

Help Your Boss Buy You A Plane

He may have to be convinced that it will make you more productive and boost the company's profits. Here's a logical way to go about convincing him

Give him justification, a reason, a suggested way to do it, and chances are good that your boss will buy you an airplane. You'll have to do the research, come up with a fool-proof plan for "why" and "how" then present a sales pitch that makes real business sense.

An interpolated survey from figures of the major manufacturers of general aviation aircraft established that there are over 50,000 U.S. business and manufacturing firms who should be using business-aid airplanes and have none. Perhaps it's partly your fault that your employers haven't put a company plane at your disposal.

There are two fundamental approaches you may use to get the boss to lay out money for a company airplane:

1. A plane should be purchased for the use of the traveling company representative who makes frequent trips in a geographical sequence suitable to light aircraft coverage. His case may be presented somewhat like a shop superintendent's request for a new and expensive production machine. Such a presentation is the subject of this article.

2. A plane should be bought for the inside company employee (or traveling man whose itineraries do not justify travel by company plane) to take full advantage of the modern trend of more and better "fringe benefits" for employees by getting the boss to company-sponsor an Employees' Flying Club.

Either way you decide to go, this is a fiscally good year to tender your proposal.

For the traveling employee. We must assume that your work for the boss is producing a profit for the company, in dollar income if you sell, or by dollars saved if you are a service or engineering representative.

The first requirement is to determine if you travel enough and to the right places to justify your request for the use of a company airplane, remembering that if you don't all is not lost because there will still be the company flying club approach. To qualify in this area you should:

- Travel 50% or more of total working days.

- Make stops in medium-size communities of about 25,000 to 75,000 population as well as in major cities. If you visit only major cities, economy dictates that you will accommodate the airlines with continued patronage, while Uncle Jack does your business flying.

- You should not have to make stops every 30 miles to hit each drug store-post office town where, unfortunately, the horseless carriage still serves best. Though designers haven't given up on the Aerocar, and Brantly, Bell, Hiller and Hughes helicopters are carving inroads toward this business need, they haven't whipped the auto yet.

- Usual appointments with clients should not be so critical that a day early or a day late would be the difference between accomplishment or failure of your mission. Unless you are a fully qualified IFR pilot and your company will provide a fully IFR-equipped airplane, storms or fog conditions will cause off-schedule arrivals.

Justifying a company business airplane. Though principles are about the same, getting the boss to spring for your airplane will not be quite as easy as getting him to find money for a new shop machine. It may be little, but the boss knows something about the machines used to conduct his business. He's purchased new machines before and has watched them increase productivity and, in turn, dollars. But what does he know about company airplanes except through ads he's skimmed over in magazines, what he has heard from a plane owner friend at the club, or by perhaps having once been a passenger in some other company's airplane? Even if he was a pilot in World War II, things have changed and he'll have to be brought up to date.

You're going to have to show and tell your boss what a company airplane can do. And since all bosses are from Missouri, you're going to have to produce positive evidence that the airplane you seek will more than pay its way. To this end, anonymously leaving copies of *The AOPA PILOT* in the head man's office may begin subtly paving your way.

Start taking these steps—with the timing and plotting it takes to woo and win a wife:

1. Prepare an accurate record of every hour and dollar spent for your business travel for the past 12 (or better, 24) months. Include every possible expense item, such as hotels, meals, transportation tickets, auto rentals, taxi fares, entertainment and any miscellaneous items. Include also a record of the lost hours spent in terminals awaiting interconnections or off-schedule public transportation. If you used a company car, list not only the usual expenses for fuel, oil, repairs, insurance, storage, lease or time payments and depreciation, but also include the portion of payments that are interest, or loss of any return on the amount of capital investment, and taxes or license fees. This document will be the "control record" of your case for an airplane. Make it accurate and leave nothing out.

2. Visit nearby dealers of both new and used aircraft, and select three airplanes that could meet your present business travel requirements. Pick one that is better than immediate needs require and which is equipped with more extras than are essential. Select another, less expensive than the first, that ideally fits your travel itineraries. And choose a third, less expensive yet, that leaves many things to be desired—but good enough to get you around your routes and prove what the airplane can do (even if you have to sneak out at 4 a.m. each day to carry out the time-saving claims you will have made).

