

# SuperYachtWorld

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Dassault Aviation

# Flight FANTASTIC

Is refurbishing a private jet as easy as refitting a yacht? We look at the case of a 19-year-old aircraft in need of some 21st-Century TLC

Refitting the interior of a long-in-the-tooth yacht is an exciting opportunity for an owner to stamp his own mark on a project. When it comes to revising the interior of a private jet, matters are not quite as simple. "The biggest challenge is the certification of the modification," says Lukas Weiss, manager of ExecuJet's completions department, which handles the refurbishment of older jets as well helping clients to create the perfect interior of a new jet.

For a start, all kit on board must pass a 'burn test'. "Every little piece inside the aircraft has to be tested for flame resistance. You produce hundreds of small samples to meet this requirement," says Lukas.

Then it's a requirement for all the electronics to be certified for aviation use. For the serious aviation kit, that isn't a problem as the manufacturers know what's needed. But owners are sometimes expecting off-the-shelf entertainment kit, which isn't always certificate-friendly. "The biggest headache is entertainment," says Lukas. "They want BluRay, they want 3D, they want to be able to use their cellphones. We're limited because of the certification process – you can't put a commercial BluRay player straight into a plane. They are not quite ready. In fact, aircraft-certified entertainment kit is usually two or three years behind, so a client is sometimes disappointed that he has to settle for 2009 technology. Having said that, technology is coming on stream – you can have iPad control now."

ExecuJet has recently fitted out a 19-year-old Falcon 900B. Often the décor of a refit will be as neutral as possible, as a client will keep one eye on the resale or

charter market. For other owners, who will keep the aircraft for predominantly private use, there is more scope to be creative. ExecuJet's preferred interior designer is M&R Associates Design. "The Falcon 900 is a small aeroplane for nine to twelve passengers, so you are relatively limited in what you can change," says Vincent Rey, director of M&R. "In this case, after initial consultations with the client, we knew he wanted an interior which had darker wood. He wanted to put something of his own personality into it. But at this stage we didn't know exactly what he was looking for, so we came up with three different renderings in 3D. He went for the one which had contrasting greys. It looks superb and it was a great choice."

But it wasn't just a matter of cosmetic changes: with a 19-year-old aircraft you are never quite sure what you'll find. "Twenty years ago they didn't document the interior installation as they would today," says Lukas at ExecuJet. Aboard the Falcon 900, the client wanted new seating – it wasn't simply a case of reupholstering. "There is a crash-worthiness requirement, where all passenger seats have to withstand 16 g-forces," says Lukas. "It is never just a case of a designer merely implementing a client's needs. You have to remember the certification."

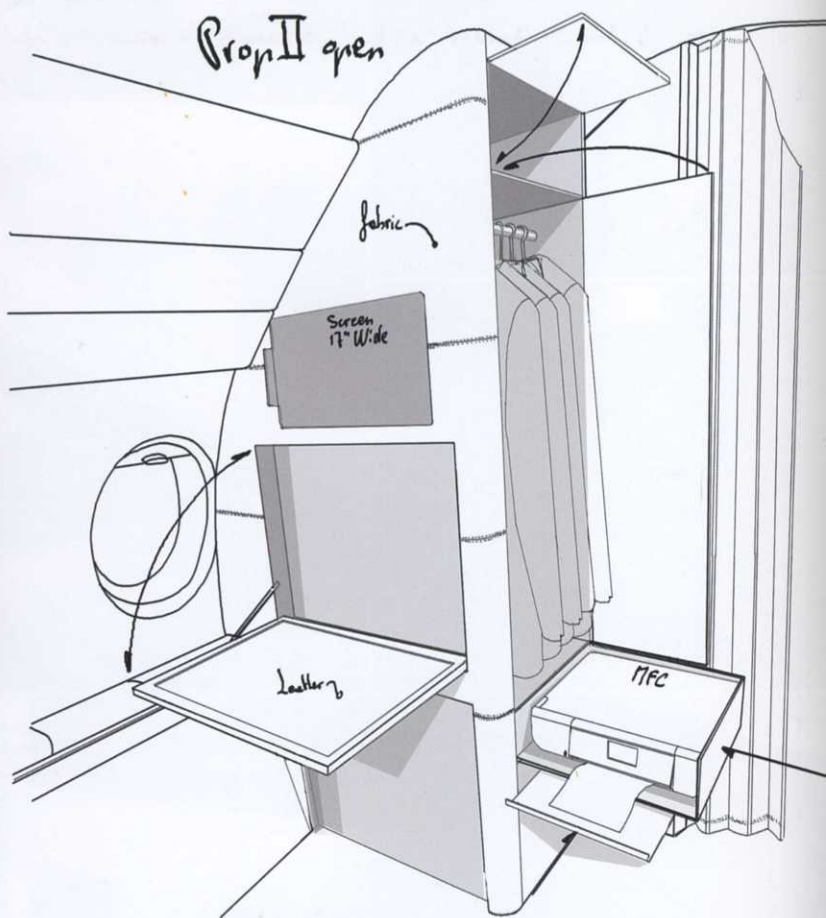
Even though the 900B is not the biggest aircraft, the owner was keen to upgrade the office facilities. "As well as changing the shape of the seats and the cabinets, we had to create a small desk and include a printer. It had to be an office in the sky," says Vincent.

