

Optics Are Alive And Well

No Plane No Gain (NPNG) and the Alliance for Aviation Across America (AAAA) are two fabulous initiatives designed to help everyone understand the incredible value to our country of Business Aviation. Jobs are created to support our industry and small and mid-size corporations benefit measurably through their use of aviation in the day-to-day operations of their businesses.

Small town USA benefits from the use of these invaluable business tools because of the location of many smaller regional airports and their ability to serve these small communities. On and on goes the list of reasons that Business Aviation makes a huge impact on the American economy.

These two incredible initiatives were started after the 'Big-Three' Auto Makers testified before congress on November 19th, 2008. That was the day our world in Business Aviation stood still. That was the day that just when our industry thought we understood all the challenges faced, we discovered another major challenge to comprehend and overcome:

Optics!

NPNG and the AAAA went to work battling the issue of optics. The success of these and other efforts by so many little-by-little began to turn the tide. In time, the companies that had pulled back from considering buying or using business aircraft began to come back into the fold. The idea of business aircraft being real tools of commerce and business began to gain favor again in board rooms across America. It seemed as though we were back in business.

Of course there is never room to rest on ones laurels, and NPNG and the AAAA continue daily to churn out the successes in legislation, jobs and small town America. After all, once we get traction why slow the pace again?

These initiatives are not cheap and organizations like NBAA and GAMA continue to make these investments a priority in their annual budgets. This wonderful work and their corresponding benefits do not go unnoticed to the associations' respective memberships. We are clearly all in this together.

But that's not the end to the story... Not even close to the end! Like each one of you reading this article, I have unique windows

into the sentiment of our industry. We all have our own circles of influence and our individual client-bases that act as our windows on the world.

Board rooms all over the country are still couching every aviation decision against the consideration of optics. Maybe not with the same all-or-nothing concern they did in 2008 and 2009, but still with a cautious eye towards stockholder and stakeholder concerns.

Parking the airplane should never be an outcome of these optics conversations, but most certainly a renewed discussion of size and type of plane to operate could be. For example, would a turboprop be better used than a small jet for regional flights? How about not buying a new airplane just yet, but continuing to operate the older one? These are the questions of today's optics, and they are still being asked out of a fear of sending the wrong message.

Unfortunately, this is a discussion that can lead down a path of continued reduced utilization, and this is what keeps our industry alert to the matter. So how should we react to the pressure that seems to come from all sides?

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We should begin as an industry to act offensively, not defensively. Being on the back foot just makes us look weak and off-balance. Every time a politician singles us out as the problem in our economy and society we must not feel backed into a corner, but rather amplify the true values and benefits of Business Aviation to the greater economy.

Jobs, jobs, jobs are what people are looking for, and we are providing plenty of them. We are stimulating economic growth and increasing GDP, and the industry should be praised for that - not made a pariah. The more of us who stand tall and speak clearly to that end,

the faster and stronger our message will be received.

In many cases, many of us already spread this message. For those who have yet to do so, it is simple. Don't wait to be attacked for using business aircraft to begin to build the offensive strategy. Start today. Be sure you are aware of, and getting the weekly information provided by the No Plane No Gain and Alliance for Aviation Across America (websites www.noplanenogain.org, www.aviationacrossamerica.org, or call their offices and ask for inclusion).

Opt for more than being placed on an email list; ask these organizations how you can help by either setting up an event in your area or writing a check to help support the cause. Also, if business ever takes you to Washington, D.C., make appointments with your representatives and speak to them face-to-face. The message of the importance of Business Aviation will resonate so much stronger in person, and I assure you they (or their legislative aides) will be accessible to you.

Alternatively, pick up the phone and call your representatives' local offices to see when they will be visiting and make an appointment to go introduce yourself and tell them how important Business Aviation is to you. Tell them to join the General Aviation Caucus in Congress. Tell them our economy and jobs depend on Business Aviation!

Congratulations for being on the offensive. Thank you for taking action today!

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