



Steven A. Ridolfi (above) and the Learjet 60, 45, and 40 XR planes in formation (right)

**EDITORS' NOTE** Steve Ridolfi was appointed to his current post in April of 2008. He has had a distinguished career with Bombardier, dating from 1982, when he joined de Havilland Inc. as a structural dynamics engineer. He progressed through the Regional Aircraft division ranks to become Vice-President, Marketing and Product Planning and Vice-President and General Manager, Operations. Ridolfi was then appointed President, Bombardier Regional Aircraft in September 1999. Since 2008, he has led the Bombardier Business Aircraft unit through a tumultuous market environment and with great success.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Headquartered in Montreal, Canada, Bombardier is the world's only manufacturer of both planes and trains and is evolving mobility worldwide by answering the call for more efficient, sustainable, and enjoyable transportation.

Bombardier Business Aircraft ([businessaircraft.bombardier.com](http://businessaircraft.bombardier.com)) boasts three families of high-performance business jets – Learjet, Challenger, and Global – that are versatile and innovative, and constantly exceed the needs and expectations of the world's most discerning travelers.

### How has Bombardier Business Aircraft evolved into a leader in the industry?

Our history is one of continued innovation. Even in these difficult times, we're spending significant investment dollars on new products – this has happened repeatedly throughout our history. It began with the Challenger jet and the Global has set the benchmark for long-haul aircraft.

This shows in our product strategy – the broadest in the industry – and also in where we have taken this market. The business aviation market was traditionally U.S.-centric. Bombardier was at the forefront of expanding internationally to new regions – South America, Russia, Asia-Pacific, China, and India.

What makes it a great company is that we're always striving for the new market as well as the new product and the new adventure.

# Continuous Innovation

An Interview with Steven A. Ridolfi,  
President, Bombardier Business Aircraft

### How critical is innovation to the brand culture?

Based on our forecasts, we believe the large aircraft marketplace will continue to grow strongly. Globalization requires companies to do business on many continents. The world will also expand dramatically in terms of the number of billionaires and much of that wealth will be created in Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia-Pacific.

We made those bets over a decade ago with the Global family and more recently with the 7000 and 8000, which are aircraft designed to connect city pairs that are 7000 or 8000 nautical miles apart.

Over the past few years, the world has been going "Global" and the large aircraft segment is leading the way; we saw that coming and invested in those areas. This affirms our vision of the future and that we understand this business and where it's going.

Investment is a bet – these programs are in excess of \$1 billion; they're expensive in terms of money but also in intellectual capital and the effort that is required to bring them on line, so you have to place the bet correctly. It's a testament to Bombardier that we have done that successfully year after year.

### Is it tough to differentiate in this space? How do you get your message across?

It's tough to make the right decisions and also to understand the consequences of those decisions.

For example, we wanted an airplane that was bigger and would go further than any other that had previously been offered in the market. We could have done that sooner using older technology, aerodynamic design, and engine design, but we had to pick the right moment where we had new engines and the right technology available to us, and yet not too late so that we would miss the market sweet spot.

So timing is critical – bringing the right technology to bear at the right time is critical. It's tough to describe: it's almost like finding that optimum investment strategy in terms of how much to spend, where to spend it, and what technology to utilize.

A lot of people talk about innovation and technology, but to get to that optimal place repeatedly with the right products is important.

### How did the company fare from 2008 to 2010? How important was it to continue to make the investments you made at that time?

The market has come back a bit, but it's still challenging. I'm happy that we continue to invest for the long run. Part of our success

has been those investments, because people see that we're going to be there for the future so they're buying airplanes now.

### Are you focused primarily on emerging markets?

We're taking advantage of emerging marketplaces, but the U.S. market still remains the largest and the replacement cycle there is healthy.

Internationally, we are in a market development mode. We have to take our message to global economies and point out how these airplanes are about productivity, making your life easier, increasing quality of life, and the ability to get out there to meet your customers and visit your factories in the shortest period of time to improve your productivity. In reality, we're selling time machines.

### How big is the market for your product?

It's actually quite significant. Business aircraft are at something like 24,000 deliveries over the next 20 years – around \$650 billion.

### What is your vision for how the recent partnership with VistaJet will unfold?

Eight years ago, VistaJet was literally a one aircraft-operation and has since grown into one of the premiere luxury aviation companies in the world. Globalization, moving to larger aircraft, and catering to the needs of high-net-worth individuals and companies, is what VistaJet's business model is all about. The order we had for 142 global aircraft is a testament to that – those airplanes are going to be flying to Europe, China, Africa, and the Middle East, so they're meant to connect people and places that are difficult to get to.

VistaJet is a tremendous business partner for us. We're really happy that we're their exclusive aircraft provider and a true partner in opening these new markets going forward.

### How critical is corporate responsibility to the Bombardier culture?

It goes back to innovation. We have innovative products that set the bar in terms of comfort, range, and speed, but we're also proud to set the bar for things like efficiency – and not just our products but our factories and people. We have many initiatives to reduce energy consumption and many are driven by our employees, because they want a work environment that is green.

We helped pull the business aviation community together to set targets with the International Civil Aviation Organization for emissions in the future. It makes you feel good and pays tremendous dividends for everyone. ●