

THE HOUSEKEEPING GUIDE TO SELLING YOUR JET

Sellers must consider a range of factors before listing their airplanes, some of which are easily overlooked. Gerrard Cowan asked industry experts what should be on any seller's to-do list ahead of marketing their plane.

Timing can often be an issue, specifically when it comes to acting upon advice from your aircraft broker and/or adviser. The seller takes their knowledge of the market from their adviser/broker, but if they wait to act, the market can sometimes quickly change

Illustrating the point, Andrew Butler, a Partner at ALTEA, recalls the recent example of his company advising a customer of a window of opportunity to sell an aircraft to specific buyers. But by the time the details of the aircraft were circulated, "the market had changed to such a degree that the dollar value of the asset had reduced significantly," he shares.

The market changes depending on many factors, Butler warns. For instance, today the political/financial and tariff

situations are changing, sometimes daily.

"The lesson is clear – if your seller can act quickly, you stand a better chance of taking advantage of some market opportunities that are more likely to disappear very rapidly in today's volatile marketplace," Butler highlights.

Have your Documentation and Records in Order

Brian Macbean, Director of Credit and Sales at AOPA Finance, highlights the need for sellers to carefully manage documentation and records, such as aircraft logs.

"Logbooks tell an important story about the maintenance and operational history of the aircraft, and experienced buyers and brokers will make it a point to have the logbooks reviewed," he says. If these aren't available for review

or are incomplete, he warns, the sale of the aircraft could be delayed, or the buyer could cancel the deal.

This might seem straightforward, but Macbean notes that depending on the type and age of the aircraft, the logbooks could include multiple volumes with many different types of entries. Organizing the various documents included in the logbooks can be a chore, he notes.

"There are many good systems available now, and your MRO provider of choice can help you identify the system that works best for you."

Neat records and a long history of maintenance are also vital to help an aircraft stand out in an increasingly saturated market, says Chris Hollingsworth, Regional Vice President – Americas at Jetcraft.



"To compete with other aircraft and obtain the most competitive pricing, the market demands a higher level of preparation and information, as buyers look for transparency on the lifecycle of the aircraft."

Don't Overlook Critical Details

The impact of overlooking critical details in areas like maintenance planning or documentation is typically financial, according to Hollingsworth, and rarely in the seller's favor.

"Gaps in maintenance planning or documentation can delay closing timelines, increase carrying costs, and weaken negotiating leverage. Poor tax structuring or regulatory oversight can also expose sellers to unexpected penalties or cross-border compliance issues."

Extended time on the market can prompt buyers to consider condition or value as reasons for why the aircraft has not yet sold, he adds. "Not only does insufficient preparation slow a transaction but it can impact the financial return and bring the aircraft's reliability into question, often unnecessarily."

Buyers today are also more data driven, Hollingsworth notes, expecting complete digital records with real-time maintenance visibility. That can be tricky for older aircraft, posing a challenge in record-keeping that wouldn't have been an issue 10-15 years ago.

Additionally, cross-border transactions are now even more common in an increasingly globalized market, he notes, resulting in greater scrutiny around tax structuring and

potential tariff exposure, particularly when aircraft move between major trading regions.

"In a digital world, reaching a global market is easier through social media and websites, and so learning to utilize these platforms is also important."

Have you Verified Your Broker?

There are many things that can be overlooked by sellers, as well as buyers, says Tim Barber, EMEA Aircraft Sales and Acquisitions, Duncan Aviation. For example, he reckons the most common error for sellers is failing to verify the broker they employ to actually sell the aircraft.

"Do they just have a good website but no substance? Are they using the paid for services for marketing, or just relying on lesser sites where advertising is free?" →

He also warns that it can be risky to use multiple brokers, instead of mandating an exclusive sales agent. Sometimes sellers believe that having multiple parties promoting their aircraft is better than one. The reality can be very different, he warns:

"Once the aircraft is being punted around the market by unknown parties, anything can happen. I was offered a Gulfstream G450 for \$15m a few days back, but the seller's mandated broker was actually seeking a far more realistic sum of a little over \$12.5m."

