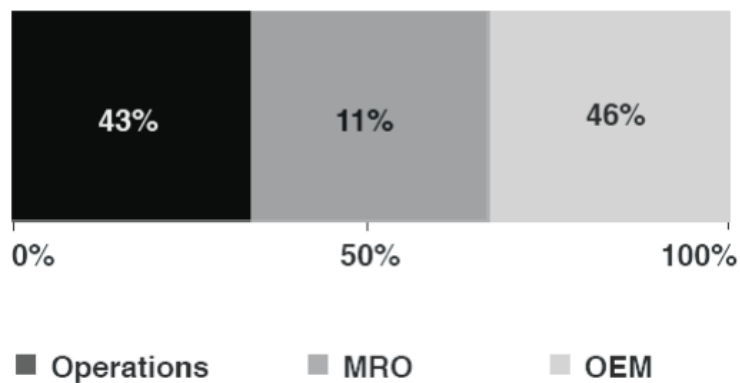
- **Aircraft Management** (Aircraft purchase assistance, Aircraft registration and operations, Aircraft administration (cost control, bookkeeping, budget control, aircraft utilization statistics), Crew management (search, selection and hiring, training and quality control checks), etc.)
- **Aircraft Maintenance** (inspection and airframe modification, Avionics repair and installation services, On-site component overhaul and repair, Long term storage management, Interior refurbishing, Scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, Comprehensive continuing airworthiness management, Airworthiness reviews)
- **FBO & Executive Handling Services** (Coordination of the flight with the Airport Authority, Arrangement of airport slot and parking position, ATC slot monitoring, Aircraft chocking and locking, Passenger and crew transport to/from aircraft, Luggage transport to/from Aircraft, VIP Lounge, Toilet service, Potable water service, Aircraft towing, Hangar parking, Aircraft exterior and interior cleaning incl. deep interior cleaning, GPU)

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- **Aircraft Sales** (Aircraft selection, Calculation of price and terms proposals, Counteroffer responses, Negotiation of the final purchase agreement, Remediation or renegotiation, deposit commitment, Delivery, documentation, purchase closing, Registration and administration of ownership)
- **Flight Planning and Support** (Worldwide flight plans, ATC flight filing, Flight clearances and landing permits, Flight tracking, Current information on air traffic and airspace, Worldwide satellite imagery and route weather briefings, Airport and FBO info along with runway analysis, NOTAM briefings, Aircraft performance data, Worldwide ground support, Post flight duties and documentation, Operational statistics)
- **Flight Charter and Brokerage** (Ensuring aircraft with crew for clients flights and coordinating all related and requested services)
- **Consulting Services** (Assessment of flying requirements and budget, Evaluation of full ownership against other methods, Explaining the total costs of ownership and operation, Detailed comparison of suitable aircraft, Explaining the total costs of ownership and operation, Purchase timing and tactics advice)
- **Travel Management** (Car or limousine rental (with or without driver), Helicopter charter, Marine transportation, Accommodation recommendations and booking, Conference & Business Meeting services)

In 2016 there were 371 000 jobs (direct and indirect) in the field of Business Aviation in Europe. Next figure suggests that 42% were operational jobs, 11% MRO jobs and 46% jobs were related to Original Equipment Manufacturer.



Source: (4)

