CLIVE JACKSON - FOUNDER VICTOR AEROSPACE

News / Business aviation, Personalities

Tell us about your career

I started out in corporate finance, running my own businesses around commercial property, debt financing and providing financial advice to ultra high net worth individuals (UHNWI). However in the early 1990s I saw the potential of the internet and moved on from finance to create Global Beach, one of the first UK digital agencies.

Global Beach grew quickly. Clients included Unilever, BT, Bentley Motors and Hewlett Packard (for whom I developed MOPy, a desktop cyber-pet which still holds a Guinness World Record for most downloads – over 26 million).

I sold Global Beach in 2008 having spun out another company in 2003. AutoTorq, which I still own, is a specialist digital marketing agency for the automotive industry working with many of the world's leading car brands.

In 2011 I founded Victor and sought to disrupt the private jet charter space. Victor allows travellers to quickly and clearly search, compare and book private jet travel from their smartphone or desktop, or via our 24-7 team of customer service experts. Having raised over $24m to date, the

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business has now successfully expanded into the US and continues to grow rapidly. Victor was the only aviation business to chart in the *Sunday Times* Tech Track 100 last year, at number 15.

What sparked your interest in the online charter market?

As a second-home owner in Mallorca, I regularly travelled to and from London until BMI cancelled all scheduled services during the depth of the global recession.

On the last BMI flight home, I polled my fellow passengers, who were equally frustrated, and having collected seven new business cards from them, I promised to explore the idea of creating an on-demand private jet charter service between Mallorca and the UK. Through word of mouth I managed to gather together 20 existing and aspiring private jet charter flyers, to help establish both the business principles and consumer benefits that would form the foundations of a new and exciting business plan.

I was, of course, frustrated by the traditional model of private charter, having experienced it first-hand. Traditional charter, through brokers, is often opaque, customers getting little insight into the pricing, process and aircraft detail behind their booking.

Victor is currently the fastest-growing private jet charter company, unique in creating a fully transparent, globally on-demand marketplace that doesn't require members to pay upfront fees and lets them fly when, where and how they want. We're still the only provider of side-by-side charter comparisons, our quotations providing a clear breakdown of costs whilst detailing the specific aircraft (including tail number), layout, operator and amenities. All of this puts customers firmly in control, allowing them to make a truly informed decision about what they need.

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Victor Aerospace

How is the charter market faring in Europe?

The private aviation market is growing. Private jet travel is up 2.8% across Western Europe with private jet charter, specifically, on the up in 18 of Europe’s top 20 airports. Aside from the upturn in the economy, we believe that the demand for private charter stems from the consumer’s increasing adoption of 'on-demand' services. More and more travellers are moving away from jet ownership and fractional jet ownership to charter. Victor’s mix of high-tech and hi-touch customer service gives ‘on the go’ travellers greater freedom to make bookings as and when they need them, and therefore greater control over costs.

How could the on-charter marketplace be improved?

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In traditional charter models consumers have been, and still are, at the mercy of brokers who don't always share important details about bookings – including the operator, specific aircraft or pricing structure and their own profit margin. Consumers wouldn't book a five-star hotel for their anniversary and not expect to know which particular hotel they are going to, which is why I pushed for Victor to cut out the inefficiency and inconsistency of brokers. This is an industry ripe for disruption and modernisation.

Victor has a capped booking fee of 10%, so customers know where exactly their money is going. We detail specific operators and aircraft beside our quotes, whether you call our expert team, use our website or tap on our app – all in no time at all. With this quality of booking experience, we believe the marketplace is improving.

What is your vision for Victor?

Customers are enjoying ever more accessible and effective charter, yet we are focused on the ways, both hi-tech and hi-touch, that we can further enhance their experience. We are on course to establish Victor as the number one brand in on-demand private jet charter. The business is growing quickly. We continue to develop our commercial teams and functions, and have ambitions for further expansion in North America as well as into the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Looking ahead, collaboration between smart, like-minded businesses within the 'sharing' economy will also prove important in terms of the way in which we best serve people globally. Victor recently partnered with Uber in the USA for a Valentine's weekend promotion. Where, in the future, 'on demand' businesses can work together, share ideas and unlock new technological potential and innovation; then people can travel and connect with one another in truly game-changing ways. The future is exciting.

Tell us about your typical day

I wake at 05:50 and by 07:00 will have completed 60 minutes in the gym. Half an hour later I'm in my home office, with a breakfast of water and fruit, planning without the distraction of emails and phone calls, which I'll reserve for my commute into London. I find early mornings to be my most creative, innovative time.

I leave my home in the country, outside of London, just before 09:00 to be into the Victor office for 10:00. When I arrive, I hold various operational meetings with my department heads – across different time zones – to review the performance and activities of the business.

After further meetings with partners, suppliers and customers I often have media interviews to give. My senior team and I regularly review the competitive landscape, market intelligence and other vertical industries that we can learn from. It's worth noting that many of Victor's shareholders fly with us and can offer particularly useful feedback about the service as it continues to expand.

By 19:00 I'm usually leaving the office, either heading to a client or team supper, or travelling back home to spend precious time with my family.

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