

Mission Critical

The Community of Our Industry

Do we really understand the importance of community, asks Jay Mesinger, as he outlines the vital role we can all play in promoting Business Aviation locally, regionally and nationally...

Last month I was invited by the Michigan Business Aviation Association (MBAA) to place a Gulfstream G650 on static display. It was a privilege to be a part of the show that was a huge success and drove more focus in the local market to the high value of Business Aviation.

I bring this event and the opportunity it provided for Business Aviation to advance itself to your attention for one very simple reason: the discussion of community.

We are all in this industry together, for the long-haul. It is the duty of each of us who is involved in it to be an ambassador and spokesperson for the industry. As Ed Bolen, NBAA president & CEO, would say - this industry is about jobs. It's also about involvement and promoting Business Aviation. When we think about the community of our industry, we must first and foremost think locally.

The fine and dedicated work of those members of the MBAA (above), the airport authority and all of the volunteers who helped make this inaugural show a success should be applauded. But action cannot stop there. The community must grow beyond the local groups to the regional groups that embrace larger trade areas. I know the fine vendors that produce avionics, ground service products and all the ancillary goods and services also benefit when they bring their wares to events like these.

It is not just the events that are important but also the local city and town aviation associations that carry the torch of our industry. And the *No Plane No Gain* website (www.noplanenogain.org) does a masterful job of focusing people on the work and benefits of Business Aviation. You'll be pleasantly surprised when you visit the site as to the depth of the facts regarding Business Aviation not only globally, but locally.

NBAA has also done a wonderful job of developing regional shows highlighting our industry. The Association holds three shows annually in strategic locations that bring the industry to the operators. Anywhere from 2,000-3,500 visitors attend.

Moving along from the regional events we come to the grand show-of-all-shows: NBAA's BACE held this year from November 17-19 in Las Vegas. If you've never attended one of these spectacular events, you'll be amazed at the scope of our industry.

Stepping away from the national US event, one will find the same type of local and regional venues on almost every continent - as the globalization of our industry continues, so goes the development of the local associations whose job it is to promote Business Aviation growth within their local regions. Each country/region will have their own guidelines and regulatory standards. It is the hard work of these regional and local associations to help shape policy, build legislative plans and help local authorities understand the usual and customary protocols developed initially in the more mature markets. It certainly seems that work is never ending.

Returning to the point of this month's article, the community of our industry, and our industry itself seems to always be under fire from one group or another. Whether it's a discussion of funding or a discussion about access to airspace, we are always on our guard. It is very difficult to fight and defend our need for access and proper funding for safe operation within a vacuum. We must band together and believe in the power of numbers, with a unified voice.

It never ceases to amaze me how vulnerable our industry is to outside forces who do not believe as we do, that jobs, growth and safe, secure transportation are vital offshoots of this wonderful industry of ours.

So as we sit back and think how we might help make a meaningful difference for the sustainability of our industry, think big, think globally, but act locally.

Do not get paralyzed by the overwhelming tasks of how to go from thinking big to acting big. Start by seeing if there's a local or regional aviation association that you can join. It might just be an airport group that gets together for lunch every other month. Find that group and join its next lunch. Be a part of the community. Your participation will be welcomed and is important.

Communities often start with one member and grow from there. There's nothing wrong with being the first! ■

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