

THE MARKETING MAN

Pundits say James B. Taylor wrote the book on how to market corporate aircraft. However, the mild-mannered man responsible for launching sales of three landmark business jets—the Dassault Falcon, Cessna Citation and Canadair Challenger—only will admit to being a contributing editor: “I didn’t write the book on aircraft marketing, [but] I might have done some editing and added a few chapters.”

As Beech Aircraft’s Frank Hedrick once said, “Nothing ever happens until somebody sells something.” The fact is that gentleman Jim Taylor not only made things happen by writing more orders than any other corporate jet salesman, he defined and refined the art of marketing turbine-powered business airplanes.

In the 1960s, Taylor established business aircraft sales standards that focused on customer requirements. He believed that a marketing department’s role in aircraft development was to see that the product was designed to satisfy those requirements. That philosophy, along with the introduction of factory-direct sales and service, which enabled manufacturers to respond directly to customer needs, forever changed the way corporate aircraft were sold and supported.

The initial chapter in the aviation story of New York City native Taylor began in 1942 when he became the first naval aviation cadet to enter the service without a college degree. Following in his father’s footsteps, Taylor was first a test pilot, then an instructor.

After leaving the Navy in 1946, Taylor flew DC-3s for a nonscheduled airline. When the carrier folded six months later, he began his storied marketing career by selling Navions for the single-engine airplane’s Northeast distributor, Teterboro-based Mallard Air Service. One of his first customers was radio and TV personality Arthur Godfrey, and on weekends Taylor often piloted the entertainer’s aircraft.

Taylor’s next job took him away from aviation temporarily but taught him the importance of direct selling. One of his first tasks after being



James B. Taylor wrote the book on how to market corporate aircraft. The genial gentleman was responsible for launching sales of three landmark business jets—the Dassault Falcon, Cessna Citation and Canadair Challenger—and pioneered factory-direct marketing and support strategies that are widely used throughout the industry today.

appointed sales manager for Upressit Metal Cap Corporation in 1948 was to visit all of the company’s sales representatives scattered throughout the United States. Taylor found that most of them were simply taking orders and not actively promoting the company’s packaging products. So he brought the marketing function in-house, and sales improved. Within two years he became president of the firm and, subsequently, sold his board of directors on operating a business aircraft to increase direct contact with customers.

Taylor remained with Upressit for a couple of years after the company was acquired by a competitor in 1959, but in 1962 he returned to selling airplanes, this time for a New York area airplane broker. However, he didn’t enjoy handling previously owned air-

craft, so in 1963 he joined Pan American World Airways’ new Business Jets Division, the organization that had been selected to market the French-made Dassault Mystere 20 in North America.

It was during his six-year stint at Pan Am Business Jets that Taylor established his now-famous *modus operandi* for direct selling of corporate aircraft. First, he and his marketing team focused on what potential customers wanted in a new business jet. Groups of two dozen chief pilots were flown to France to see the prototype airplane. Based upon operators’ input and using the expertise of Pan Am’s engineering department, numerous changes were made to the aircraft’s design. What emerged was a longer-range, stretched, reengineered aircraft known as the Falcon 20.

Taylor laid the groundwork for sales of the new business jet by employing a variety of innovative techniques to make potential customers cognizant of the Falcon. For instance, in June 1964 corporate executives and flight department managers began receiving a series of lavishly produced brochures on falconry in which the hunting bird’s speed, range and ability to land with precision were compared to the new airplane. The Falcon theme continued at the Pan Am exhibit during the 1964 NBAA annual meeting in Miami Beach as 500 attendees watched a falconer and two of his hawks perform in a local park.

The intent of all these efforts was to pique the interest of would-be jet buyers, explained Taylor. “We wanted people to learn a new name in the business aircraft field, and to pay attention to the things we were going to say about it.” The brochures—as well as later newsletters, Christmas cards and direct correspondence—helped create an atmosphere of anticipation and excitement for the aircraft.

The marketing paid off in a big way. Pan Am eventually sold Falcons to nearly 80 percent of the chief pilots who had visited the Dassault factory, all without the benefit of a demonstrator aircraft and despite a backdrop of anti-American rhetoric from French

President Charles de Gaulle. Perhaps most remarkable was that those early deals were done by just four salesmen.

Taylor's first sales success was marketing a foreign-made aircraft in the United States, but his subsequent assignment was even more difficult: selling a new, small business jet—the Cessna Fanjet 500—to piston twin and turboprop operators. When Taylor became vice president and general manager of the Wichita manufacturer's new Commercial Jet Marketing Division in 1969, he had to dispel the notion that the company only could build recip airplanes. Furthermore, he had to disabuse people of the notion that Cessna's new 400-mph jet was aimed at the same market as the 500-mph Learjet.

However, Taylor's biggest challenge ever was to convince Cessna Chairman Dwayne Wallace and President Del Roskam that the best way to sell and service the Fanjet 500 was factory direct instead of through the company's well-established network of dealers. Some dealers loathed the prospect of being cut out of the loop and threatened to steer Cessna operators toward competitive jets. But Taylor argued that large capital investments such as business jets need to be sold to upper corporate management, not just to pilots. "GM sells its cars through dealers, but its locomotives direct," he said. In the end it was hard to argue with the success Taylor had at Pan Am, so the Fanjet 500 was sold factory direct.

Despite the controversy over how the new jet would be marketed, Cessna management was confident that the airplane would be a great success. Wallace boldly predicted that the company would sell 1,000 units within 10 years. Taylor shared that enthusiasm, but believed the aircraft's name needed to be changed to project more of a winning image as well as to differentiate it from other fanjets such as the Falcon. When it was suggested that the aircraft be renamed Citation after the 1948 Triple Crown winning thoroughbred, Taylor sent chrome-plated horseshoes to Wallace and Roskam to convince them that the name was right. The distinctive, horseshoe-shaped C eventually became part of the Citation logo.