Fig. 1 - Direct and indirect jobs in Business Aviation in Europe in 2016

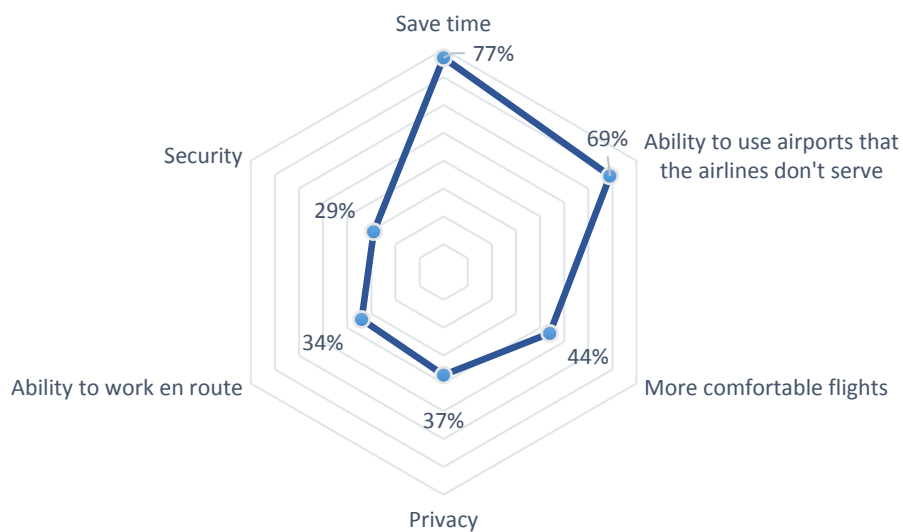
## 2. OPERATIONAL CONTROL CENTRE DEPARTMENT

Operation control Centre is department responsible for nonstop operation and complete performance and effectiveness of aviation operator. The main target of Business Aviation is to meet needs and expectations of clients focusing on high quality of services.

There is number of reasons why customers prefer business aviation to other modes of transportation:

- ability to save time
- ability to get closer to their final destination
- luxury and comfort on board
- ability to work during the entire flight in a quiet and personal environment
- security

The following graph depicts preferences of clients.



Source: (9)

Fig. 2 - Scale of business aviation customers' preferences

The OCC focuses on:

- flight organization and planning
- management of smoothness of the flight including all related services
- elimination of delays
- solving unexpected situations
- ensuring satisfaction of clients
- optimization of operational costs

## 2.1 Standard services offered by OCC

Operation Control Centre department offers many different services, depending on aircraft type, client requirements and destination.

Nowadays the standard package of services consists of following services (quality of service varies among different operators):

1. Flight planning – last minute flights are typical in business aviation company, often to not very busy airports. Crucial part of the service is gathering information from different information systems, analysing data from AIP, NOTAMs, Jeppesen, etc. and deciding on airports and routes.

Basic package of OCC services offered to clients usually includes:

- flight notification
- operational flight plan
- weather (METAR, SNOWTAM, TAF, NOTAMs)
- documentation - general declaration (GenDec), flight briefing
- flight watch, monitoring, movements messages
- permissions for the areas where it is necessary
- landing permits and authorisations (routine / non-routine)
- handling arrangements (including customs, refuelling, crew accommodation and transportation, VIP lounge)
- airport slot arrangements
- additional services - ground handling and fuel setup, revision, cancellation, customs, immigration, flight plans and filing services, custom weather services, communication, miscellaneous services, visa and passport information

There are also post flight services like Luxury Taxes across the Europe, which are applicable on business aviation flights and must be reported and paid after the flight. Each country has its own conditions. Body responsible for clearing customs is flight operator.

2. Crew planning – cooperation between OCC and crew. For instance, there are rules on how many hours a day a crewmember can be in the air. There are other limits on the number of hours crewmembers can be away from their home base before they must layover in a hotel, etc. Different type ratings are required to operate different aircraft types, etc. Another aspect is a service of flight attendant on board aircraft which is an option in many cases. OCC department deals also with visa arrangements for crewmembers.

3. Clients changes – one of the biggest benefits of business aviation flying is flexibility. Clients do not care about any flight schedule; the flight is according to client schedule. For OCC department it means last minute changes. The most frequent changes are postponing flight plans, rebooking and cancelling flights.

4. Unpredictable situations – business flights often terminate at airports with no scheduled/regular traffic. Usually they are small airports and sometimes it is difficult for them to provide services in such high level of professionalism that is needed in business aviation. Sometimes the airports do not even have proper equipment for that. But it is not possible to

cancel business flight due to bad weather conditions. In case of bad weather OCC department must be looking for plan B, another airport which could be used or suggest different schedule /solution that would satisfy clients.