3. Tell airplane dealers you visit exactly what you have in mind concerning a presentation to sell your boss on a company airplane. So they won't think you're huffing and puffing, give the dealers a summary of your company responsibilities, a list of the towns you visit, how frequently, and an idea of how long you usually stay in each town. With this act you will have enlisted the aid of some experts for your cause.

4. With the aid of the dealers, develop complete sets of figures around each of the airplanes you have chosen. Include outright purchase prices, term purchase prices, tax information (both amounts to be paid out and short term writeoff data), costs of several types of lease programs with advantages of each, annual direct and indirect opera-

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tional costs—not forgetting depreciation. Figure in enough insurance (including substantial amounts of excess liability insurance) to protect your boss and his business under any eventuality. This latter item tells the boss that you are looking out for his interests.

5. Write letters to the marketing directors of each general aviation aircraft manufacturer requesting their support with documentary materials to help build your “sell the boss campaign.” Tell them you want aircraft information, tax information, operational statistics, industrial case histories and testimonials, general insurance suggestions, and information about all time purchase or lease programs offered by their subsidiaries or cooperating agencies. Be sure to indicate also—in positive terms—whether or not you want them to start flooding your boss directly with selling brochures. This is important, because you know your boss better than they do, and too much too soon can frighten a good prospect into hiding. Requests to manufacturers will receive most complete treatment if written on company letterheads.

6. If companies competing with yours, or companies with similar product lines, are successfully using airplanes, dig out the favorable facts for inclusion in your presentation. Such data may make your boss want to “keep up with the Joneses.”

7. You'll probably be able to do the work of 1½ or more men with the assist of an airplane. Annual costs for the aircraft could never reach half of the yearly wages and travel expenses of putting another man into the field—and besides, qualified men are hard to find. Use this advantage by preparing a proposed annual travel itinerary for you with the airplane. Plan each trip as a multistop round robin route, allowing en route change of plan flexibility so that you'll be able to bypass stops that may be fogged in or closed after dark on your outbound leg and can hit them on the way back. Compare this new itinerary with your present travel performance to learn that you can easily make nearly 50% more calls. Then beef up your case with numbers: What is every customer contact you

make worth to the boss in dollars, present or future? What is the “per call cost” the way you've been traveling? How much will you lower the “per call cost” with the airplane? And how often will the airplane get you there “fustust with the mostust” to beat out competition?

8. Talk about the fringe benefits of prestige, a modern way of conducting business, advertising value, the customers who remember the rep that flies a company plane. Mention ability to fly customers to see your products at work in other cities, or customer entertainment flights, or taking consultants or other company employees along on important calls—at no additional transportation cost. A couple of important emergency deliveries have been known to be worth the entire price of an airplane.

A lot of “freeloader” entertainment expense can be eliminated by not being stuck in nonproductive customer's towns overnight, which often cannot be avoided when driving or relying on public transportation.

One flying salesman told us, “I seldom rent a car or pay a cab fare since I've had the plane. If I call ahead, one of my customers is almost always ready to drive to the airport to meet me when I land. And even when I don't call ahead and have to take a cab into town, someone always volunteers to drive me back to the airport.

“There's glamour left in the airplane,” he said. “People seem to welcome the chance to get out of their stores for a few minutes, drive to the airport and watch me fly off into the blue. When I have time, I often take customers for short hops over their cities and it sure pays off. Not only are my sales going up, but I've become a personal friend of most of my customers. They invite me into their homes to eat instead of me taking them out to dinner. Some of them even insist on putting me up overnight. Expenses are down, sales are up—and I'm no longer just another salesman. I'm sure glad my competitors don't have airplanes.”

With the airplane you'll also be more productive back in the home office after a trip because you won't be as exhausted and tense as after using other modes of travel. Besides making more calls on customers, you'll have more days at home with your family and friends.

Making your pitch. When all of your facts are gathered, sort and weed them out for presentation. This will be a comparative study paralleling the complete analysis of your past and present performances and costs, with the potential of increased performance with little increase in costs possible with a company airplane.