Indeed, the sector has "a thriving underworld of opportunists," Barber warns. Such opportunists could seek a high "introducer's fee," he says. This means that committing to a reputable broker with an exclusive mandate will likely cost less in the long run.

"It's also worth noting that when an unknown party is representing the aircraft for sale, having not actually seen it or the maintenance records, there's greater chance of misrepresentation, which will ultimately put the deal in jeopardy or potentially lead to further costs for the seller as they fight to keep the deal alive."

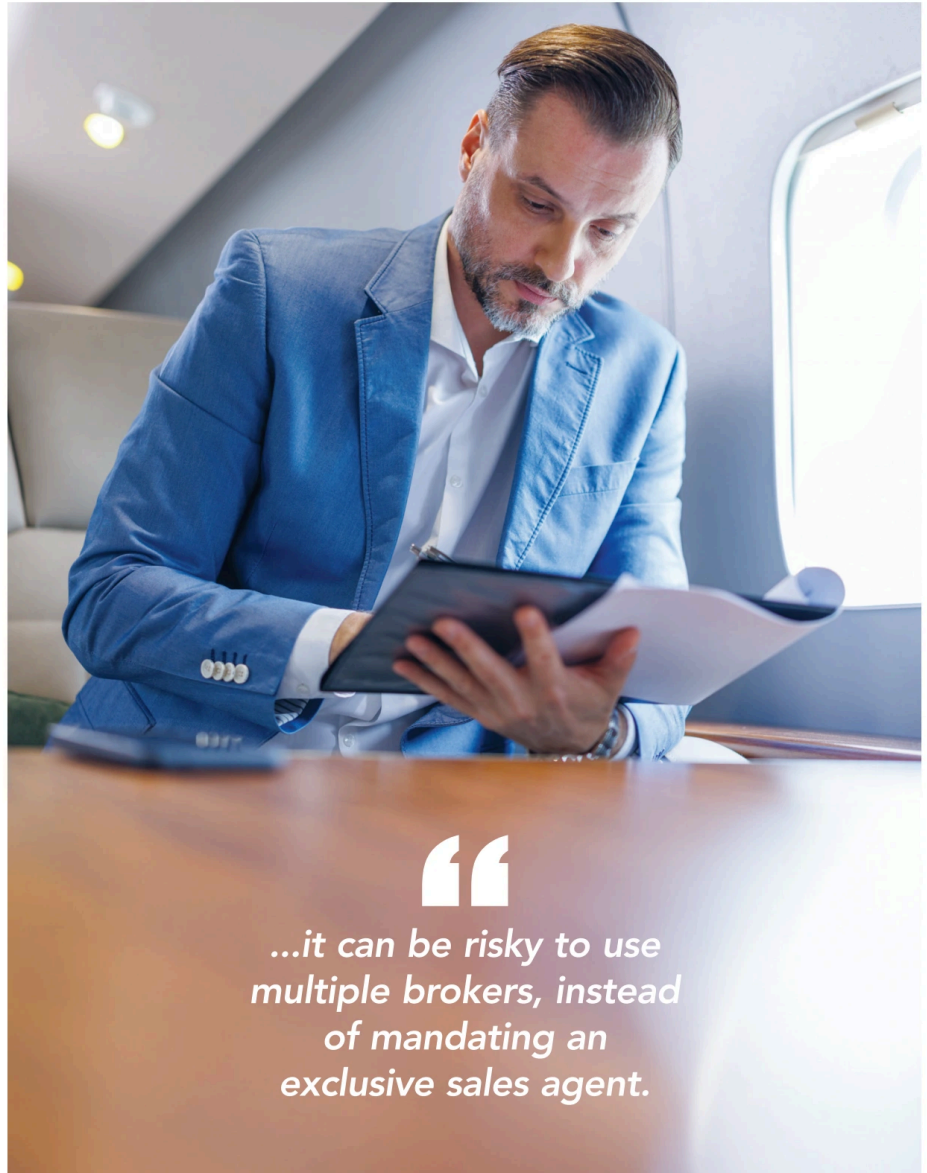
A good starting point is to look at brokers who are members of industry bodies requiring accreditation, such as IADA, Barber suggests.