5. Individual requests – proper attention is required to deal with individual requests. Clients sometimes require exotic food, which must be fresh and nice looking, or clients could potentially require quiet and smooth boarding without witnesses.

**Transportation to/from airport** is nowadays considered a standard service which is offered by business aviation operators. The other benefit of flying by private jet is personal care provided by crewmembers or by executive handling agent before and after flight. The company will book transfer to/from airport (either taxi or limousine service) whatever is more preferred by client. Escort service is also offered to a client so that he/she will not get lost.

**Customs and immigration** service is also prearranged by OCC at airports at which it is required. Because the information about the client is shared with customs and immigration office before the client shows up, clearing to customs and immigration is usually smooth and fluent.

**Services on board (i.e. catering, newspapers etc.)** is again prearranged by OCC.

There is increasing number of requests for taking **pet on board**. There are no specific requirements for transporting pet on board in Europe unless it is exotic animal. The exemption is United Kingdom where special conditions for pets travelling onboard aircraft apply. UK officials usually examine vaccination certificates. OCC is again responsible for completing vaccination forms and for sending them to the respective destination country.

OCC department is also responsible for proper **weight and balance** of an aircraft. Especially in small aircraft, it could be crucial. Mainly fuel needed for the trip needs to be taken into account to reach the final destination with requested reserve amount of fuel. Weight of crew and passengers needs also be taken into account. Luggage limits could occur for ultra-long-haul destinations.

Some of these services are offered to client in standard service package and some of them are available on request and they are charged extra. Everything depends on what is more important for the client.

## 2.2 How to improve services

This chapter of the paper reveals some principles of how the services of business aviation can be enhanced.

We have made a small research where we asked more than 30 business aviation companies how important particular services was for them. Scale ranges from 1 (not very important) to 10 (the most important). Table 1 shows the results of the research.

Almost all companies consider cabin equipment and food as the most important services. This fact is highlighted green in the table 1. This kind of features are making business aviation different from other sectors of air transport.

A little bit higher level of provided services are crucial for more than 50% of asked. In the table it is **blue colour**. Crucial because those services used to give companies a competitive advantage. However, blue services are becoming more and more often and categorised as standard services for clients.

New services, **yellow coloured** in the chart, are services, which are using digital technology. Companies are just starting to discover their benefits. But from the passengers point of view those services could be important in choice of Operator Company. Those services reduce stress related with flight booking, flight changes and on top of that they give clients opportunity to be informed always and everywhere. Online availability, mobile applications, information and quick communication are becoming more important than transportation to/from airport by luxurious car. Those services contribute to stress free moments before flight (when the flight is booked) and on board aircraft.

Table 1: Service valuation

Service	Companies (average)
luxury furniture and equipment (electronics, fresh flowers,...)	10
delicious catering (quality of food)	9
spacious cabin layout	10
online availability of your company (to be searched simply)	3
useful websites (intuitive and easy for users, important information, locations, contacts, quick loading,...)	1
mobile application which inform about clients flight and company news	2
possibility for clients to get news and innovations from business aviation regularly	1
nice and responsible communication	6
stewardess service on board	7
internet, phone services on board	8,5
priority and fast ground services (customs, fuelling, apron close to the terminal,...)	8
help of handling agent and crew with baggage	8
drive passengers from terminal to aircraft by luxury car	7
welcome passengers in terminal by captain	7

Source: author

Nowadays, digital technology is everywhere around us and it is becoming more important for business aviation clients.

This research stresses the fact that business aviation operators will need to pay improved attention to electronic services which are predestined to be future of business aviation.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The article focusses on Business Aviation operations which is in many ways unexplored and only little attention is paid to it. The paper examines different services with a special attention paid to services of Operational Control Centre. Our research shows that some of the services are considered standard in business aviation as they are offered by almost every business aviation company and some of them mean competitive advantage because they are non standard. However the most of the companies consider those services as less important.

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