## Finding Work/Life Balance in 24/7 World

It's in everyone's best interest to staff adequately

## **PAUL KOSCAK**

is having company executives understand the need for adequate staffing so that everyone can enjoy their personal lives while also contributing fully at work. Establishing a predictable and acceptable work schedule for pilots in a small flight department can be a major challenge. The key

f business aviation was more like most from 9-to-5 and then sleep late on Saturto have a life after work. You'd just fly careers, it would be a lot easier for pilots

guessed it: in case the phone rings. commute. Only you can't drift too far-you no flights while everyone else is doing the daily plan changes and it's finally three. The phone craft owner needs to get to a Friday morning busirings. It's Thursday afternoon and a harried airclient decides to finally close the deal. The phone bors green with envy as you sit home all week with keeps ringing. Or, maybe you're making the neighto visit four field locations, then it's five, then the ness meeting. The phone rings. The CEO decides But business isn't predictable. A West Coast

seem like being on the clock around the clock. Jugpilots, being mentally tethered to the airplane can shops or even larger companies with a short list of endless conundrum and a scheduler's headache. gling these variables to keep pilots happy fliers is an Sound familiar? For small operators, one-aircraft

more than just fly and an ability to replace between owners and operators, pilots willing to do life after work, arriving there is the biggest chalhour and crew combinations yield quality time for flight hours and crew capacity have come close. discovered, years of tinkering with on and off days, lenge. It requires good business diplomacy The experimenting shows that while certain flight-While the holy grail of schedules may never be

aircraft owners' cooperation and an operator's abil-Building attractive work schedules hinges on the

> especially true where there's just one aircraft and a maintain well-rested and content pilots. That's ity to convince them it's in their best interest to pilot or two.

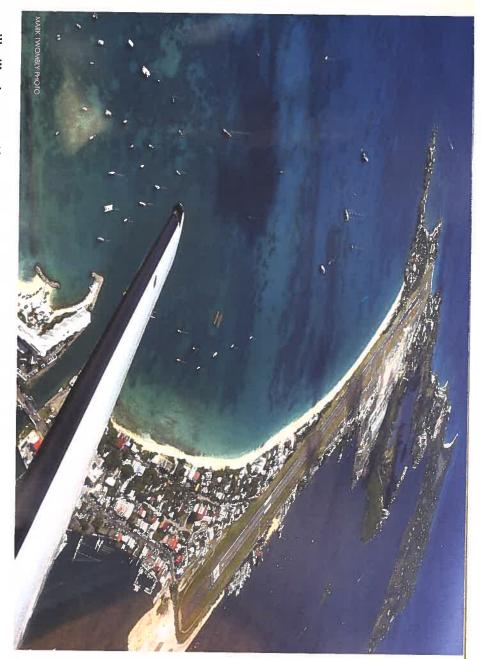
enough' while others insist 'I want my pilots rested." When scheduling can't be adjusted to tion and other factors are taken into account. come, when salary, training, downtime, transporta-Replacing a pilot is a potentially expensive outmake all parties happy, staff turnover may result. have the outlook 'my pilots don't work hard mittee Chairman John Hatfield. "Some owners said NBAA Corporate Aviation Management Com-"You have to consider the owner's personality,"

schedules. We lost a few pilots that way. Regan, "everyone was on call and the pilots assigned to the aircraft would work out their own two aircraft, has experience in dealing with on-call complications. "At first," recalls Chief Pilot Rick NextFlight in Manassas, VA, a company with just

gling act and difficult on both ends," he said. month, it still wasn't enough time" for pilots to meet their family obligations. "It was a constant jug-"Although they were given five days off per

schedule," he said. And while the numbers seem to owner that having rested and happy crews is a pruated a schedule for five days off every 10 days. dent business consideration. work, the program still centers on convincing the "Four pilots per airplane is a must if you want a set By assigning four pilots to an aircraft, Regan cre-

exit interviews. You could be in the most beautiful place in the world with the rich and famous, but life," he said. "This has been the biggest issue in "Everything [in aviation] is focused on quality-of-



you'll still miss your wife and kids."

may find there's no aircraft available after returning every time they return to work. the same crew on the ground and another crew flying to work or sometimes a chance month keeps from time to time, said Regan. Sometimes a pilot But no schedule is perfect and glitches occur

which "helps tremendously" in planning, he said. NextFlight's trips are booked up to two weeks ahead, ule occupies a lot of my time." About half of to stay ahead of the changes and admits "the sched-To keep such anomalies to a minimum Regan has

changed so the pilot could spend time at home. one of the crew had a birthday, the schedule was month with plenty of flexibility. For example, when hours per year. The crew averages 10 days off per pany owns a Citation Excel, which flies about 500 Strickland Insurance in Goldsboro, N.C. The com-Another company using the four-pilot model is

employee insurance company, where nearly all said Jim Steele, chief pilot for the small 170trips are scheduled. "This is very manageable." "We're a family company, so that's important,"

by chartering its aircraft about 250 hours per year. pany pays for the fourth pilot's salary and insurance ing the overnight trips equally. Steele said the com-Having a fourth pilot allows for vacations and divid-

However, there's one big difference that perhaps

tenance, saving the company money. other by Municipal Airport. The businesses support each tion, it owns the FBO that runs Goldsboro-Wayne flyers: The company not only manages the Citasets the Strickland pilots apart from other business sharing resources such as fuel and main-

ating some ideal working conditions. and the company's willingness to add crew in cre-Steele credits such progressive business practices

cated a third pilot and ultimately realized a fourth another pilot. As demand grew, the company advoenjoy sufficient time off, he said. eral years ago, management suggested they hire and another pilot was the company's first crew sevpilot would be needed to ensure the crew could what aviation brings to the company." When Steele senior leadership brought it up. They understood "I didn't have to push the issue," he said. "The

munity, which Steele manages. FAA's Wings program for the general aviation commonthly safety seminars and participation in the extra money. In fact, the FBO is known for its port security, airport safety and the FBO, earning ager and the other three pilots each manage air-When he's not flying, Steele is the airport man-

on a trip, fly," he said. "Flying is not all we do. When we're "We look for people who want to do more than , instead of looking for the pilot's lounge