

# Creative Innovation

An Interview with Andrew Collins, President and Chief Executive Officer, Sentient Jet

**EDITORS' NOTE** As the President and CEO of Sentient Jet, Andrew Collins is responsible for a \$450 million aviation business. In 2018, Collins, on behalf of parent company Directional Aviation, led the acquisition of international digital charter provider PrivateFly (London, U.K.) to help establish a \$100 million, on-demand global platform. In addition to helping Sentient Jet, Collins is also the Global Brand Leader for PrivateFly, acting as the team's executive sponsor as this platform is further enhanced. In recent years, Collins has motivated a significant digital and technology transformation at Sentient Jet and its parent company, Directional Aviation. This has included the creation of retail product, online consumer "touch points," novel mobile applications, and a brand-new, supply-side platform for driving further efficiencies in flight-time procurement. Collins received his BA from Union College in Schenectady, New York, and a master's degree from the Sloan School of Management at MIT.



Andrew Collins

The idea was that someone could just purchase 25 or 50 hours at a time and have the flexibility of choosing anything from a light jet all the way up to a mid, super-mid or large cabin aircraft, and have that jet delivered to them within just 10 hours of advanced notice. With the Jet Card, Sentient Jet created an entirely new industry segment that offered then unheard-of flexibility and convenience for personal and business travel in private aircraft at all-inclusive fixed rates with guaranteed availability, seamless booking and industry-leading value.

We've continuously innovated beyond the Jet Card throughout our years in business. Sentient Jet was also the inventor of the "first-to-market" model, framing the company as a leader in safety with an Independent Safety Advisory Board composed of former top officials of the FAA and NTSB, and a Chief Safety Officer. Additionally, Sentient Jet co-invented TripCheq – a comprehensive analysis of operator credentials, including detailed information on the operator, aircraft, and pilots, further giving our flyers peace of mind when booking travel with us. Sentient Jet is also proud

of having introduced an all-inclusive digital platform designed to allow for seamless scheduling, payments and transactions and more.

We attribute much of Sentient's success and leadership in the industry to our amazing team of product developers, engineers, customer service liaisons, pilots, operators and countless other employees. They drive the company forward with creative innovation and new ideas that continue to evolve the entire private aviation industry.

**How do you define Sentient Jet's culture and how critical is it to maintain culture as the company grows in size and scale?**

We greatly value our culture as our team members are the greatest strength of the company. As we continue to scale and expand our operations internationally, we're actively working to maintain a culture of respect, open communication and creative innovation.

**How proud are you to see the strength and resilience of the Sentient Jet team during the pandemic as they continued to take care of the needs of customers?**

While the pandemic put a strain on most parts of the travel industry, private aviation became increasingly popular. We saw an

**COMPANY BRIEF** Sentient Jet ([sentient.com](http://sentient.com)) has continued to perfect the jet card model for more than 20 years as an alternative to jet ownership, fractional arrangements, and other jet card programs. Sentient Jet certifies every single aircraft, pilot, crew, and flight that flies in its program to ensure the safety of its clients. Operators are tested annually and the company's safety standards exceed FAA Part 135 regulations in various categories. Supported by an extensive 24/7 customer service operation, Sentient Jet strives to make each private jet travel experience an extraordinary one.

**Will you highlight Sentient Jet's history and heritage and what have been the keys to the company's strength and leadership in the industry?**

Sentient Jet was formed in 1999 with a mission to provide safe and efficient private aviation to travelers around the globe. At that time, the charter market was fragmented and purchasing jet time was a confusing process for many. Simplifying it and reducing the friction of trying to book a flight provided a big opportunity for us. We created the Jet Card, which was a first in the aviation industry and led to a Harvard Business School study calling us "the uber of private jets before Uber even existed."



The interior of a Sentient Jet is perfect for business or leisure travel



*A wide variety of Sentient jets are available for clients with only 10 hours of advanced notice*

unprecedented demand from travelers who turned to Sentient Jet as a safe and convenient way to travel domestically making 2020 our busiest year to date. I'm incredibly proud of the work the Sentient Jet team has done to keep our customers safely flying to their destinations. Because of our team's strength and hard work, we've been able to expand our transatlantic flights and grow the company in an overall economically difficult year.

