



New Desert Jet CEO ‘aims to make the business a small giant’

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Desert Jet’s new CEO Jared Fox is on a mission. His aim is to focus his decades of aviation experience – spanning fixed-base operations, airport management, jet charter, aircraft management and consultancy – to expand the Desert Jet brand.

“My ambition for Desert Jet is to make the business a small giant in the aviation industry,” he told Corporate Jet Investor, shortly after starting his new role earlier this month. “I’m not looking to make the business the largest, but I want it to make a big impact – to make our brand best known for quality service in the field in which we operate.”

So, Fox is likely to have a very full in-tray. The seeds of the company were planted in 2006 when founder Denise Wilson was asked to help facilitate the acquisition and management of a jet for a private company. The following year Desert Jet was formed as an aircraft-charter, management and acquisition company in Riverside County, California.

Twelve years later, from its base at the Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport in Palm Springs, Desert Jet has grown to develop three core offerings:

Desert Jet Charter – operating business jets to fly corporate executives and high-profile individuals who want to avoid the inconvenience of airline travel.

Desert Jet Center – a fixed-base operator (FBO) servicing the needs of the business and general aviation community in KTRM.

Desert Jet Maintenance – a Cessna Citation-specialized FAA-certified Part 145 Repair Station that performs scheduled fast phase and document inspections on Citations, unscheduled maintenance on a wide range of jet types including Hawkers, Falcons, Lear and Gulfstream, pre-buy inspections, maintenance management services and provides AOG support across Southern California.

700 new professional pilots

We begin our conversation – which takes place on the day CAE revealed plans to train 700 new professional pilots for Southwest Airlines’s Destination 225° programme – with Fox’s thoughts about the pilot pipeline for Desert Jet.

He acknowledges widespread industry concern about securing the next generation of commercial pilots against changing demographics but sets out a novel approach to solving the problem. “We are aware of the deficit of pilots and keep constant attention on ways we attract talent and maintain crews. Desert Jet has a history of recruiting pilots based on whether the individual exemplifies the company’s values, rather than the number of flight hours they have. If we feel like a candidate will be a good fit with us, we will train them to develop their skills within the business.”

Adam Stoughton, director of training, adds: “Charter flying lends itself to pilots coming from freight operations who want to develop their career in charter with us. So, Desert Jet, with its mentoring approach to younger pilots, offers an alternative career path to the airlines. To that extent, business aviation and charter are under-appreciated in the industry.”

Fox then underlines his commitment to hiring staff who have the potential to be the best in their field and to grow with the business. “We need to grow intelligently and hire the best people who live our company values to be part of the team,” said Fox. “We don’t need to be the largest charter company, but we do need to be the best.”

‘We do need to be the best’

So, what does being “the best” in the charter business look like? The new CEO picks out two words: safety and service. “Safety is absolutely paramount – continuing to reinforce the professional environment, to recruit the best individuals, to make the company an enjoyable place to work and to have some fun.”

Also, continuing to develop a reputation for unrivalled service is a key part of Fox’s vision for the growth of the company. “Service is absolutely a defining factor. We will do whatever is necessary to support our clients,” he said. Desert Jet’s clients are spread throughout the U.S., with some further afield in Europe and beyond.

Turning to opportunities, Fox sees the resurgent U.S. economy as favouring business growth. While U.S. economic growth slowed in the second quarter of this year, reflecting trade disputes and a global slowdown, recent figures showed the U.S. narrowly missed President Donald Trump’s pledge to grow the economy by over 3% last year, with the U.S. Department of Commerce estimating annual growth at 2.9% in 2018.

‘Fortunately, the U.S. economy is strong’

“Fortunately, the economy is strong here in the U.S. and we are seeing charter growth,” said Fox. One key to unlocking further growth, he said, was to develop business growth via the company’s website and other technologies. “At present we are reviewing options as to the best way forward – whether to form a digital partnership or to develop our own digital services. Either way, it will be critical not to lose sight of the highest level of customer service.”

While no immediate threats cloud the horizon for the business, the new CEO is wary of an impact of an economic turndown in future, market volatility and “we are always aware of fuel price movements.”

Fox speaks with the assurance of a long-time player in the aviation industry – which, indeed, he is. “I grew up in the aviation world,” he said. An early aviation enthusiast, the 14-year-old Fox flew Cessna 150 two-seat training aircraft out of Sarasota/Bradenton International Airport near his then home in Anna Maria Island before learning to fly out of Santa Monica, California.

‘Consider a corrected course’

So, with the wisdom of hindsight, what advice would the new CEO offer his younger self? Unsurprisingly, he answers by way of an aviation analogy. “The advice to my younger self would be to listen more. Sometimes, it’s better to pull back the power and to correct course than to continue on at full power. Take a moment and consider a corrected course.”

The flying analogy should come as no surprise given Jared’s personal accomplishments in general aviation. He has both a Commercial Certificate and an Instrument Rating and still pilots a Cessna 182 Skylane when family and work commitments allow.

“I still prefer to be in the air when able,” he said. “And, I’m very excited to be joining [Desert Jet](#) as CEO. I’ve been a customer of the business and I’m very much looking forward to leading the team on our path to become a small giant in the aviation industry.”



Jared Fox: on a mission to make Desert Jet “a small giant”.

Jared Fox – at a glance

- Early aviation enthusiast: by the age of 14 years he was flying planes out of the Sarasota/Bradenton International Airport near his home in Anna Maria Island, Florida
- At 18 began working for Delta Airlines and was quickly promoted to Operations Supervisor, the youngest to hold the position for the airline
- In 1997, Jared began working for an FBO in Sarasota
- Completed a degree in International Affairs and Business Management at Florida State University
- Joined Banyan Air Service at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport. During this time, he also obtained a Commercial Certificate and an Instrument Rating
- Moved to the West Coast to join American Airports Corporation (AAC) as training coordinator for its Santa Monica, California-based FBO group; Supermarine
- After AAC sold its FBO businesses, he transferred to its airport-management division and began managing Los Angeles County Airports through contract
- Joined Corporate Jets LLC and then TWC Aviation developing multi-million-dollar books of business from the ground up.
- August 2019 begins work as Desert Jet CEO
- Remains enthusiastic pilot of light single-engine aircraft.



Desert Jet plans to open a new FBO at Thermal.