

Local charter company soars to new heights

By Dave Cullen

NovaJet, located at the Pearson International Airport in Toronto, provides chartered jets to small and medium-sized businesses along with wealthy individuals. It is one of eight charter services in the GTA. The company targets mid-sized businesses that may have four or five people who need to fly 900 to 1,600 kilometers, often the same day.

Novajet was founded by Chuck Buchanan, a certified pilot and aircraft mechanic who felt strongly that executive aircraft charters was an undeveloped market in the Greater Toronto Area. He was right. The 25-year veteran of the aviation industry struck a chord with members of the business world and now the company is really starting to take off.

Before starting Novajet, Buchanan spent 10 years building Flightexec, a similar charter service located in London, Ontario. Buchanan took the company from receivership to an impressive \$20 million in sales. After a falling out with his business partner,

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Buchanan left Flightexec with plans to start a new air charter service in the GTA.

Novajet launched its first flight on November 2, 2006. The first customers were a group of five businessmen headed to Chicago's Palwaukee Municipal Airport. Novajet's sole jet was still

waiting for its permit at the time and so this initial flight was subcontracted to another company charter.

Novajet currently owns one aircraft a seven-seat, 480-nautical-mile per hour Dassault Falcon 10. The company subcontracts flights worldwide in order to facilitate charters they cannot handle.

Buchanan's strategy for success includes identifying companies with head offices and subsidiaries in mid-sized cities not well served by scheduled airlines.

Phil Babbit is the Director of Sales and Marketing at Novajet. Babbit says the company maintains their edge over the competition by offering incentives and providing luxurious service.

"Right now we have a promotion running that gives new customers \$1,000 off their first flight," said Babbit. "We also give a 10 per cent commission to travel agents who book Novajet flights. But that is not what makes us unique. We are very service oriented.

We pay close attention to detail and we really try to go that extra mile. We're like an airline limousine. Everything is first class from the time you show up to the moment you leave. We even serve executive-style catering on board. You won't find any cheap peanuts on our flights."

Private chartered flights are proving to be a more economical alternative for companies in today's business world.

"People are really starting to see the advantage of chartering," said Babbit. "For example, it will cost about \$1,500 for a round-trip ticket to New York. We can charter the same flight for \$6,500. So, if you have five people that need to

plane," said Frank Da Costa, Vice President of Operations for Novajet. "We will help them find the right aircraft that suites their needs and we will obtain a pilot and crew. We can also make you some money when you are not using the plane. We can charter your aircraft out to other businesses and turn a profit for you, the owner."

So far the company is exceeding their projected revenue.

"We're exceeding our projections by 25 per cent consistently," said Da Costa. "We will be turning a profit this year and it is very hard to make a profit the first year in aviation. Our projected target is \$2.8 million for this year."

Da Costa stated that he expects to purchase another aircraft within the next three months and hopes to buy a third before the year has ended. He believes that the company serves as an invaluable "business tool that saves people time they can't get back."

Novajet's mission is to provide a solution based on service that "exceeds your expectations." It is this luxurious service, combined with competitive rates, that will take the company to the next step on the ladder of success.

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get to New York for a business meeting, they could be saving about \$1,000. Time saving is also associated with chartered flights. You could fly to New York for a meeting at 8 a.m. and be back in your Toronto office by noon the same day. It's quite convenient."

TSN is one of the many large companies using this service to save time and money.

"TSN is covering the Stanley Cup and we just did a run for them," said Babbit. "Twelve individuals from the network took flights from Nashville to Buffalo. TSN had to flip back and forth between the two states and the time was restrictive. They could not have properly covered the games if they used scheduled commercial flights."

Novajet also offers acquisition services for companies or individuals interested in purchasing an aircraft.

"We can help businesses and individuals with the purchase of a

Novajet's Dassault Falcon 10.