**Will you highlight Sentient Jet's safety program and how this focus has helped differentiate the company?**

We've invested millions of dollars in our safety infrastructure to give card owners a high-touch private aviation experience. Our Sentient Certified process ensures that every operator who flies for our programs – along with every pilot, aircraft and flight – is individually certified by Sentient to ensure our customers' safety. The Sentient Jet app shows fliers when their aircraft has passed all its safety checks and gives real-time access to the pre-takeoff Sentient Jet Certified Safety Report. Composed of former officials from the FAA and NTSB, Sentient's Safety Advisory Board is the first of its kind and serves to guide and inform safety initiatives alongside Sentient's Chief Safety Officer.

With over 20 years of proprietary data, which includes over 100 million pieces of unique data on Sentient Certified® aircraft, pilots, airports and other daily-use operational information, we have established a safety program that is one of the most stringent in the private aviation industry, maintaining standards that often exceed the FAA's regulations.

**Will you discuss Sentient Jet's commitment to innovation and where is innovation taking place in the business?**

By keeping our eyes on areas that have opportunity for advancements, we keep Sentient Jet at the head of the entire private aviation sector. In our routes and rates division, we recently announced our international expansion with the launch of a new Transatlantic Program that offers Jet Card owners fixed one-way rates with guaranteed availability to Europe. We also introduced guaranteed hourly pricing to destinations worldwide.

We're working on new features and innovations for our mobile app as well which makes the Jet Card experience easier than ever to navigate. From the launch of the mobile app in 2016 through the end of 2020, we reached \$100 million in mobile transactions, with \$50 million of those bookings taking place in 2020 alone. Sentient Jet's card owners have continued to embrace mobile booking enthusiastically and we expect to reach \$100 million total in mobile transactions by the end of 2021, matching our entire revenue from mobile transactions in just one year. We are also projecting that 25 percent of total sales in 2021 will come from mobile transactions, showing that the ease and accessibility of mobile will be a lasting trend in the private aviation space.

**How critical is it for Sentient Jet to build a diverse and inclusive workforce and will you discuss the company's efforts in this regard?**

Open and honest feedback and communication is a key part of Sentient Jet and one of the best ways we facilitate that is with a diverse and inclusive workforce who provides us with a wide range of perspectives.

**What do you see as Sentient Jet's responsibility to the communities it serves and will you discuss Sentient Jet's climate commitment?**

We take our mission very seriously when it comes to providing clean and safe flights to our communities, but we understand we have a responsibility to keep communities safe from the other effects of aviation – primarily its effects on climate. Since January 2021, every Sentient Jet flight flown is both carbon and emissions neutral. This goes beyond most common carbon offset programs by offsetting all aviation emissions, including water vapor, aerosols and nitrous oxide, which together account for two thirds of emissions an aircraft produces when flying. Through our new sustainability initiative, and at no expense to Jet Card Owners, Sentient Jet is offsetting all flights 300 percent to account for other, non-CO2 emissions by funding a multitude of carbon offset projects like forestry and renewable energy that reduce emissions equivalent to those from flying. Sentient Jet has teamed with environmental leader 4AIR to review its flight volumes, shared impact in the skies and various options to drive its new sustainability initiative forward.

**What advice do you offer young people interested in building a career in the industry?**

This is a wonderful industry that has a great deal of innovation happening in it right now, be it creative business models, new digital technologies, or the promise of the future of flight via quiet, electronic aircraft and vehicles. The most important thing you can do is understand where things fit in the landscape and learn as much as you possibly can, either while working or as you prepare to find your first position. Following Aviation International News, Corporate Jet Investor, and Business Jet Traveler should give you a strong snapshot of the business. I did not have an aviation background. I came from a business and technology path but have learned to love aviation and what it stands for. I think this is the type of journey you want when it comes to a career. ●



*The Sentient Jet app allows clients to handle all their jet needs from scheduling to the safety record of the plane and crew*