



BEYOND OPERATIONS: THE GLOBAL ROLE OF FBOS — INTERVIEW WITH EVGENY SHADOV, GENERAL AVIATION SERVICE

News / Business aviation, Events / Festivals



Aviation evolves through moments of clarity — moments when industry leaders step forward to explain not only what is happening, but why it matters. This conversation with Evgeny Shadov, VP Business Development at General Aviation Service, is one of those moments. In the dynamic environment of Riga Aviation Forum 2026, Evgeny brings a sharp, operationally grounded perspective on the latest achievements shaping today's business aviation landscape. From the surge in cross border charter activity to the rise of new service standards across Europe, he offers a clear view of the trends redefining how BizAv operates, grows, and adapts.

T.O.: It's a pleasure to finally meet you because I know how much you travel and how actively you speak about business aviation. To be precise, we are in Riga, and you have just finished your presentation at the 10th Riga Aviation Forum. I'm taking this opportunity to ask you a few questions after what has been a very busy summer in Spain. But first, what are your impressions of the Riga Aviation Forum, considering it's your first time here? And General Aviation Service is also a Silver Sponsor of the event for the first time.

E.S.: Tatiana, thank you very much for the questions and for the invitation. As you just mentioned, I have literally just stepped off the stage after my presentation, and although I'm not physically shaking, I still feel a little nervous inside. Even when you have a lot of experience speaking publicly, there is always some level of excitement and nervousness.

As for the Riga Aviation Forum, yes, this is my first time here. When we were initially considering attending the event, we thought it might not really be our market or our typical audience. We usually attend events focused specifically on business aviation, where participants include operators, brokers, and vendors working directly within the sector. Those are typically the environments where we are most active.

This forum is more focused on commercial aviation in general, bringing together government representatives, airport authorities, airlines, and other stakeholders. So, in a way, it's a little outside our usual space.

That said, I believe it is an excellent event. For those who truly understand what business aviation is and what an FBO actually does, attending an event like this is extremely important. Of course, it provides a great opportunity to meet interesting people, and I have met many wonderful individuals here. But beyond networking, it also gives us a platform to explain who we are and what we do.

This event once again demonstrated something very clearly to me. Airport authorities, entire countries, senior industry leaders, airline representatives, and airport executives often don't fully understand what business aviation and FBO services are really about. Many see us as a small segment of the industry, yet very few consider what I discussed on stage: even though business aviation represents only around 7% of traffic in Europe, people often underestimate the value we bring.

And that value extends far beyond airports. We contribute to infrastructure, the wider ecosystem, the economies of cities, and even entire countries. So, yes, that was one of the key takeaways for me.

T.O.: So basically, you are acting as an ambassador for the business aviation industry. What I noticed in the audience was that many aviation professionals believed they already knew what an FBO was, but once you started explaining the details, they were genuinely surprised. You're changing perceptions. From my perspective, you're helping bring airport authorities and the business aviation sector closer together. And as you mentioned, many issues can be solved through good communication at an early stage.

Let's go back to the summer. It was difficult to catch up with you because the entire team was incredibly busy. And this isn't the first summer I've followed General Aviation Service, so I know everyone works around the clock. I have a very simple and obvious question. In July and August, you exceeded all expectations. It was a historic period because you had never handled so many flights before.

First of all, is everyone still alive? I know the company is very much like a family of professionals all moving in the same direction. How did you experience these

achievements? And what happens if September delivers equally impressive numbers?

E.S.: That's a very good question. Yes, we're alive, thankfully. This summer marked a significant milestone in our history. For more than 45 years, we've been providing ground handling services in Spain, and July was absolutely extraordinary for us. It became the busiest month in our company's history in terms of the number of flights we handled. What was even more surprising was August. We didn't expect August to exceed July, but it did. Historically, July tends to be very strong, while August is usually slightly lower. September is generally the beginning of a gradual slowdown, as we move toward the cooler season and eventually winter. However, for two consecutive months, we broke records and reached a completely new milestone. We are talking about more than a thousand flights handled during a single month. As for September, as you mentioned, it could still surprise us. Who knows?