Taylor used a variety of methods—some old, some new, virtually all effective—to market the Citation. Trained



Jim Taylor began his storied marketing career in the late 1940s by selling Navions for Teterboro-based Mallard Air Service. One of his first customers was radio and TV personality Arthur Godfrey, who is shown here talking to Taylor from the cockpit of his single-engine airplane.

homing pigeons carried invitations for demonstration rides to sales prospects. A direct mail piece that featured progressively smaller miniature barrels stored one inside another illustrated the relatively low fuel burn of the Citation compared to other business jets. Following the advice of aircraft interior designer Dave Ellies, Taylor had a Citation mockup mounted on a 40-foot-long trailer and towed around the country so that as many prospective buyers as possible could see what the aircraft being developed looked like.

Undoubtedly, the original Citation's success had a lot to do with the quality of the product itself: the airplane was certificated to FAR Part 25, had the lowest noise levels of any business jet and boasted an impressive short-field capability.

However, Cessna's first business jet was widely accepted also because Taylor and his marketing men sold the aircraft as a "complete package"—an industry first. Each purchase included a fully outfitted airplane, pilot and mechanic training at American Airlines, and one year of computerized maintenance. In addition, three dedicated factory-service centers were established—one in Wichita and one on each coast—to ensure that opera-

tors were adequately supported after the sale.

By 1976 Taylor was looking for a new marketing challenge, and he found it in an orphaned Bill Lear design called the LearStar 600, the plane that evolved into the Canadair Challenger. If selling a paper aircraft wasn't difficult enough, Lear denounced the changes Canadair made to his transcontinental design by calling the new wide-body business jet "Fat Albert." More important, although the fledgling government-owned manufacturer was desperate for work, Taylor was given just six months to sell 50 Challengers or else the program would be canceled.

During the summer of 1976 Taylor solicited design input from pilots, brought aboard many former sales associates and laid the foundation for what he called "the first marketing-oriented business jet design." By the November 1 deadline, Canadair had garnered 56 sales, thanks in part to a low initial price tag of \$4.375 million, a 25-airplane commitment from Federal Express and an important Taylor touch—contracts that included performance guarantees.

Despite the many technical problems associated with wedding a new airframe to a new engine, Taylor's

team sold over 110 Challengers before the prototype flew, and the Model 600 created so much excitement that it became one of the few paper airplanes to ever grace B/CA's cover.

Even a year before the Challenger 600's first flight, Taylor was already talking about the need for a stretched, reengineered 50-seat airline version of the business jet. While the General Electric CF34-powered Challenger E (extended) was never built, its direct descendant—the RJ—has been flying in airline service for over a year.

Having successfully launched a third business jet was not the final chapter in the Taylor sales story, however. In 1985, the consummate marketing man was called upon to resurrect financially troubled Gates Learjet. His task was to change the red ink to black, and the key was to extricate the company from a money-losing lease of 80 Learjets to the U.S. Air Force, a deal that was costing the manufacturer \$2 million per month.

In what Taylor described as "the second toughest sales job of my life" (the first was convincing Cessna to sell the Citation direct), he was able to persuade the Air Force to purchase the Learjets that it was leasing. By the time he left the company in 1988, Taylor had eliminated company debt, reduced costs, shed money-losing projects and developed two new models, the 31C and 55C.

Taylor held key positions with four major airframe manufacturers, but the power of his innovative marketing ideas permeated the entire general aviation industry. Virtually all of today's senior business jet marketers either worked for or with Taylor at some point in their careers. And the praise bestowed on him by his competitors indicates the true value of his accomplishments.

Bill Juvonen, a Taylor protege who now is chairman of Stratford, Connecticut-based Flight Services Group, said that first and foremost "Jim was above board, professional and loyal to his employees, sometimes to a fault." He developed the professional aircraft demonstration and pioneered factory service and pilot visits to aircraft manufacturing plants for on-site technical briefings.

"Nobody worked harder," added Juvonen, who while employed by Pan Am Business Jets lived in a Manhattan apartment that had a view of the Pan Am Building. "If I came in late after a night out, I would often see the light on in Jim's office."

(Taylor explained that he became a very early riser during his school years. Because he played sports each afternoon, he often was too tired to do his homework in the evening, so he had to get up early the next day to complete his assignments. He remains an early bird to this day.)

Pete Ginocchio, another Pan Am alumnus and now Falcon Jet's senior vice president of customer support, said: "Until Jim came along, aircraft manufacturers were engineering driven; they wanted their sales organizations to sell what engineering designed. Jim shifted the emphasis to satisfying the customer."

AlliedSignal consultant Mack Graham, one of the few industry leaders who never worked with Taylor, respected him so much that he organized a testimonial luncheon for Taylor during the 1991 NBAA annual convention in Houston. Graham said: "Jim Taylor made the marketing of business jets a business. He recruited the best. He demanded performance. He tangibly rewarded results. His letters and direct mail campaigns were envied by all of us. Jim made us all proud to be in the business jet business."

During the 1992 NBAA convention, Taylor received the association's Award for Meritorious Service to Aviation. Recently he added another prize to his trophy case. In late November 1993, he was named an Elder Statesman of Aviation by the National Aeronautic Association, aviation's equivalent to being inducted into the hall of fame. It's an appropriate honor to the man who hit more home runs than any other business jet marketer.

B/CA



Dave Ellies, the late aircraft interior designer, gave Taylor the idea of building a trailer-mounted mockup of the Cessna Citation, which toured dozens of business aviation airports across the United States so that as many prospective buyers as possible could see what the new jet looked like.