



## First Centralized Private Jet Reservation and Auction System



**Douglas H. Schmohl- CEO**

FlightPartner is a software as a service (SaaS) provider of the first centralized private jet reservation and auction system; FlightPartner.com. Through the most innovative technology, our cloud-based service utilizes a real-time software trip engine (patent pending) to provide efficient scheduling between private jet charter operators and private jet travelers. Within sixty seconds the trip can be quoted, requested and confirmed, eliminating the need for traditional time consuming methods of trip requests. FlightPartner is the first to build and use "True Quote" technology that provides accurate real-time air charter quotes. FlightPartner is the technological pipeline through which customer and operator information flows.

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**Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine**

**CEOCFO: Mr. Schmohl, what is the concept at FlightPartner?**

**Mr. Schmohl:** Flight Partner is simplifying private jet travel through a user friendly, rapid reservations system providing instant air charter quotes and confirmations. We aggregate private jet charter availability and bring it to the web based marketplace as a luxury travel site. You can think of it as Priceline for Private Jets. We are a

central reservations system for air charter or what is known to most as private jets. Currently if you were to go online and book your standard trip on one of the major airlines, you might go through one of the portals such as Expedia or Travelocity. The availability of seats on an aircraft comes from large data exchanges known as global distribution systems (GDS). There is no system that both aggregates private jet availability and brings that availability to the marketplace in a single luxury travel site, so we are bringing central reservation systems to the air charter industry.

**CEOCFO: Has this been tried in the past?**

**Mr. Schmohl:** Not in the method and with the business strategies that we utilize. There's been a proliferation of what I would call message boards for private air charter. FlightPartner is an advanced booking system with an intelligent software search engine. There is a company in Sweden that does attempt to aggregate air charter availability, but they do not bring it to a single point of presence. They have a different method of doing things and it is certainly different that our business model.

**CEOCFO: What do you and FlightPartner understand that allowed you to develop this offering?**

**Mr. Schmohl:** First and foremost is 30 years in the aviation industry and 16,000 hours of flying jets and being associated with the efficiencies that have developed in my years in the airline industry. Additionally, I have been creating technology solutions for large companies for the past 17 years. I saw a need to bring the same efficiencies that I saw evolve in the airline industry to the air charter industry. In short, private jet utilization is dismal when compared to air carrier (Part 121) jet utilization. In fact, research shows that for each hour a private jet is flown, an air carrier aircraft fly's seven hours. There are inherent issues that will prevent air charter from approaching the efficiencies of an air carrier. However, with technology we can increase air charter aircraft utilization, create a new tier of luxury traveler and disrupt the legacy style industry. The challenge we face is the industry itself. If you can think of who utilizes the service of private jets, one of the first things that comes to mind is privacy. The challenge in the industry is really getting the level of trust needed to create a data exchange. Past failures in this space have been attributed to people not having both knowledge of the industry and strong skills on the technology side. We are combining both of the aforementioned. I have been involved in information technology since 1997 with a previous successful startup and I would like to think mixing those two experiences, skills and knowledge, is a winning strategy in this industry. Business aviation has 2,100 operators of 8,600 (Part 135) aircraft. Implementing the exchange between large groups with fragmented technology and different software tools is certainly a

challenging task. That is our challenge. But I believe in the methods that we have put in place will certainly grant success to what we are doing.

**CEOCFO: *How long has the service been available?***

**Mr. Schmohl:** We have gone through two years of research development. We have created a MVP, which is the minimum viable product and we followed the rules of a lean startup, getting feedback from trial customers. We currently have over 1000 aircraft registered in our system and are currently moving from beta to production. We are 'Got-To-Market' ready. To answer your question directly, we did a soft launch over this past holiday season and received a great amount of air charter auction requests and charter reservations. We quickly recognized that we needed a larger staff. So we retreated from the soft launch and are continuing with our trial period as we build out our customer service side. I am determined to offer a positive experience in a very customer-centric business. We are currently raising capital to add employees and build out the client services department. At that time, we will go to full production launch.

**CEOCFO: *How are you reaching out to the three segments: the broker, the operator and the end customer?***

**Mr. Schmohl:** Using some of the new standards in communication, such as LinkedIn, we can really target our segmented industry through the filters available. We will also use traditional methods of news releases in publications targeted to our industry. We will use all the tools available from traditional marketing methods to social forums and search engine optimization.

