At the 2013 AEA International Convention & Trade Show in Las Vegas, AEA President Paula Derks asked member companies the question: What's working for you? Derks challenged AEA members to share their success stories, best practices and ideas that are working for their respective companies. This article is part of a series that highlights how AEA member companies recognized challenging economic circumstances, and how they responded and overcame them.



STORY BY THOMAS INMAN

Clay Lacy Aviation

Innovative, entrepreneurial and high-quality standards

n March, Clay Lacy Aviation announced that its FANS 1/A+ solution for the Gulfstream GIV and GIVSP received FAA supplemental type certificate approval via STC–ST03423CH. The comprehensive upgrade provides a feature-rich, lowcost solution with minimal downtime. The company is installing the new technology at its Van Nuys, California, repair station. In addition, it made the STC available to Universal Avionics Systems Corp. authorized dealers.



An upgraded Gulfstream GIVSP

Photo by Chad Slattery

"Our FANS program is designed to provide Gulfstream owners the most cost-effective and convenient solution with increased functionality and ease of operation to meet current and future worldwide mandates," said Jim Lauer, the company's director of avionics. "It is the only certified upgrade that gives the client the option of using the existing Honeywell MCS-6000/7000 or an Iridium-based solution that meets the current TSO-c159A."

Approximately 470 Gulfstreams are candidates for the equipment, which will cost an estimated \$200,000 and take seven to 10 days to install in an aircraft. An amendment to the STC to include the Gulfstream GV type is in process. FANS installation incorporates technology developed by Universal Avionics, including the Universal UniLink UL-801 CMU, UNS-1Espw FMS and CVR-120R, as well as CPDLC and ADS-C units.

FANS 1/A+ is currently used by most commercial aircraft for the North Atlantic crossings, but only by a small percentage of business jets. It replaces current position reports using HF radio communications, which can be unreliable and hard to understand. The new system uses automatic satellite-based position reports delivered directly to air traffic control from the aircraft's onboard flight management and datalink systems. This improves safety, reduces operating costs through more direct routing and decreases stress on crewmembers by automatically communicating position reports in text rather than voice format.



A view of the ramp at Clay Lacy Aviation's Seattle facility.

"ATC facilities around the globe give preferential routing and airspace access to FANS-equipped aircraft," Lauer said. "With FANS, air traffic control can more accurately track aircraft along the entire route, safely and efficiently accommodating more aircraft in the designated airspace."

Approaching quickly are worldwide mandates that will deny non-FANS-equipped aircraft access to the most desirable and efficient North Atlantic crossing routes. By 2020, they will not be allowed to operate in minimum navigation performance specification airspace, essentially grounding their European-bound flights.

"We are very excited to partner with Clay Lacy Aviation, a company that is highly respected and trusted in the aircraft maintenance and management industry, on equipping today's most preferred business aircraft with this innovative technology," said Dan Reida, Universal Avionics' vice president of sales, marketing and support. "We are committed to providing aircraft owners avionics solutions that enhance safety, reduce operational costs, and address current and future requirements."

This achievement is one of many. The Aviation Research Group in the U.S. and the *Robb Report* have given the company their highest ratings. Clay Lacy has earned the FAA Diamond Award in recognition of its maintenance training excellence. The company exceeds the Wyvern Standard, and the National Air Transportation Association has honored it with its highest rating. As the numerous awards and accolades indicate, Clay Lacy Aviation certainly has maintained high-quality standards.

In addition to a wide range of aircraft services, including charter, management, sales and even aerial cinematography, Clay Lacy Aviation provides a complete spectrum of maintenance repair and upgrade services. Its Class 3 and 4 repair station is open 24 hours with three shifts, a mobile response team and a multimillion on-site parts inventory. As an authorized dealer for leading avionics manufacturers, it specializes in full-suite avionics installations, system upgrades and modifications, and STCs. All work is backed by an installation workmanship warranty. Clay Lacy Aviation maintains locations in Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver, San Diego and Santa Ana. Furthermore, 80 aircraft are under its management, with 50 aircraft listed on its Part 135 charter certificate.

Currently employing 340 staff members, the company's success stretches back to its founding by Clay Lacy in 1968 with a single Learjet. At that time, the company was the first jet charter company in the western United States. Seven years later, the company pioneered the Astrovision air-to-air camera system. In 1981, the company established the world's first all-jet fixed base operation at Van Nuys Airport. The company continued to grow during the next 20 years, and by 2001, Clay Lacy Aviation was managing a 30-aircraft fleet.

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CAPABILITY,

GIS 25 years' experience provides quality instrument service specializing in altimeters, panel mounted and remote gyros, including:

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WHAT'S WORKING

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The following year, the company opened a second FBO at Seattle's Boeing Field. In 2007, Clay Lacy Aviation became an avionics dealer. Now, the company carries authorization for more than 12 different manufacturers. This year, the company is adding a satellite repair station at the Carlsbad/San Diego location. Clearly, something is working for the company.

From the beginning, Clay Lacy was an innovator and a record-breaker. For example, in 1965, Lacy and co-pilot Jack Conroy made a record-breaking transcontinental round-trip flight overnight on May 21. Averaging more than 483 KTS, the Learjet made only one stop in each direction. Actually, the flight set three world records for business aircraft: Los Angeles to New York in 5 hours, 8 minutes; New York to Los Angeles in 5 hours, 45 minutes; and round trip in 11 hours, 36 minutes, including 1 hour, 14 minutes on the ground. Clay Lacy Aviation has the same record-breaking spirit.

As the company grew, it added capabilities to provide services to the planes being chartered. Building maintenance and avionics facilities reduced downtime and liabilities. By the end of the 1970s, the fleet was large enough to make ferrying for maintenance a serious and "constant" burden. The capabilities added to help itself also aids other customers, as the FANS STC indicates.

Clay Lacy Aviation is already eyeing other candidates for FANS 1/A+ STCs. Scott Cutshall, vice president of marketing said, "The GV and the Challenger 601 are prime candidates for the STC because of the sheer number of aircraft. Not only is the STC needed, but also it adds value and safety."

Clay Lacy Aviation has three primary attributes working for it. First, the company is innovative, recognizing that if it needs a product or service, so does someone else. Second, the company is entrepreneurial, turning the need or service into a viable addition to the business. Finally, the company maintains high standards of quality and doesn't allow growth or innovation compromise those values.

To learn more about Clay Lacy Aviation, visit claylacy.com.