CLEAR for Takeoff

by Rachel Buser
The pride was audible in Jamie Walker’s voice as he guided us down the long stretch of grey carpeted hallway in his Omaha headquarters. The President of Jet Linx has every right to be grinning from ear to ear when giving a tour of his thriving business’ home base. Inside these concrete walls are busy staff members – booking private planes, monitoring flights and arranging client accommodations. His enthusiasm for the operation is almost tangible – making it difficult to imagine that just over a decade ago, Jamie’s professional life had taken off in a much different direction.
Looking Back…

Jamie was born and raised in Omaha and graduated from Creighton Prep. After obtaining a degree in English and a minor in Journalism from the University of Kansas, he uprooted from the Midwest to begin a sales and marketing career in the downtown Manhattan real estate industry. After 4 successful years, he was abruptly faced with a market standstill. Jamie was among many professionals who felt the ripple effects of 9/11. The New York real estate market went cold and he had to make a career change. Ironically enough, the events surrounding 9/11 led him full force into the air travel industry.

Denny Walker, Jamie’s father, initially gained professional success in 1999 when he founded CardMember Publishing Corporation (a consumer services direct marketing company). A decade later, Denny began searching for fractional ownership in a private plane to meet his professional and personal needs. However, the pursuit proved to be frustrating and he quickly recognized a gap in the market. This discovery inspired Denny to create Jet Linx Aviation in 1999 and he invited his Manhattan-based son to play a long-distance role in the company. When Jamie was forced to consider a career change 2 years later, he made the decision to fully commit to Jet Linx and return to Nebraska. The aviation industry may have seemed like a risky commitment at the time, but a unique demand has continued to earn this top rating every year since. Pilots, flight crews and service representatives are required to participate in ongoing education and training, putting them at the forefront of industry’s safety policies and practices. Additionally, Jet Linx utilizes a back-up safety program that monitors various aspects of their operations, such as flight crew rest time and aircraft maintenance. Jet Linx knows that in order to provide clients with the most enjoyable flight experience, safety must be the highest priority. No matter how many accommodations and luxuries they can provide, it all becomes irrelevant if a flight does not make it safely from one location to another.

In June 2004, Jet Linx formed a working relationship with SilverStone Group. As their fleet experienced continued growth in size and complexity, our Aviation Risk Services Team worked diligently to improve the coverages and pricing within their aircraft insurance program. SilverStone Group also guided the placement of their group benefits package and provided property and professional liability solutions to meet their evolving needs. Additionally, our umbrella of protection extends to the Walker’s personal lives and their family trusts. But the perks don’t stop there – local representatives will often arrange ground and hotel accommodations, set up kenneling services for pets, and cater favorite meals and beverages onto the flight. Upon returning, clients will find their cars freshly detailed and waiting for them just outside the plane.

Jet Linx is structured upon a local concept to ensure each client receives an unmatched level of customer service. It is a company dedicated to serving the individual, not the masses. Flights are booked by a local dispatcher, and planes depart from a local private terminal and are flown by local pilots who passengers know and trust. But the perks don’t stop there – local representatives will often greet clients at the airport, arrange ground and hotel accommodations, set up kenneling services for pets, and cater favorite meals and beverages onto the flight. Upon returning, clients will find their cars freshly detailed and waiting for them just outside the plane.

The personal touch Jet Linx provides sets them apart from their national competitors and is the cornerstone of their operation – a standard they refuse to sacrifice at the cost of rapid growth. Jet Linx has followed a cautious expansion plan, adding locations in San Antonio, Dallas, Indianapolis, Denver, Scottsdale and St. Louis. Each growth spurt has been executed only after extensive research and negotiations with their operating partners. Slow and steady seems to be the secret to this company’s success. Jet Linx’s revenue has nearly doubled in the past 2½ years. At a time when most people are cutting luxuries, this Omaha-based private jet company has experienced continued growth – a testament to the quality of service they provide.

Another standard Jet Linx will not compromise on is safety. Following an exhaustive on-site audit in 2005, ARG/US (the worldwide leader in performing safety audits among corporate flight departments, charter operations and commercial airlines) awarded Jet Linx with the Platinum Safety Seal – a designation less than 4% of their peer group receives. This is the highest safety rating an operator can achieve, and Jet Linx’s unwavering commitment to safety has continued to earn this top rating every year since. Pilots, flight crews and service representatives are required to participate in ongoing education and training, putting them at the forefront of the industry’s safety policies and practices. Additionally, Jet Linx utilizes a back-up safety program that monitors various aspects of their operations, such as flight crew rest time and aircraft maintenance. Jet Linx knows that in order to provide clients with the most enjoyable flight experience, safety must be the highest priority. No matter how many accommodations and luxuries they can provide, it all becomes irrelevant if a flight does not make it safely from one location to another.

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The aviation industry has undoubtedly experienced a decade of historic downturns. Despite the obstacles, Denny and Jamie have been able to pool their ingenuity and unflinching business sense to create an industry mainstay, breathing new life into the skies.