

FACE TO FACE WITH...

Andrew Perry Executive director Houston Executive Airport

Andrew Perry is executive director of Houston Executive Airport, where he oversees the operation and growth of the private commercial development that caters to corporate passengers. He also is vice president of development at HEA's sister airport, Austin Executive Airport.

Established in January 2007 by former commercial pilot Ron Henriksen, HEA has bucked the downward trend in the airline industry by focusing on affluent business clients. Located near Houston's West Side and the Energy Corridor, passengers frequently use HEA as an alternative to the crowded George Bush Intercontinental Airport and William P. Hobby Airport.

Prior to working at HEA, Perry was executive director of Debuque, Iowa's regional airport and director of aviation of Garden City, Kansas' regional airport. Perry was interviewed by Casey Wooten.



Q Who are your core customers?

A Houston Executive Airport's core customers are those corporate travelers conducting business along Houston's Energy Corridor and in West Houston. Our customers desire an alternative to the growing congestion at other Houston airports and want the convenience and professional service provided at HEA.

Q What are some unique challenges of running an airport like yours?

A Building an airport from the ground up, without federal or state funding, is quite the exception in the aviation

industry. As such, we don't face the same kind of challenges other airports must contend with. Of course there are always challenges, but many more advantages, actually. While many general aviation airports are closing around the country, Houston is fortunate to have Ron Henriksen, the airport's owner and developer, at the helm. Ron has been in the aviation industry for many decades and is fully committed to funding this airport privately to ensure its longevity and provide a much-needed service to the city.

Q Given the turmoil in the overall airline industry, how is the private airline industry faring? Have high fuel prices affected business?

A The airline industry overall has indeed faced some difficult years, but business aviation has actually seen tremendous growth since 2001. In 2007, for example, new jet sales were at an all-time high. Many corporations have determined that using private business aircraft positively impacts the bottom line, saving both time and money. High fuel prices have had an impact on aviation throughout the country. For example, 100 low lead (a type of fuel) sales have dropped anywhere from 20 percent to 40 percent in some markets, while jet fuel has dropped anywhere from 5 percent to 15 percent. However, from what we have experienced, Houston has stayed

well below these figures.

Q What are some of the things your airport does to convince business travelers to fly private? What can private airports offer that Bush or Hobby can't?

A Airlines continue to drop less-populated destinations and travelers continue to be frustrated by delays, congestion and limited routes. It doesn't take much more than missed meetings or unnecessary delays to mean lost revenue to a corporation. And, as one of the world's major energy hubs, Houston needs an alternative for corporate travelers who want easy access to West Houston and the Energy Corridor. ■



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