



## Maintenance: How to Effectively Use Maintenance Contractors

Whether your flight department is a large operation with dozens of employees, or simply a pilot and an airplane, contract MRO (maintenance, repair and overhaul) personnel and facilities can be a valuable tool to ensure your aircraft are ready to support your business.

Doug Gordon, maintenance manager for Executive Jet Management, noted his single-airplane operation in South Florida utilizes contract help “almost weekly,” but when speaking of EJM’s multiple locations and more than 200 managed airplanes worldwide, “I’d put it closer to at least daily.

“We hire contractors to do what we cannot do ourselves, either due to manpower or the required equipment and support,” Gordon continued. “I’m one guy with one airplane, and that airplane flies a lot. More than two-thirds of aircraft are operated by a single owner, and it’s not practical for them to hire an entire flock of people to maintain it. Someone needs to do that work.”

“We use contractors for lots of things,” added Joel Felker, director of aviation

maintenance at CNL Financial Group. “That includes C-checks, paint jobs and all of our avionics work. Of course, we also utilize contract labor when faced with AOG (aircraft on ground) situations on the road.”

In such cases when time is at a premium, it helps to have an extensive list of resources from which to draw.

“We maintain a list of trusted contractors, both in the U.S. and around the globe, able to respond quickly to an AOG,”

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**DOUG GORDON**  
*Maintenance Manager,  
Executive Jet Management*

Felker said. “Additionally, most large MROs now have their own apps that we can use to determine their level of expertise and available slots.”

As part of a larger operation, Gordon benefits from EJM’s knowledge base and list of approved contractors.

“The central location handles oversight of all aircraft maintenance, and they’re my first source to see what resources we have in that location,” he said. “Beyond that, it becomes more about developing relationships with dependable and reliable vendors in a given area.

“I’m responsible for sourcing people not already on our approved list,” Gordon continued. “We have a two-fold obligation here – not only to protect our asset and the owner’s asset, but also to consider the contractor and protect their own interests and liability.”

### DOING YOUR HOMEWORK

Vetting a new contractor doesn’t need to be a drawn-out process, but it does help to do your homework and schedule as far in advance as you can. Debi Cunningham, vice president of marketing at West Star Aviation, emphasized the importance of finding an MRO familiar with your aircraft.

“I can’t stress enough the benefits of planning ahead,” she said. “Visit prospective companies that you are thinking about using whenever possible, so you can then tell if they have the tooling, trained technicians and specialized equipment that may be needed for your aircraft.”

If such visits aren’t possible, Cunningham recommends asking about a shop’s experience with the specific work needed for your aircraft.

“This is important when doing major inspections for specific airframes,” she continued. “If the company has done one or many, they have a better idea of the

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