

CAMP InSight



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Flight Scheduling
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Departments.

p.10

FLIGHT
AIR
Dynamic!



AIR

Dynamic

By Karie White

The alterations in commercial air travel resulting from September 11 sent many a businessman on a quest for alternative commuting methods. Richard "RJ" Valentine was no exception.

A Boston-based entrepreneur and motor sports dynamo, Valentine realized that to continue to conduct business efficiently, and at the pace he was accustomed, he must re-evaluate his travel practices. "I said to myself, 'there's got to be a better way.' So I did some investigation and decided I wanted to buy a plane." Discouraged by many but dissuaded by no one, Valentine did just that. Then, to top it off, bought a subsequent plane. In 2004, F1 Air, an executive aircraft charter business, was founded.

Before diving into the company it serves to know a little background about the man. Valentine, as mentioned, is a successful entrepreneur. He established The Massachusetts Business Association (MBA) in 1969. With 37 years of success to date, The MBA is a holding company for a diversity of operations some owned and operated by The MBA and others invested in by the company. Valentine is Chairman of The MBA Group and a principal in all the entities

developed by The MBA Group of Companies, (www.mbagroup.com). Some companies in their care include, F1 Boston (America's premier 106,000 square-foot corporate event, racing and entertainment venue), F1 Outdoors (recognized as the "gold strand" of US outdoor kart racing venues), Arrayworks (a firm specializing in customized CRM software), SSC East (exclusive distributor of state-of-the-art European racing karts and equipment to the eastern US and Bermuda), and, yes, F1 Air.

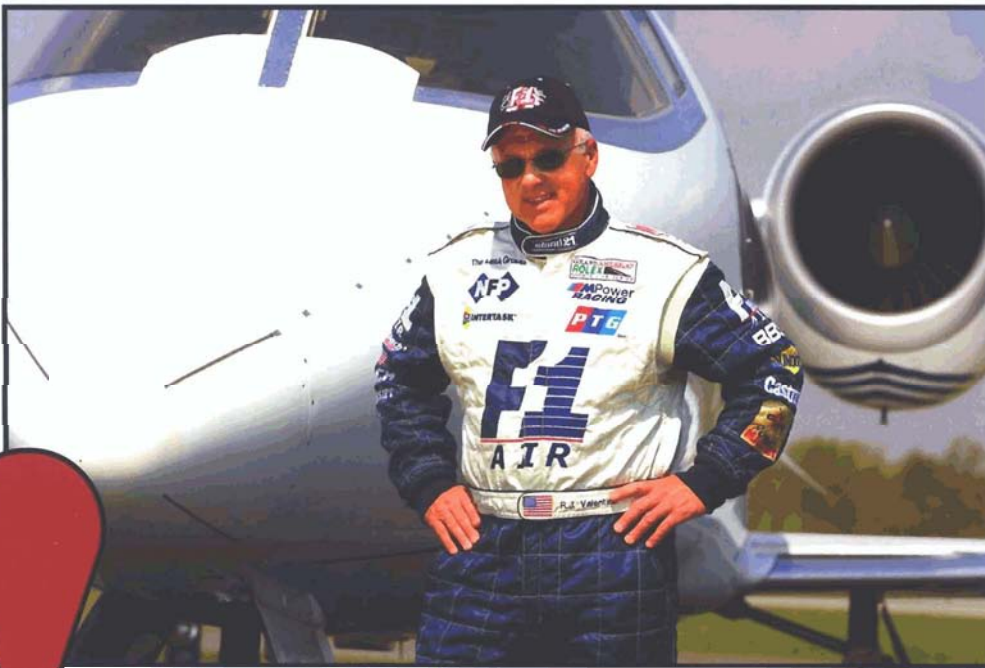
You may have noticed, among the list of thriving businesses above, there exists the theme of racing. Valentine also has a prestigious auto-racing career. Having had a love for cars and speed his entire life, Valentine's admiration for racing aspired to action after attending his first *Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona* sports-car race. In 1975 he went to racing school. He began participating in regional race events,

then national. In 1978 Valentine went professional in the International Motor Sports Association. Yes, he is driven!

For most, 2004 may not have seemed like an opportune time to purchase a plane or two and dive into the aircraft industry, however this sort of timing and risk-taking is clearly an asset of Valentine's character and success. When asked



F1 Air Learjet in the Nashua, NH hangar.



Richard "RJ" Valentine, entrepreneur and professional race car driver. Photo provided courtesy of F1 Air

what his personal business philosophy is, Valentine replied, "Do the right thing when nobody is looking." It seems safe to say that nobody was looking (at the market in the same way Valentine was) when F1 Air was launched. The aircraft, as you may recall, were purchased to serve as convenient, effective corporate transportation for Valentine and his business ventures. So, how did a charter business emerge? Nina Anderson, pilot for F1 Air, gives this explanation of Valentine's establishment and talent, "He has the incredible ability to see the forest through the trees. He can pick things up and instantly see a marketing outcome for them. He is a genius that way, an absolute genius! He always amazes me."

When starting the business, Valentine acknowledges that there was a lot to learn about charter. In the process of F1 Air's founding he "learned that you have to get with a good 135 operator, one that is relatively strict. You don't skimp on pilots, training and things of that nature or on maintenance and safety. And you must have procedures in place." All of these are lessons learned and aptly applied. The company offers its charter services under New World Jet's charter certificate with the management of the aircraft by Jet Aviation.

Also essential to F1 Air's management is Ed Goldberg, Valentine's partner. Goldberg worked at Merrill Lynch. He was a senior guy, running their air force," as Valentine puts it. He continues, "Ed plays an integral part in what goes on in the aircraft business [F1 Air]. He is instrumental; he's high-quality, smart business. It has

made my life a lot easier working with him."