Moreover, research the broker's website. Clever design and the use of AI "can make an individual look like a global player with offices in 10 cities around the globe," Barber says, so it's all the more important to check the company is built on solid foundations.

Nick Schneider, President & CEO of Global Wings, similarly highlights the risks of having multiple brokers. This can have wide-ranging effects, he says, even undermining the credibility of the transaction. "Buyers become unsure which broker has the most direct line of communication with the aircraft owner.

"This uncertainty leads many buyers to simply shy away from a particular aircraft as they do not want to be caught in the middle."

Similarly, brokers could end up competing with other brokers for the same buyer by suggesting a lower selling price, presenting a clear conflict of interest with the seller's interests.



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The internet is helping to create a false sense of market knowledge and expertise for some owners, warns Schneider, some of whom "believe that they know more about the Business Aviation market than the industry professionals who have been in business for decades".

Again, he reiterates the importance of working with an IADA broker, as these brokers "are committed to adhering to the highest ethical standards in the industry and will always strive to exclusively represent the interests of the individual aircraft owner".

Stephan Krainer, CEO of PRIMUS AVIA, says sellers – particularly those of higher-end jets – who may consider an off-market transaction, could see some buyers willing to pay a premium. "Of course, even then, I would hand over the aircraft to a credible

company, rather than an amateur expert who thinks they can easily fulfil a broker's role," he stresses.

Considerations Around Inspections and Maintenance

Another area that gets overlooked is timing for major inspections or life-limited component events, says Todd Jackson, Senior VP of Aircraft Sales at Elliott Aviation.

"Sellers sometimes bring an aircraft to market just months before a heavy inspection or engine program event, assuming buyers will 'figure it out'," he says. "In reality, that upcoming cost is heavily discounted in negotiations and can materially affect perceived value."

Buyers price risk aggressively, he warns. Incomplete records or looming inspections can lead to deeper discounts, longer negotiation cycles, and



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other problems. "In some cases, buyers will simply move on to a 'cleaner' aircraft with fewer unknowns," Jackson says.

The biggest risk in any aircraft transaction is the pre-purchase inspection, says Jason Middleton, Founder and CEO of Silver Air Private Jets. "Both buyer and seller are exposed there. The buyer wants to find everything. The seller wants minimal financial impact. It's a negotiation and the inspection findings drive that process."

During the Covid pandemic, Middleton recalls how people would often buy aircraft sight unseen. "Some weren't even airworthy. It was such a frenzy in 2020 through 2022 that buyers overlooked fundamentals." This creates clear problems.

As an operator, when Silver Air Private Jets evaluates an aircraft for a client, it focuses on maintenance especially.

He highlights some subtle indicators of potential trouble: "I always check the wheel wells. Nobody looks there. If they're spotless, it tells me the owner cared about the details. If they're dirty, there are probably other things worth digging into."

It is just like selling a house, he says: the seller should remove personal items and present a clean and organized environment. "We've walked into aircraft with coats hanging in the baggage compartment. It sounds small, but it

signals how the airplane has been treated," he says.

Jackson similarly stresses the presentational side, noting that the interior condition and cosmetics are often underestimated.



Clean, organized, digital records...

"Sellers may think buyers will look past worn interiors or dated avionics, but in a competitive market, buyers gravitate toward aircraft that feel turnkey," he says. "Even modest investments in detailing, minor interior refresh, or addressing deferred cosmetic items can materially change buyer perception."


From a marketing standpoint, a poorly presented aircraft or one that lacks a clear value story will receive fewer inquiries and weaker offers, adds Jackson. "The bar is higher today. Buyers are far more data-driven and expect transparency.

"Ten to fifteen years ago, incomplete digitization of records was more common and more tolerated. In 2026, buyers expect clean, organized, digital records that can be shared quickly with their technical teams."

