There's a New Game in Town—Play to Win

by Jay Mesinger

It's called *The First-Time Sellers Game.* Think of it as a board game like Monopoly. Each player gets a token to use as a vehicle for moving around the board. Some will play the game with a factory-new aircraft token. Others will play using a pre-owned aircraft token. Let's assume that you and some of the other players are in the game for the first time. Your experience in business aviation is limited to one acquisition and a short stint of operations.

Let the game begin. As with many board games, opponents are traveling around the board with you. Points are gained when the asset you purchase increases or decreases in value, based on any improvements that have been made as well as the current condition of the market. Overall debt on an individual asset plays a huge role in your ability to sell or even stay in the game at all. There will be opponents trying to pay painfully low prices for your aircraft. So shoring up value and getting the price you seek will depend on your ability to understand market values and make smart buy/sell decisions based on solid facts.

In the *First-Time Sellers Game*, you'll need to know who the other players are. They will be dealers working to acquire your plane for inventory purposes. Manufacturers will be formidable and often unwelcome opponents. Retail buyers will also surface as you go around the board. As a seller, you'll have various motivating factors prompting you to align with other players. If you have an immediate need to liquidate, the dealer may be a compelling strategic partner. On the other hand, if time is on your side, you might seek out a retail buyer—realizing that the retail scene today is quite different than it was just a few months ago.

If you are in the game selling a very new aircraft, the strongest competition will be the manufacturer. They will be trying to sell an identical aircraft against you. Fresh warranties, pilot training, OEM support—all the compelling reasons you chose new yourself—will now be the compelling reasons for buyers to consider the factory aircraft rather than yours. Price and skillful positioning will be required for you to sell in that situation.

Regardless of your strategy, you're in the game to win. Of course, if you have a need to continue operating your aircraft, don't even play the game. But if your needs have changed, play the game with conviction about your aircraft's strengths, obtain accurate market information, and then sell as quickly as you can. Don't rely on Lady Luck. A relationship with a skilled aircraft sales professional as your playing partner is a wise investment and is usually the key to winning the *First-Time Sellers Game*.

Remember back when this was an obscure, seldom-used typewriter symbol?

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