

Rectrix Commercial Aviation Services

Rich Cawley said focusing on safety, quality, and service allowed this company to create several different businesses designed to outshine the competition.



Aviation Innovation

Growth and innovation in private aviation is a Rectrix Commercial Aviation Services specialty. The company has been slowly, but steadily, growing ever since Rectrix started operations about a decade ago when founder Tom Russell bought a plane in the late 1990s. Today the key to continued growth and innovation for Rectrix lies in multiple business units and putting customers first.

After the company had been in business for several years, Rich Cawley, president and CEO, was brought in to help Rectrix get into the FBO (fixed base operator) business. At that point, the company began to realize its potential within the aviation industry, and today Rectrix is made up of five different business units.

Rectrix Aviation offers private jet charter service to more than 5,000 airports worldwide as well as management services for aircraft owners. Rectrix Aerodrome and Air Cape Cod in

Hyannis, Mass., along with Rectrix Aerodrome Centers in Sarasota, Fla., are the FBOs. Rectrix Hangarminiums, also in Sarasota, offer prospective buyers an array of Rectrix development services and deliver a customized hangar. The company has grown from a few employees in 2005 to about 50 employees today.

“We were able to grow when the rest of the industry was sluggish. We’ve been successful at hiring the right people and treating our customers like gold,” Cawley said.

Conceptually different

Of the business units, the Hangarminium is perhaps the most interesting. The trademarked concept is a Rectrix innovation that first came about back in September 2006 when Rectrix created a design for the first-ever Hangarminium. Located on 20 acres of property at Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport, the design accommodated more than

180,000-square-foot of aircraft hangars and passenger service facilities.

The Hangarminium concept offers owners the benefits of private hangar ownership without additional staff or equipment. Each is designed and constructed to owner specifications. Rectrix already had a presence in Sarasota with the Rectrix Aerodrome Centers FBO business unit, and Rectrix felt there was appropriate demand from the customer base in Sarasota for something revolutionary.

“The airport loved the idea, which was really a group effort between ourselves and a group of aircraft owners and managers in Sarasota,” said Cawley.

This past July, Rectrix announced plans to expand operations in Sarasota, signing a new lease agreement with the airport that made four additional acres of land available for aviation-related development. Plans include construction of additional hangars for large business class jets, as well as the potential for a repair station and self-service fueling area.

Growing in all areas

Expanding the Hangarminium to other parts of the country is part of a long-term Rectrix growth strategy and the company has plans to continue developing its FBO division. Building new FBOs from scratch is something Rectrix can shoot for because the company has zero debt. Cawley believes in building from the ground up because the Rectrix philosophy is different from its competitors.

“It’s very difficult to go out and buy an existing FBO because we’d have to rebrand it and change the whole company philosophy,” he said. “For us to expand FBO operations, we must identify the airports that are going to have a significant growth spurt. We are doing that now and hope to have five to seven locations within the next five to eight years.”

Part of the site identification process will include determining if an airport has suitable aviation activity, outside commerce, and a receptive community.

Despite public outcry over GM, Chrysler, and Ford executives showing up to Washington on three separate private jets while looking for a bailout, Rectrix’s charter business continues to succeed, though not at the level of the heady days of 2006 and 2007. Cawley said Rectrix has worked to improve its position next to competitors in the market by being better at providing flexibility, reliability, efficiency, comfort, safety, and security.

“Our aircraft are meticulously clean and unbelievably maintained. We have zero tolerance for error and we have the best maintenance technicians in the industry,” Cawley said. “We operate our own airplanes, and with Rectrix you get the same pilots and the same mechanics who have firsthand knowledge of our fleet.”

Currently, Rectrix has four planes in its charter fleet: a 2007 Bombardier Challenger 300, a 1991 Canadair Challenger 601-3A-ER, a 1996 Challenger 604, and a 1999 Hawker 800XP that received a paint and interior makeover in 2009. Cawley said the company plans to add to its fleet slowly and methodically by design.

Getting noticed

With aviation expertise in terms of maintenance and pilot experience combined with hospitality expertise in terms of cleanliness and customer service, Rectrix has certainly gotten noticed during the last decade. In fact, just this past June, the company earned an Argus Platinum rating for charter operations from Argus International, an industry leader in providing specialized aviation services to companies involved with commercial and business aircraft, and performing on-site safety audits. Platinum is the highest Argus rating, meaning the designation puts Rectrix in select company.





This type of achievement is an indication of Rectrix's health as an organization and the company's potential for growth. Cawley said unlike the FBO model, acquisitions could be in the aviation division's future as part of its growth strategy, as with the acquisition of New World Jet Corporation in June 2009, but everything will be balanced to ensure any moves fit with the company's customer first philosophy.

"Our growth goes right back to the expertise of our people and our ability to deal with each challenge we face one at a time. With every downfall in the economy, there is an opportunity," Cawley said. "As a company, we look to find the positive in any situation and work from there." ■

—Eric Slack



Partnering For Success

The Hiller Group, Inc. is proud to be associated with Rectrix Aviation & Aerodrome Centers, a premier provider of private jet charter, aircraft management and fixed based operations.

Hiller would like to congratulate Rectrix on their recent achievement of an ARGUS Platinum rating for their Charter Operations.

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