With smaller jets, and an owner who appreciates the compromises needed to meet the certification



Facing page: The Falcon 900B is a veteran in private jet terms, but a new interior can totally transform it.  
 Top left: New armrest controls were added to the 900B's interior.  
 Above left: Sample boards were a big part of the owner's buying choice.  
 Above: The 900B's new interior is right up to date.  
 Left and right: The initial design sketches of the new passenger seats are close to what was produced.  
 Below left: A 3D rendering of how the divan might look.  
 Below: Crew input on cockpit layout is essential.  
 Below right: The 900B's galley and washroom facilities were also updated.





*“He wanted to put something of his own personality into it”*

requirement, the job is straightforward. But bigger aircraft present the designer and the client with something of a blank canvas. “You have more scope with a bigger jet from Airbus or Boeing Business Jets. You can start from scratch with an empty floorplan and fill it to the customer’s requirements within the safety regulations.” So what are the strangest requests Vincent has had from imaginative clients? “Definitely a Jacuzzi or a swimming pool! But perhaps it is not as mad as it sounds, as bigger jets can have a gym room. People do want very nice theatre rooms and we have produced those, and we have done saunas and hammams. One of the most interesting projects was a completely illuminated floor in one jet.”

For ExecuJet’s completions department, it’s a case of dealing with new aircraft as well as refurbishments for existing clients. “We’re active in new aircraft completions – we can support owners who are going through the buying experience, tailored to the ‘mission profile’ of the aircraft. This involves looking at the technology on board as well as cabin amenities and materials,” says Lukas. “Some owners will be happy to order a standard interior that an aircraft manufacturer offers with a new jet, but that tends to be a basic design. If we get involved, we can ensure that the personality of the owner is stamped on the aircraft in the way he wants.”

ExecuJet will often get the call from an owner as the aircraft is in build. “We take it from a ‘green’ aircraft

when it has just left the factory, and we can support the owner who is going through the buying experience. The first thing to understand is the mission profile,” he says.

The size and scope of ExecuJet’s related businesses are key here: “We have lots of pilots within the ExecuJet family who can advise on particular types of aircraft and what avionics are needed,” says Lukas. This advice is often essential with new aircraft as owners sometimes choose the crew later in the process, so they won’t be able to have much input.

“Once our preferred designer is on board, and the creative work is under way, we manage the process to completion, overseeing the entire project. We inspect as we are going along – when the cabinets and coverings go in, say. For a new aircraft we are usually at the factory three to five days a month during the completion process.”

It’s the older aircraft that sometimes present the toughest problems. “It’s often a case of just updating materials, and we can do that very easily, but a full refurbishment of an older jet is much harder and much more closely managed,” says Lukas.

“It used to be the case that most interiors were beige, or beige with beige!” he adds. “But there are more variations now, with darker wenge woods and greys. And owners are more aware of what designers can offer, which allows for greater creativity. There are still some who are motivated to ‘keep it neutral’ for the charter market, but we also get requests for colourful combinations, such as purple and white. The simple fact is, there is nothing to stop an owner getting just the interior he wants.” Provided, that is, he doesn’t want a 62in 3D TV next to the hot-tub. **SYW**

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Above and left: Sketches of the office area, and how it was produced for the refitted 900B. A printer lives in the cabinet, allowing the jet’s owner to work while the plane is in the air.