

Business aviation companies embrace smartphone apps

by Kirby J. Harrison

There they were, some 23,000 visitors to the NBAA Convention in October, all seemingly armed with smartphones—talking and texting, checking e-mails, prices and sports scores, cruising the Internet, listening to music and yes, even checking flight plans.



Each seat in the G650 comes with its own iPod Touch passenger control unit. Crewmembers will select all the galley functions via controls presented on a 10-inch touch screen (above).

And when they weren't bumping into one another, offering mumbled apologies as their thumbs danced across a miniature keyboard, they were dropping business cards off with more than a dozen exhibitors in hopes of winning another smartphone.

Perhaps more interesting were the number of new smartphone apps announced by everyone from aircraft manufacturers to fixed-based operators.

Call it, if you will, part of the new iPhonomenon.

Touchscreen Interfaces

When Gulfstream arrived at the show in a G650 to introduce the new cabin, it also announced that every aircraft would come with an iPod Touch for each seat, and two extras.

It was more than just a nifty amenity. Each iPod will contain a Gulfstream app that will permit passengers to control all aspects of the cabin, from lighting to entertainment, using the iPod. And according to senior v-p Pres Henne, Gulfstream is developing a cabin-management app for other products in the Apple line, and further down the road for other smartphone brands and models.

And there was the Gorilla app offered by exhibitor Gorilla Expense, an

expense management services provider. The mobile application runs on iPhone, BlackBerry and Android smartphones.

Simply take a photograph of your receipt with the smartphone camera, edit a few details about the expense, and it's automatically incorporated into the Gorilla Expenses account. Back at the office, or from any computer with Internet access, you can complete the expense report. And for an extra fee, Gorilla will customize your software to integrate with your company's accounting system to further automate the expense reporting process. The cost? Just \$10 to \$50 per person, depending on how many users work for the company that buys the software app.

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Business aviation data provider JetNet unveiled a new smartphone app for accessing its Evolution database. It provides a faster, more convenient way to access the latest aircraft intelligence, according to director of sales and marketing Paul Cardarelli.

Much of the information Evolution makes available on a desktop is now available through its mobile phone app for the iPhone, Droid and BlackBerry smartphones.

The app provides a small-screen version of JetNet's Evolution software interface, allowing users to access market trends, aircraft data and specific models for sale, charts, graphs, tables and sorted lists. Subscribers can also follow



Avinode released its first iPhone application at October's NBAA Convention. The app puts the company's Empty Leg Link into customers' hands.

context-sensitive links to access more detailed information on owners of aircraft, maintenance and inspection details, and in some cases, even data points on flights made in the last 90 days.

"This is the perfect fit at the perfect time for our industry," said JetNet president Vincent Esposito.

Even an FBO came to the convention riding an electron trail. Signature Flight Support, with more than 100 FBOs worldwide, introduced its iFBO app, which allows users to find up-to-date fuel prices and calculate the price breakdown based on aircraft type.

The free app can also find a Signature FBO, provide contact information and show a list of services and amenities at any particular Signature location. A location link to Google Maps is also available. The app can be downloaded free from the iTunes store.

Universal Avionics introduced for Android smartphone users UniNet, a free app that can connect right into the

cockpit. The Universal Droid connects the phone to Universal's UniNet to give users access to the account navigation database, operator assistance and billing information. It can access Universal contact information from anywhere in the world and is available to view in the cockpit through the company's new solid-state data-transfer unit.

Connecting the device to the Universal Avionics solid-state data transfer unit via the USB port automatically uploads navigation data into the FMS.

West Star Aviation's new Experience On Call app provides a comprehensive worldwide directory that allows customers to inquire about service needs specific to their aircraft or geographic location.

The free app can be downloaded at the Apple App store, or by following a link on the West Star Web site.

From Universal Weather & Aviation comes a mobile app that gives customers access to all the company's services from any type of smartphone. Instead of developing software apps for each type of smartphone, the mobile Web allows any smartphone user to access Universal's data.

Charter Data at Your Fingertips

Looking for an easy way to track flights? Try charter operator Solairus Aviation's mobile Web app, which enables viewing of flights as they become available.

The app was originally created in an attempt to occupy empty-leg flights and alert potential customers to discounted flights.

Online charter portal Avinode has also released its first iPhone app, putting the Swedish company's Empty Leg Link right in the customer's hands.

Avinode leaves it to its members/operators and brokers to approach prospective customers through the app, which is built on a base that can be customized to include only their empty-leg availability and branding. The broker or operator releases its own version of the app via any iPhone store.

The app features a GPS-based search function that allows users to source the most beneficial aircraft capacity, depending on where they are in the world at any given time, and which airports are most convenient. To speed the process, users can also store favorite airports.

As the crowds moved through the halls on opening day of the NBAA Convention, one individual, trapped behind a slow-moving texter, mumbled, "Things would move a lot faster here if we could get rid of all the cellphones."

Good luck with that one. □



Flight Display Introduces 'iMounts' for Cabin Use

With millions of iPads sold, it should come as no surprise that Flight Display Systems has introduced its new Apple iPad mount for the business jet cabin.

The mount—available this month—will adapt for vertical or horizontal mode and can be stowed and easily removed. No price was available at press time.

An adapter cable will allow the user to recharge the iPad, and to play music through the cabin speakers at a cost of \$875. A quick-release cable is priced at \$1,063. —K.J.H.

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