Marketing has also evolved, he adds. Buyers expect high-quality imagery, video and detailed technical summaries. "A basic listing is no longer competitive in a global marketplace."

Avionics and connectivity expectations have changed too, he continues. Compliance with modern navigation mandates and cockpit modernization play a much bigger role in public perception.

"We are also seeing increased sensitivity around import and export compliance, sanctions screening, and beneficial ownership transparency. Cross-border transactions require more upfront diligence than they did a decade ago," he says. "Tariffs, parts supply chain constraints, and longer maintenance lead times also influence how buyers evaluate upcoming events and downtime risk."

Sellers should treat the listing process like a transaction preparation exercise, Jackson adds. They should clean up documentation, address obvious cosmetic issues, and be strategic about timing inspections and maintenance events. If an event is approaching, model 

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the financial impact and decide whether it is better to complete it pre-sale or price it transparently into the listing.

“Finally, sellers should be proactive and transparent. Clear disclosures, strong presentation, and realistic pricing build trust with buyers and shorten the path to closing.”

Prepare to Navigate Change

Proactive guidance is vital, according to Wassim Saheb, Managing Partner for MENA at Opus Aero. This can be particularly important at times of fast-moving change, which are unpredictable by nature.

For instance, during the 2008 financial crisis, many transactions had been initiated in the summer months, with buyers and sellers agreeing on purchase prices and financing structures. But as market conditions deteriorated rapidly, valuations began to shift dramatically.

At the time, Saheb was involved in the sale of a Bombardier Challenger 604 from Latin America to a client in the Middle East. The aircraft – a 1993 model – had an agreed sale price of \$19.5m. The pre-purchase inspection had been completed and closing was scheduled for October, with a major financier agreeing to provide asset-based financing structured at 80% loan-to-value, with a 20% down payment from the buyer.

But as the crisis unfolded and aircraft values declined almost daily, the financier began to reassess aircraft values. “Within a two-week period, the aircraft was revalued at \$14.5m. The bank could no longer support the originally agreed financing ratio and

required the buyer to increase his equity contribution to reflect the revised valuation.

“Recognizing the accelerating downturn and anticipating further declines, the buyer elected to withdraw from the transaction and forfeited his deposit. By the end of the crisis, comparable aircraft were trading in the low teens.”

Similarly, sellers must be vigilant in understanding how regulatory changes could impact their aircraft’s value. For example, Saheb points to the introduction of Reduced Vertical Separation Minimum (RVSM) airspace requirements, which required a range of avionics upgrades, system modifications and other demands.

Likewise, he highlighted the introduction of noise restrictions in the 1980s and 1990s and the implementation of Future Air Navigation System (FANS) and Controller-Pilot Datalink Communications (CPDLC).

“In each of these cases, aircraft owners were compelled to implement technical and regulatory upgrades. When such mandates approached during a planned sale window, they

often had a substantial impact on the aircraft’s marketability and sale price.”

Global economic markets are in a constant state of flux, says Butler; that’s been the case for centuries, he notes, for numerous reasons. This means that every aspect is a factor in the decision-making process that drives the sale and purchase of an expensive asset like a business aircraft.

“In this digital information age, we all have access to copious amounts of data,” he concludes. “This instant accessibility means that the overall market situation is susceptible to change much more quickly.

“It’s challenging to have the knowledge and foresight to be ahead of the market – and this only comes with experience.” ■

More information from:

ALTEA: <https://altea-aero.com>

AOPA Finance: <https://finance.aopa.org>

Duncan Aviation:

www.duncanaviation.aero

Elliott Aviation: www.elliottaviation.com

Global Wings: www.gwjets.com

Jetcraft: www.jetcraft.com

Opus Aero: www.opusaero.com

PRIMUS AVIA: www.primusavia.com

Silver Air Private Jets: www.silverair.com

BUSINESS JET PRE-SALE HOUSEKEEPING CHECKLIST

ALTEA has made a easy-reference business jet pre-sale housekeeping checklist available to AvBuyer readers via the following QR code. Check it out to gain more valuable insights and tips on this topic:



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