



By Darren Shannon

Alex Wilcox, a founding member of JetBlue and the first president of India's Kingfisher Airlines, has unveiled his latest project: JetSuite, a very light jet (VLJ) operator that will pay aircraft owners a monthly income in return for rights to charter their aircraft.

Along with several key figures from JetBlue's formative years and colleagues from his time at Virgin Atlantic and Kingfisher, Wilcox has taken an air taxi concept once known as Magnum Jet and revised its business plan to create this new venture. This company plans to start its first revenue charter service with an Embraer Phenom 100 in June 2009, and expects to be operating a fleet of 100 Phenom 100s and 300s within four years of its launch. Embraer, which expects to certify its Phenom 100 in mid-2008, will begin delivering JetSuite's aircraft in April 2009.

"We are creating a branded charter," Wilcox tells AWIN. "The aircraft efficiencies allow us to take this technology and really change the industry." Wilcox notes that JetSuite's new, single-type fleet will cut current charter operating costs in half, allowing savings to be passed to a new generation of users. "We will have to grow the market. A lot of people out there don't know about charter; most don't even have an idea what an FBO [fixed based operator] is."

Formal certification for Part 135 operations is scheduled to begin this August and the first revenue charter flight is planned for June 2009, says Wilcox. The fleet will initially be based at Hawthorne Municipal Airport just outside of Los Angeles and Henderson Executive Airport in Las Vegas, but Wilcox expects to quickly open a base in Northern California's Bay area and has plans for services from Mesa, Arizona and Salt Lake City, Utah within two years.

Joining Wilcox are Usto Schulz, a former vice president for safety at JetBlue and a 17-year veteran of the FAA who will be JetSuite's vice president of certification and safety, while Robert Murphy, who has worked in financial and strategic planning roles for several companies including JetBlue and Kingfisher, will handle corporate affairs. Amy Curtis-McIntyre, a former vice president of marketing at JetBlue has been retained to consult on the new charter firm's brand and product and Ken Burnham, who was a DC-10 fleet captain for United, is JetSuite's vice president, flight operations. JetSuite has also named General Wesley Clark as chairman.

Phenom 100 photo: Embraer

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