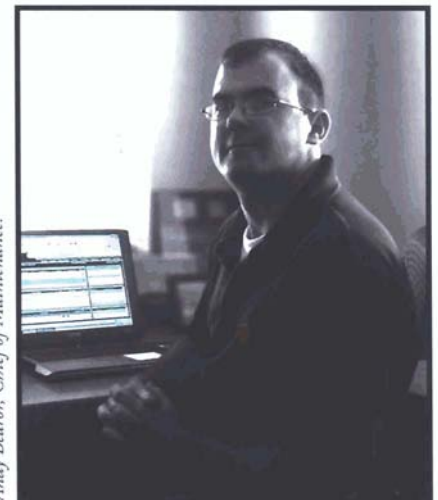
F1 Air's staff consists of about 12 employees. Its fleet consists of a Raytheon Hawker 800XP and a Bombardier Learjet 60. The planes keep a schedule of about 450-500 hours a year; catering to charter and meeting ownership needs. Both planes are pristine and reflective of Valentine's high standards of quality. "When I fly I want the planes to be in tip-top shape," says Valentine. "Being a racer, equipment is extremely important to me. Therefore, our aircraft are clean and maintained, with pilots well trained."

The maintenance needs of the planes are under the dedicated care of Andy Bearor, Chief of Maintenance. Bearor has worked for F1 Air since the company's start in 2004. Regarding the company's growth he reflects positively and observes, "The owners are motivated. In the ownership, you will find the best support structure in existence." Always on call and ever devoted, Bearor is hands-on and does most of the maintenance himself. From "scheduling, due items, engine times to painting," Bearor explains he "does everything from the nose to the tail on the airplanes." Of course there are jobs too large for one man to conquer alone. For these, the planes are contracted out to their corresponding manufacturers: the Hawker to a Raytheon facility and the Learjet to a Bombardier for the maintenance. Of his responsibilities, Bearor will tell you that he enjoys his job and that, "Anytime our planes need maintenance or leave for maintenance, I'll be there with the plane. I'll make sure, from start to finish, the plane and maintenance is taken care of properly." True dedication and attention to safety.

Another facet of F1 Air's success since the company's introduction has been CAMP\$ Maintenance Tracking system. When asked, "Why CAMP?" Valentine firmly answered, "CAMP is the gold standard of the business. After investigating everybody, CAMP was the name of the game." Bearor confirms this fact through his daily use of the web application. Initially a little overwhelmed while becoming acquainted with the system, Bearor now assures that, "CAMP does streamline procedure for me. Once you figure it out it is the easiest thing." He shares what he sees as some of the several benefits of CAMP: "The web application is phenomenal. One of the big things with CAMP is that you can check it at home, in the office, anywhere you are! This is great. When I get a call, and I'm always on call, I don't necessarily have to leave my house to go to the hangar to get the answer. I can check from home. Other tracking systems are behind CAMP on this." He continues, "Also, why would I, or anyone for that matter, use say two or three different programs when I can use one?" Bearor concludes by saying, "Between doing-it-yourself, using CMP (the previous application Bearor utilized on the job), and now CAMP, I never want to use another program again. I will always want to be on the CAMP system. I love using it!"

So, what else makes F1 Air unique, contributes to the company's success, and makes it a charter business worthy for hire? Well, it has to do with more of Valentine's philosophy. Let's revisit Nina Anderson for the answer. Anderson is a rotational pilot for F1 Air's Hawker. She joined the company in the summer of 2005 after doing a contracted flight for Valentine. About her experience with F1 Air and RJ Valentine, she shares that, "He is very insistent that, while he wants to make sure that the airplanes keep busy, the pilots/[staff] have a life. He knows that a good employee is one that is happy, and if

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Andy Bearor, Chief of Maintenance.



Photo provided courtesy of F1 Air.

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you don't have a life, you're not happy." Additionally, Anderson attributes the company's success to the fact that, "He [Valentine] talks to you like a friend rather than some sort of geek employee. He understands business, yes he wants to make money, but he also cares about the people who work for him. Which is unusual. Usually in a company you are like a taxi driver, that's all you are, but not with RJ. He hires people that not only can do the job but that he has some sort of personal rapport with. He is very fair and he's treating you like family, which is totally why he is so successful."

Another observation on the company's prosperous nature: "It is a really great crew found in the MBA Group that runs the airplanes. It is an extremely safe operation. RJ will not skimp on safety. He is very picky on who **flies** the aircraft. He only hires trained pilots who he feels are safety conscious. He wants to make sure that there are no hot-shots that are going to endanger him." And, as seen earlier, the same applies to the employee chosen to maintain the aircraft... no carelessness hot-shot lurking there either. She continues, "The coordination with our personalities [among the **staff**] is the best I've probably **ever** seen. **That's** a big, big thing. Keeping a corporate flight department happy is a key to safety. We have a good crew."

About business and racing, Valentine explains that racing is a great marketing tool, with entertainment and bonding factors incorporated in the experience. And the correlation between racing and aviation?"Attention to detail, by all means," states Valentine, "Safety overall has to be without equal. Those two things along with a sense of always realizing that you are dealing with very sophisticated equipment and you have to pay attention."

When asked what Valentine is most proud of about F1 Air he answers, "Obviously, it is our service. We are very proud of the fact that our pilots have a lot of experience. We work hard to achieve a standard that I want and expect of my all my businesses and a standard that I want when I **fly**. We try to do everything according to our 135 operator, New World Jet and Jet Aviation. They are involved with us in a big way and we work closely with them."

Unquestionably, undeniably... dynamic!