



TOP TABLE
Brad Nolan (center), director of product planning and strategy at Bombardier Business Aircraft, goes over aircraft interior renderings with his team.

FEEDBACK LOOP

Customers don't just come first at Bombardier Business Aircraft – their words are shaping the jets of the future, inside and out.

BY EVRA TAYLOR | PHOTOS BY RICHMOND LAM

In this era of high-tech communications, the team in charge of product planning at Bombardier Business Aircraft relies on one of the simplest yet most effective forms of feedback available: face-to-face consultation. The experts responsible for developing new business jets, including the Learjet 85, Global 7000 and Global 8000 aircraft, foster a customer-focused culture, gathering critical information from discerning business jet owners at every point of contact, from casual conversations to carefully planned focus groups. While internal innovation and engineering prowess are vital to product planning, customer input is driving development every step of the way.

Early in the development phase, director of product planning and strategy at Bombardier Business Aircraft, Brad Nolan, and his roughly 15-member team regularly meet with a select group of clients to track customer needs. In these sessions, business jet owners discuss what they are looking for in their next aircraft, expressing preferences about everything from functionality to styling.

"When we gear up to launching a new product, that's when we move to a more hard and fast process of customer data collection," says Nolan. "We conduct regular focus groups with key stakeholders, including end-users, posing questions as detailed as, 'Are we using the right leathers to suit your taste?' In addition, sales directors provide us insight into what they're seeing in the marketplace from their vantage point."

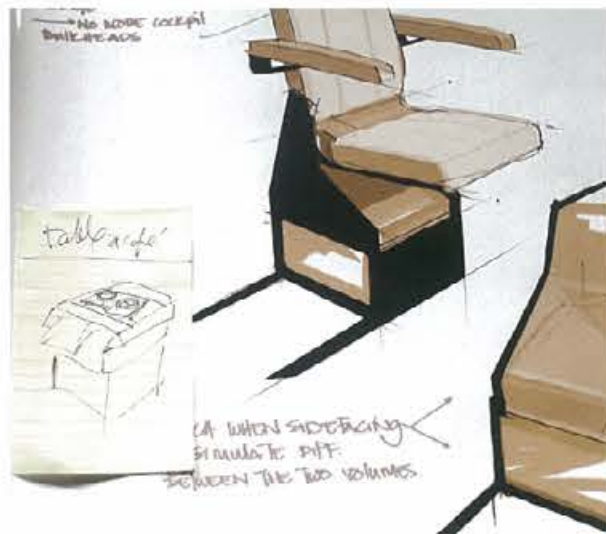
Global Guides

When the Global 7000 and Global 8000 aircraft were announced in 2010, the industry was instantly abuzz with the news, but what took seconds to report was part of a very long-term vision. "Due to the complexity of the product, a typical development cycle for a new aircraft is five to six years," explains Nolan. "As a result, with such unique airplanes, our product strategy has to cover a 10-to-20-year period."

The new ultra long-range Global aircraft were inspired by a firm vision of the future, one where customers' increasingly far-reaching business trips were the primary focus.

"These aircraft are the result of the need to expand the corporate jet market in both range and interior design," elaborates Sean Johnson, director of completions for Global 7000 and Global 8000 aircraft. "We were getting feedback from our customers that they wanted greater comfort and more luxury in the cabin. At the same time, worldwide city pairs – commonly traveled and emerging routes, such as New York to Mumbai – are seeing increased traffic and have become of prime interest to our customers. We need to be able to traverse those routes in one flight."

Customer input was crucial in the development of the Global 7000 >



and Global 8000 aircraft, turning one jet into two. Nolen explains: "We had decided to build a 7,000-nautical-mile business jet. Leading up to the launch, our strategy was to redefine the sector by offering a jet with segment-leading range and a larger cabin than that of competitor aircraft. But after a hundred meetings with customers, we saw that a significant number of them didn't want the extra cabin space as much as they wanted greater range. We realized that if we wanted to have blanket coverage of the market, we had to build that second airplane. So we ended up dramatically changing our plans based on those customer meetings."

The impressive results: The Global 7000 aircraft, due to enter service in 2016 with a range of 7,300 nautical miles (13,520 kilometers), boasts a maximum capacity of 19 passengers and the largest interior cabin in the industry; and the Global 8000 aircraft, equipped to fly 7,900 nautical miles (14,631 kilometers), which will make it the longest-range business jet on the market when it debuts in 2017, surpassing the business jet range record established by the Global 7000 aircraft one year prior.

Inner Vision

The cabins of the Global 7000 and Global 8000 aircraft were a key consideration as well, because planning for the future also means examining every detail. "We have designed the Global 7000 and Global 8000 aircraft from the inside out, with what industrial designers refer to as human-centric design," says Johnson, seated at a conference table in what he calls the "Creative Room." The walls are papered with displays titled Cabin Interior Ideation, each one pairing descriptive phrases with design elements, words and images uniting to project a specific design theme.

One prospective interior is a minimalist nod to mid-century modern decor, with low-profile seating that wouldn't be out of place in a chic Manhattan loft. This is no accident. "Our jet interiors reflect current design trends in residential and industrial design," says Johnson. After all, as much as they "live" in the penthouse of all penthouses – the stratosphere – the Global 7000 and Global 8000 aircraft reflect the best of modern design here on earth.

"Our objective is to create a core aesthetic that encompasses the varied tastes of our customers and will appeal to just about everybody. We're striving to achieve a home-like feel," says Johnson, "but we also need to include the capability to customize the interior to fulfill customers' wishes."

Johnson continues: "We start off by going back to a basic principle, answering the question, 'What are the human needs that must be met on the aircraft?' The longest-range non-stop

mission can be 16 hours and involve all of one's normal daily activities, so we try to understand, 'What is the perfect sleep, dining or work experience if you're flying at high altitude for 16 hours?' We then attempt to create that experience using solutions that haven't been seen before."

The end result, inside and out, benefits both Bombardier Business Aircraft and customers themselves. In the increasingly competitive business jet industry, direct communication with aircraft owners is critical in achieving a competitive edge. And by making their wishes known, business jet owners can count on a new generation of aircraft building on Bombardier Aerospace's innovative track record – and surpassing it, thanks to their input. ■

FAST FORWARD

Much like the Global 7000 and Global 8000 jets, the origins of the Learjet 85 aircraft are based not only in Bombardier Business Aircraft's technological expertise, but also in close contact with valued clients. There was already a very strong customer base of Learjet business aircraft owners who were loyal to their jets but were looking for a model that didn't yet exist, one with more space and range. Says Nolen: "The Learjet brand is a more aggressive brand – a fighter jet, race car-inspired brand. There is a bit of license in creativity, but as you move up the product line into the Challenger and Global jets, the image is a bit more toned down." So Learjet aircraft owners got their own platform for feedback, with special attention paid to their particular concerns. "When we designed the Learjet 85 business jet, the two key questions that became ingredients in the recipe were: 'What attributes does the Learjet 85 aircraft need to have to satisfy the future needs of a Learjet 40, 45 or 60 aircraft customer who is looking for a bigger airplane?' and 'What characteristics does our aircraft need to make us better than our closest competitor?'" Nolen says that the answers to these questions greatly influenced the development of the Learjet 85 aircraft – and the stunning results will be revealed in 2013, when it's set to enter service.

CREATIVE CLASS
(This page and opposite)
Aircraft interiors are sketched with customers' wishes in mind; Sean Johnson (center, standing), director of completion for Global 7000 and 800 jets, gets inspired by his team in the Creative Room; a replica aircraft interior helps turn concepts into reality.

