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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.