T.O.: Formula 1.

E.S.: Exactly. Sometimes our activity depends on major events taking place in the country. Today is the 10th of September, and we currently have a major event taking place: Formula 1 in Madrid. Naturally, that brings a significant amount of additional traffic. As a result, traffic levels are much higher than what would normally be expected during this period of the year.



T.O.: Even though we're sitting here in Riga, I can't ignore Air Charter Expo. You flew here from London after attending the event. Coming immediately after a record-breaking summer, how was the exhibition? And what can you say about the industry overall? Do you see changes taking place? Do you notice any new trends?

E.S.: That's a great question. Yes, I have just returned from Air Charter Expo at London Biggin Hill Airport. I particularly enjoy this event because it takes place after the busy summer season. By September, everyone in business aviation, brokers, operators, and service providers alike, is exhausted after the intensity of the high season. Air Charter Expo is often the first opportunity for the community to come together again. We meet friends and colleagues, catch up, hug each

other, ask how the summer went, and share stories. So personally, I really enjoy attending this event. As for changes in the industry, yes, I do see some trends developing.

Business aviation activity is growing, not only in countries such as Spain, but increasingly in highly concentrated locations such as Ibiza, Palma de Mallorca, and, this year, Alicante as well. One of the most positive developments is that operators and especially brokers are planning much further in advance. This has always been one of my missions: to draw attention to FBOs and general aviation handlers because we can solve many problems before they happen. I also participated in a panel discussion where I was seated alongside representatives from a brokerage company and Gamma Aviation. Naturally, much of the conversation focused on the challenges of this summer.

What we've noticed is that operators and brokers are increasingly consulting us before finalizing their arrangements. Previously, they would sign the charter contract, agree on the price, prepare the aircraft, and have everything ready. Only afterward would they send the handling request to us. That is when we sometimes had to say, "Sorry, that's impossible." Why? Because there might be no slot availability, no parking availability, or timing restrictions.

Take Ibiza as an example. You may still be able to fly there, but perhaps only as a drop-and-go operation. You drop off the passengers and immediately reposition the aircraft elsewhere. That single operational adjustment could increase the charter cost by €30,000 or more.

The good news is that the industry is changing. More operators are consulting with us before making promises to passengers. Instead of committing first and checking later, they now ask us questions such as: "We would like to fly to Alicante, Madrid, or Mallorca. Are there slots available? Are hotel rooms available? Is the infrastructure capable of supporting this operation on the intended date?"

This allows us to advise them properly. Perhaps noon is unavailable, but 4:00 PM works perfectly. Then they can speak with the passenger, explore some flexibility, and adjust the schedule accordingly. By planning the operation around available slots, infrastructure, transport services, and accommodation, everyone benefits. The operation runs smoothly, and the passenger remains happy.

T.O.: My last question. Even though we're only in September, Christmas will arrive sooner than we think. That means we will soon be looking back on 2026 and planning for 2027. I know there is still a lot of work ahead this year, but if you could make one wish, what would you wish for General Aviation Service?

E.S.: Oh my God, that's a good one. My first wish would be prosperity. I would wish for the same number of flights, or even more, but certainly not fewer. This year proved something important. Even though it was challenging, it showed that we are capable of managing these volumes successfully. But more than anything, I would wish for General Aviation Service to continue having the fantastic people who are already part of the company, and to attract even more outstanding professionals to our teams.

We can do an amazing job promoting ourselves. We can attend events, invest in marketing, develop our brand, and create visibility. But without great people, none of that matters. At the end of the day, it is our people who handle the requests, deliver the service, make the operations happen, and keep clients satisfied. So my wish is simple: that General Aviation Service never struggles to recruit talented professionals and continues to have the very best people in the industry. Preferably with us, not with our competitors. Only with us.

T.O.: Thank you very much. And I'll catch up with you again at the next opportunity. For now, enjoy Riga.

E.S.: Thank you, Tatiana. It's always a pleasure. Thank you very much. I certainly will. Bye.

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