

# The New York Times

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NEW YORK, TUESDAY, JULY 8, 2008

## A Boss in the Private Jet Is Likely to Be a Woman



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By **JOE SHARKEY**

The private jet industry has long struggled against the stereotype of the typical user as a well-off guy in a big corporate jet.

And you will see plenty evidence of the stereotype in New York next week, as squadrons of business jets arrive at regional airports delivering executives and clients for the All-Star game at Yankee Stadium. (Bringing along clients, of course, turns a day at the ballpark into a business trip.)

But as the National Business Aviation Association points out, about 75 percent of the 11,000 business jets in the United States are operated by small to midsize companies and entrepreneurs. And increasingly, especially within that niche, the boss in the

*Saving time and trouble leads busy women to spurn commercial carriers.*

company jet is likely to be a woman.

XOJet, the big private jet company, says that about 15 percent of its customers who contract for 100 hours or more a year in flight time are female. And while few keep precise statistics, all of the private jet companies I spoke with, including charter operators, said that women are a growing part of their market.

For women, ego and status seem to be less important as motivators than considerations like avoiding the problems and delays of commercial airports. Essentially, some say, you are buying time.

"I need to more carefully pick and choose how I spend my time, and the airplane to me is an enabler," said Mary K. Swanson, a businesswoman in the Phoenix area who founded a wellness company, HealthCare Dimensions, in 1992 and sold it in 2006. She then founded the Swanson Family Foundation, a philanthropy that works among the poor in the United States and abroad.

Her plane is a light-cabin seven-seat Hawker 400, whose 1,400-mile range makes it ideal for foundation business that has to be done in a day, when a trip by commercial air travel can take

twice the time. "It often makes me say yes when I would otherwise say no," she said.

Ms. Swanson's plane comes from Marquis Jet, a partner with NetJets. Marquis sells flying time in 25-hour increments, in various business jet models from the NetJets fleet of around 800 aircraft.

Ms. Swanson, who also flies on commercial airlines when it is feasible, said that when she was building her own company, private flying was financially impractical.

"I never spent money I didn't have," she said. She said when she sold her company, she decided to pour much of the profit into her foundation.

"If you asked me 10 years ago if I would be flying around on a private jet, I would have said absolutely not," she said.

In Los Angeles, Nancy Furlotti, a psychotherapist and real estate investor, said she uses her private jet, an eight-passenger Cessna Citation X, when flying commercially would waste time.

"I have a private practice, but I'm also currently president of the C. G. Jung Institute in Los Angeles, and I have to do a tremendous amount of traveling to various conferences and things like that," she said. "Many times I would not be able to get to these meetings and get back in time for my practice here, and for family."

Many businesswomen who are balancing work and family responsibilities say a business jet solves logistical problems.

Recently, she added, her son's wedding required getting her 87-year-old mother, 94-year-old mother-in-law and several other relatives to San Francisco.

"Managing that on a commercial flight? A potential disaster," she said.

None of this comes cheap. And the surge in private jet travel only underscores the growing disparity between the haves and have-nots in air transportation.

A 25-hour Marquis Jet card on the Hawker XP model that Ms. Swanson flies costs about \$132,000 (plus trip taxes and government fees) as of Jan. 1. XOJet said that for a Citation X like the one Ms. Furlotti uses, a \$375,000 upfront fee guarantees 100 hours of on-demand flying time over five years, with an additional hourly flying charge of \$3,600 to \$4,000.

But Ms. Furlotti says it is money well spent. "I usually fly out of Van Nuys airport about 35 minutes from my home, show my driver's license, hop aboard and boom — off we go."

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