

# Private Jet Interiors Are Big Business



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Annual deliveries of business jets have more than doubled since 1998 and sales of business jets and turboprops continue to be strong thanks to vibrant economies in Asia, the Middle East and other parts of the world. As a result, demand is robust for new business-aircraft interiors and cabin refurbishments.

Manufacturers of turbine airplanes such as Cessna, Bombardier, Gulfstream, Hawker Beechcraft and Embraer have cabin design and construction departments employing many skilled craftspeople and technicians.

"Approximately 2,500 Bombardier employees work at our completion centers for Learjet, Challenger and Global aircraft," said Annie Cossette, a spokeswoman for Bombardier Aerospace Business Aircraft.

Thousands more work at Gulfstream Aerospace. "In total, given we have completions facilities in Brunswick, Ga.; Appleton, Wis.; Dallas; and Long Beach, Calif., there are probably some 3,000 to 4,000 folks involved in what we call our final-phase manufacturing," said Robert Baugniet, Gulfstream's director of corporate communications.

France-based Dassault Aviation announced a year ago that it would add a \$20 million, 116,000 square-foot expansion and 200 jobs to its jet completion center in Little Rock, Ark. Strong demand for the company's Falcon business jets has resulted in aircraft deliveries increasing from 50 in 2006 to a planned 90 this year.

Hawker Beechcraft, which makes corporate jets and the ubiquitous King Air turboprop family, also has a business-jet service and completion center in Little Rock that employs some 900 people.

Cabin elements such as leather seats, side panels, tables and galleys are designed and built by aircraft manufacturers.

Meeting customers' needs and wants

Customers pay millions of dollars for jets and turboprops, so they want the cabins not only to meet their requirements, but also to reflect their tastes. Aircraft manufacturers and independent completion companies such as Moline, Ill.-based Elliott Aviation go to great lengths to ascertain exactly what each client needs and desires for its airplane.

Asked for specifics about customers' requirements, Cindy Halsey, Cessna's vice president of interior design engineering and development, replied, "Too broad to specifically answer - mission requirements can drive differences in the cabin, personal tastes, number of passengers, catering or cooking needs. It's really no different than what requirements you or I may have for a car or a home."

"Customers are advised early on in the process that any unusual requests, such as a water bed or shower, will add weight to the aircraft and therefore impact on its overall performance," noted Baugniet. "In commercial aircraft adapted for private use, this is not so much of a consideration. In purpose-built business jets, it surely is. Added weight impacts on range and speed and fuel efficiency."

Like other private jet makers, Gulfstream provides "a number of cabin layouts to choose from (including forward or aft galley configurations in the large cabin aircraft), and there are multiple choices for wood finishes, fabrics, carpets, coverings, etc.," wrote Baugniet.

Elliott Aviation uses sophisticated design software called EnVision that allows the designer and client to see what the cabin will look like with different layouts, material colors and passenger amenities before it is constructed.

Equipment such as galley ovens and bar fridges and bathroom toilets and sinks - some have gold-plated handles - come from suppliers that must have their products certified by the Federal Aviation Authority before they can be installed. Certification requirements include resistance to burning and aviation-grade electrical insulation.

Bells and whistles

Cabins are often equipped with electronics to satisfy the business and entertainment needs of owners, including air-to-ground phones and fax machines, satellite radio and communication equipment, DVD players and flat-screen monitors.

For owners who want wireless connectivity to access their e-mail, surf the Internet and text message while en route, broadband services for private jets and turboprops have been developed.

"We're proud to offer two distinct broadband services to the business aviation market - one for North America using advanced mobile wireless technology, and the other for a global market using satellite technology," said Jack Blumenstein, President and CEO of Aircell, in a recent company press release.

"We live in an 'always-on' world and these new services will offer affordable broadband connectivity to thousands of travelers around the world for the very first time," added Blumenstein.

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Thousands of people are employed in the design and construction of private airplane cabins such as this one on a Global Express long-range business jet. Photo courtesy of Bombardier Aerospace.