

## YOU COULD LEARN TO LOVE IT

Jay Sapovits says most of his clients use the time he sells on private jets to fly for leisure with their families. Here's a look at the time you'd save on your next family ski trip from your house in Northbrook to Aspen, Colo.

|                      |   |                               |                                  |   |   |                                     |                                   |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| COMMERCIAL ITINERARY | Drive from Northbrook to O'Hare. 15 miles without traffic | Park car and walk to check-in | Wait in security checkpoint line | Sit at gate. If you've arrived the recommended 60 min. prior to departure | Fly to Denver on a traditional commercial route | Drive or shuttle 160 miles to Aspen | Elapsed time: 7 hours, 55 minutes |
|                      | 21 min. 30 min.   | 20 min. 40 min.               | 2 hours, 34 min.                 | 3 hours, 30 min.  |   |                                     |                                   |

|                   |   |                            |                                  |                                   |
|-------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| PRIVATE ITINERARY | 12 min. 5 min.  | 20 min.                    | 2 hours, 45 minutes              | Elapsed time: 3 hours, 22 minutes |
|                   | Drive from Northbrook to Palwaukee Airport, six miles without traffic | Park car and walk to plane | Load baggage, preflight airplane |                                   |

Sources: Jay Sapovits, O'Hare International Airport recommendations, Transportation Security Administration averages

# CRAIN'S

CHICAGO BUSINESS

### SELLING PRIVATE JETS

# Selling the sky to the well-heeled

Sales secrets from 'The Jet Guy.' Tip one: Play Santa Claus

BY MEREDITH LANDRY

**The salesman:** Jay Sapovits, 34, vice-president of Midwest sales for Marquis Jet, a New York-based company founded in 2001 that sells 25-hour increments on small, private planes owned by NetJets that seat seven to 13 passengers. Packages run from \$109,900 to \$299,900. Last year the company had revenues of \$400 million, of which Mr. Sapovits sold \$20 million.

**The challenge:** Catering to high-powered executives and celebrities.

Once you've flown in a private jet, it's hard to travel any other way. You begin to realize what a horrible inconvenience flying commercially can be. My clients are

people who have worked hard their whole lives and can afford that convenience now.

I try to sell them on the safety and the convenience of flying privately. I don't deal with clients who try to negotiate on the price. If price is all that matters to them, then they're probably not for us. I make it a point not to talk down the competition because it only makes me look unprofessional.

My goal is to be seen as "The Jet Guy." To stay ahead of the curve I read up on everything I can get my hands on—all the industry trade publications, I study the FAA's site, every competitor's site, manufacturers' publications and anything aviation-related. I get on any plane I can to familiarize myself with the equipment so I can

give my clients the answers to questions they don't even know they have yet.

To find clients, I network with a lot of wealth and tax advisers and get as many names from them as I can. I use Crain's lists of highly paid executives, and I also use them to do research at Yahoo Finance to find prospective clients. We have a partnership with Ermenegildo Zegna, which sells fine men's clothes. They keep us informed of their top clients and we offer our customers a \$1,500 credit at their stores.

Most of my clients are not traveling from one business meeting to another. They're flying for leisure with their families. Many of my clients use us because they can take their pets with them on vacation. The whole process, from identifying a potential client to money in the bank, takes about 45

days. I don't pressure them.

The most unusual destination thus far has been the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador. Having a clientele mostly from Chicago lends itself to Naples, Fla., and Aspen, Colo., although I've had my share of flying clients to Hawaii, Europe and the Caribbean.

We market ourselves primarily by hosting family-oriented events, since our typical client is between age 40 and 50 and has two or three kids. We sponsor a day at the American Girl store in Chicago around Christmas. The entire store closes to the public and we invite our clients. Every year I also play Santa Claus at the Make-a-Wish Foundation's Christmas event. We like to sponsor family-oriented events because if you do something nice for our clients' children, it's the same as doing something nice for them.



No dogfights: "Many of our clients take their pets with them," says Marquis Jet salesman Jay Sapovits.

ANDREAS LARSSON