If dealers and manufacturers of airplanes, working with you, have not provided a complete presentation portfolio in which you have jointly entered all of the correct figures, you will have to prepare this presentation piece yourself. A suggested format to use is a standard “Application for Employ-

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J. Harris Pritchard is a free-lance author living in and flying out of New York City. He has literally grown up with general aviation, having been a Cessna dealer and co-owner of a used aircraft sales organization for several years. He started flying in 1934. After World War II and a comprehensive “learn to fly all over again” course, his flying interests soared into use of private aircraft in several business ventures and ultimately into the field of aircraft sales. He has been in the position of both buyer and seller of airplanes, and the pointers he offers in his article for The AOPA PILOT are based upon experience.

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ment," with the airplane as the applicant and you serving as the applicant's agent. This will be a direct approach that your boss understands, and you'll be leaving nothing out. It will be easy to match things you want to say about the airplane with the questions contained on such a form.

Use plenty of photos, operational graphs, an "old way" and proposed "new way" comparative chart, overlays on a map of your territory showing the round robin trips you propose to take, and appropriate case histories. Confine cost figures to "dollars per month" to avoid frightening your boss prematurely with that highest cost of an airplane—the original purchase price.

Plan ahead with the knowledge that your boss, even if he's all for your airplane himself, may have to sell your airplane to a board of directors or a group of stockholders. Give him the ammunition he may need to get your request through. Often he can get a lease program through much more easily than having to persuade a board to invest thousands of dollars of operating capital in buying an airplane.

One company salesman got his plane by pointing out that it came with a near money-back guarantee after a three-year period of use. He used the total cost of a new light twin airplane, added a 6% per annum return on the company's cash outlay, included all direct and indirect operational expenses in arriving at a three-year total figure. He then subtracted from that total the amount the airplane could probably be sold for after three years' use, dollar advantages of a three-year complete tax writeoff, the previous annual costs of his travel on a three-year average—and Whamo! the company could own and operate that new airplane for the added cost of a couple of boxes of good cigars each month.

This salesman even took into consideration a capital gain tax due upon selling a three-year-old airplane that had been completely written off. And he also emphasized the ownership prestige and the increasing of his efficiency by some 30%.

By now you have determined the

format of your presentation, whether it be the employment application pattern or some other. As regards material, check this list to be sure you have included:

- How the airplane will pay its own way.
- Why your efficiency will positively increase.
- The surprisingly low monthly cost (after your boss has heard about all of the high prices of airplanes).
- A comprehensive and honest comparative cost schedule of what your travel has been costing the company and what it will cost with the airplane, with differentials favoring the airplane expressed in dollars to be saved, or enough more dollars earned to justify any additional expense.

• Ways in which the airplane will benefit the boss personally.

• Supporting documentation to back up every statement you have made or every estimated expense or gain item you have listed.

Before you hand your boss your written proposal, try to get him to talk with top executives of other companies which utilize airplanes successfully—particularly those executives he knows personally. Try to get him up for a business trip in that airplane you want him to buy, under perfect weather conditions and not pushing time. He must have only pleasant memories of his first business trip in his company's airplane.

Your campaign has included casual conversation with references to what an airplane could do for the company, the arrival of an aviation magazine on his desk, a few airplane brochures dropped around his office, getting him to make a business trip in the airplane you want on a chartered basis. You know that business for the company has been generally good for the past several months. It's almost time to sell those benefits of the company airplane.

When you are satisfied that your proposal is complete, when the boss seems in a receptive mood, and shortly after you have done some outstanding job for the company—go! And remember the Eleventh Commandment—"Thou Shalt Not Goof." ●

'Administrator For A Day'

The 16-year-old daughter of an AOPA member is the new Girls Nation "Administrator" of the Federal Aviation Agency.

Blonde, blue-eyed Stephanie Kimmel of Davenport, Ia., was appointed Girls Nation counterpart of FAA Administrator William F. McKee following the Girls Nation convention and presidential election at American University. Before coming to Washington, Stephanie was elected Iowa Girls State "Lieutenant Governor." Girls State, culminated by Girls Nation, is the youth citizenship training program con-

ducted annually by the American Legion Auxiliary to give high school students practical experience in the processes of government. Following Stephanie's appointment, she spent a day at FAA Headquarters in Washington, D. C., becoming acquainted with the duties and responsibilities of her new "post."

Stephanie brought firsthand aviation knowledge to her post gained from several years' experience as a frequent passenger in her father's plane. Stephanie's father, Joseph S. Kimmel, Jr. (AOPA 178438), flies a Cessna 195. ●