**“Flight Partner is simplifying private jet travel through a user friendly, rapid reservations system providing instant air charter quotes and confirmations.” - Douglas H. Schmohl**

**CEOCFO: *I would imagine that all of the players would at least hear you out. Are you finding that to be the case?***

**Mr. Schmohl:** We have certainly created a buzz. We have actually demonstrated for some pretty big players and I think it's just giving them the level of comfort needed to move from the old standard to a new, efficient way of doing business. When I say standard ways, I am still seeing hand written quotes being faxed. My job is to give the business aviation industry the level of comfort they need to know that they can break away from those old methods and embrace technology. Technology will bring efficiency to their business. The interest is there when they are approached. I cannot mention a name but I will tell you that we did a demonstration for a very large operator. They have a certain requirement that we actually spent two days building out just for the demonstration. I think they looked at it and understood that it really was an answer to what they needed in regard to bringing efficiency into their system. However, they're a very large business and I would imagine that everything is slow to move whether it's getting approval to go with a vendor or security concerns. So, things have a tendency to move a little slower than a startup would like as we're moving very rapidly.

**CEOCFO: *You have been involved in other internet ventures. What have you learned from previous experiences that has been the most helpful here?***

**Mr. Schmohl:** Do not forget the customer. Sometimes that can get lost, particularly in web based services. Sometimes you can lose touch with the fact that there is a person on the other end of that keyboard and that they are looking for a certain level of service. In particular, the business that we are in now is extremely customer centric. Bringing all these great efficiencies to the business aviation environment is wonderful. But, what we cannot forget is that the individual or group of individuals are paying a very large price for superior service in travel and there are no excuses or second chances.

**CEOCFO: *Are you funded for the continued rollout that you are doing or will you be seeking partnerships or funding?***

**Mr. Schmohl:** This is a “bootstrapped startup”. I have funded the business up until now. However, I do see the need to grow rapidly. We are actively seeking to raise capital and form partnerships.

**CEOCFO: *Do you think that it will fly well because it is an easy to understand concept with the investment community or is it difficult these days?***

**Mr. Schmohl:** I do not think the challenges are in people looking to invest in a good product or service with very large growth potential. I think the problem that exists is many investors really do not have experience in the aviation industry and I think the word “aviation” frightens them. It's my job to make investors more comfortable with the opportunity that exists in this industry.

**CEOCFO: *What is ahead the next months or next year?***

**Mr. Schmohl:** There is just so much work to do. Like any start up, my workday starts at 7am and finishes about 11:30pm. That is just another day for me. There is so much incredible work that we can bring to the industry and the vision is certainly larger than we can be right now. Having the funding that enables us to build out the team and create strategic partnerships will be the road to success. We really are going to reshape this industry. It is long overdue and a result of a

highly fragmented history. We could talk about the efficiencies that the airlines have in place and you probably know that they become profitable now. Then we can take a look the business aviation industry and realize that many of those efficiencies can be implemented in business aviation. A jet sitting on a ramp is a poor return on investment. Once people start to recognize that technology can play a big role in getting that aircraft flying, we will be the toolset they rely on. I guess my biggest concern is being able to handle the growth.

**CEO CFO: *What should people remember most when they read about FlightPartner?***

**Mr. Schmohl:** We are committed to creating a level of technology and the associated level of service that changes the air charter industry and private jet travel. Just as you would go to Priceline to book a seat on an air carrier, you'll come to FlightPartner to make you business aviation private jet reservation or place that trip out to bid in our auction platform.

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**BIO:** Doug Schmohl has over 30 years experience as a professional pilot in the aviation community. Having logged more than 15,000 hours in various jet aircraft, he has a vast knowledge of both scheduled and on-demand aircraft services. Additionally, Doug was founder and creative force behind several Internet ventures. Most notably, SoundFront which was started in 1997 to rebroadcast terrestrial radio stations over the Internet and ClickLive which had a global presence in Internet video streaming. He has been actively involved in designing and building Internet communication solutions for companies such as Home Depot, General Electric, NYMEX and many more Fortune 500 companies.

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