

Headed by Wayne J Rizzi, President and Chief Executive Officer, Air Royale is a purveyor of private charter operations from its Los Angeles, London, New York, Hong Kong and Dubai bases. He explains what his air charter business provides to the stars to keep them coming back

Fit for the stars of the silver screen, the boardroom and the state, Air Royale International Inc procures private air travel globally on any occasion for an array of prominent entertainers, top brass and corporate important people. As an intermediary between owners and operators of aircraft, and purchasers of private flights, Wayne Rizzi, President and Chief Executive Officer of Air Royale, and his team have become expert in the fulfilment of the private flight needs of the burgeoning market for private air travel.

With film studios, news broadcasters and Fortune 500 and 1,000 companies in Air Royale's client list, the air charter broker has plenty of demand to meet. However, it is at the other end of his business – that is the procurement of aircraft operations for charter – that Rizzi concerns himself first.

Safety first

Air Royale's network air carriers have to prove they can meet safety standards that are second to none if Rizzi is going to avail his company and clients of their operations. First and foremost, Rizzi is clear about the role his company has to play: "We are an air charter broker. We do not own or operate any of the aircraft." This is an important distinction and while Air Royale is not itself going to fill aircraft OEMs' coffers, it does understand the size and shape of the private air travel market. And because it is so close to the market that creates demand for private flight and therefore



Image by Chris Sorensen courtesy of Air Royale

executive aircraft, its perception of the parameters of the market in coming years is "on the money".

Returning to the safety issue, Rizzi insists: "The travelling public need to know who they are dealing with. They also need to know, when they are on board an aircraft, who has operational control; that is the air carrier. That is extremely important for safety and insurance reasons, amongst others."

He continues: "We make sure that if we're doing business with an air carrier operating under FAR Part 135 and that air carrier is doing business under a different name, we're going to know about it." By the same token, Rizzi is not in the business of allowing the air carriers it works with to outsource flights to third-party operators; that is not the way in which he chooses to do business.

Policing the actions of air carriers could be a minefield but Rizzi is thorough in his determination to know whose air services he is brokering. "What makes Air Royale different in the safety area? We are a licensed Wyvern Authorised Broker™," explains Rizzi. Wyvern Consulting, is a provider of aviation safety auditing, consulting and information services. It is accessed by corporate flight departments, travel departments, fractional programmes, charter brokers and travellers for aviation safety information. "Wyvern has performed more on-site safety charter audits than any auditing company in the world," insists Rizzi, fully endorsing the auditing company's practices and reputation. "There are thousands and thousands of air carriers, but that means nothing. We want to deal with the top air carriers. Wyvern monitors operators' crews and aircraft all the time."

Air Royale ensures it maintains access to The Wyvern Report™ on a daily basis; in fact, the charter broker has even commissioned its own audits to ensure that operators' aircraft and crews far exceed minimum government oversight. "I can't tell you how important that is," remarks Rizzi. "If we have been looking at a carrier that is new to us and we like it because it has new aircraft and appears to be managed in a professional manner, we have even sponsored audits," ventures Rizzi. "We are licensed by Wyvern to generate and actually hand our clients a Wyvern certificate, which guarantees that the aircraft and both the captain and first

officer are airworthy – for each individual flight. If you're going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk."

Then comes the product

Once the safety issue has been addressed, what else does Air Royale look for in an air carrier's operations in order to consider brokering its operations? "Outside of safety, we have a prejudice that air carriers we work with must keep their aircraft perfect," states Rizzi. "Although that is part of safety too." "It is very important that the interior of an aircraft is perfect, too. These are top business jets that have very advanced flight decks, and in some cases, the equipment surpasses that of the commercial carriers; that's a benefit for the passenger," comments Rizzi. And productive time in the air is also a must. "Maybe 15 years ago just a CEO would travel in a private jet; that is not the case today. Now CEOs still do that but so do much of upper management. Instead of just a CEO flying now you will see perhaps 10 members of his team flying." Rizzi comments that users of business aviation have become very smart. He says that Fortune 500 and 1,000 companies are now savvy enough to harness private air travel in such a way that it actually saves money compared with the commercial airline alternative, be it in hard cash terms, executive time or both.

Aircraft aside, pilots too come under scrutiny at Air Royale. "You may have a pilot who is type-rated in that aircraft,

but what if that pilot only has the minimum number of hours required by the FAA? That would be a problem for us," comments Rizzi.

He says that FBOs are not always necessary for the type of flights Air Royale arranges. "If you are a celebrity you will not want the public to see you so we will arrange it so that your flight does not leave you stuck out in the middle of the tarmac; no one is going to hassle you. You will enter through a hangar privately," explains Rizzi.

Long-term relationships

"We have been in business for 13 years. We do not believe in jet cards," insists Rizzi. "We make no bones about saying that. We do not think that anyone should give hundreds of thousands of dollars up front." He says the private air travel business depends upon good pricing and long-term relationships.

He says: "We have vast buying power and a perfect safety record as well as very loyal clients. Relationships are everything to us. Without relationships we don't have a business. We make personal contact with our customers; we're going to make sure their travel experience exceeds their expectations – before they take off, when they are in the air and when they land. That's our job," he says. "It's all about customer service."

"Our job is also to advise our clients on which aircraft will suit the mission. The entire Air Royale team has an aviation background," Rizzi remarks.

Air Royale has just started a new service



Image by Chris Sorensen courtesy of Air Royale

called LuxuriAir using Boeing Business Jets. Again, LuxuriAir serves as an agent for its customers in obtaining air charter services. All air carriers are fully certified by the US Federal Aviation Administration and are solely responsible for the air transportation arranged by LuxuriAir, acting as broker. As for the future direction of private air travel, Rizzi expects the Pacific Rim and Europe to show the greatest market growth. He also says that private travel for leisure purposes has grown as an adjunct to private business travel, as he points to his other company Private Luxury Group. "Any place that has water is a huge draw," he says. And the impact generally of private air travel on the overall market for travel? Rizzi just sees increasingly pronounced growth in the private sector at the expense of the commercial sector. "I think the writing is on the wall," concludes Rizzi. "And frankly this does upset the airlines." ❖