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Satcom Direct evaluates the myriad options for connectivity available to business aircraft operators

Connectivity has drastically changed how we communicate and do business, whether at the office, at home or on the run. "Passengers and crew flying on business aircraft expect to be able to make a call, access their email, surf the internet and more while they're in flight," says Jason Natwick, director of product line management at Satcom Direct. "Recent advances in technology have made these capabilities more accessible, whether you operate or fly on a large-cabin Gulfstream or a smaller Cessna Citation."

There are many options available for business aircraft. "Existing capabilities include Iridium, Inmarsat, Yonder, Gogo Biz and Airfone (Magnastar)," says Natwick. "New technologies are in development and include Iridium OpenPort and Inmarsat Global Xpress. Ultimately, the determination of which system to install comes down to the mission of the aircraft, the passengers that are on board, the type of connectivity needed and where the aircraft is expected to fly. To make the best decision for your aircraft, it is best to consult with a knowledgeable service provider that has years of experience supporting business aviation communications, such as Satcom Direct."

Adding to the already abundant options when selecting connectivity for an aircraft, mobile applications have become increasingly popular. Most applications are built for Android or iOS devices such as the iPad, iPhone and iPod. "All

of these products set a new standard in how people expect to get connected," says Natwick. "What makes these devices more complex are the applications available and differentiating among them."

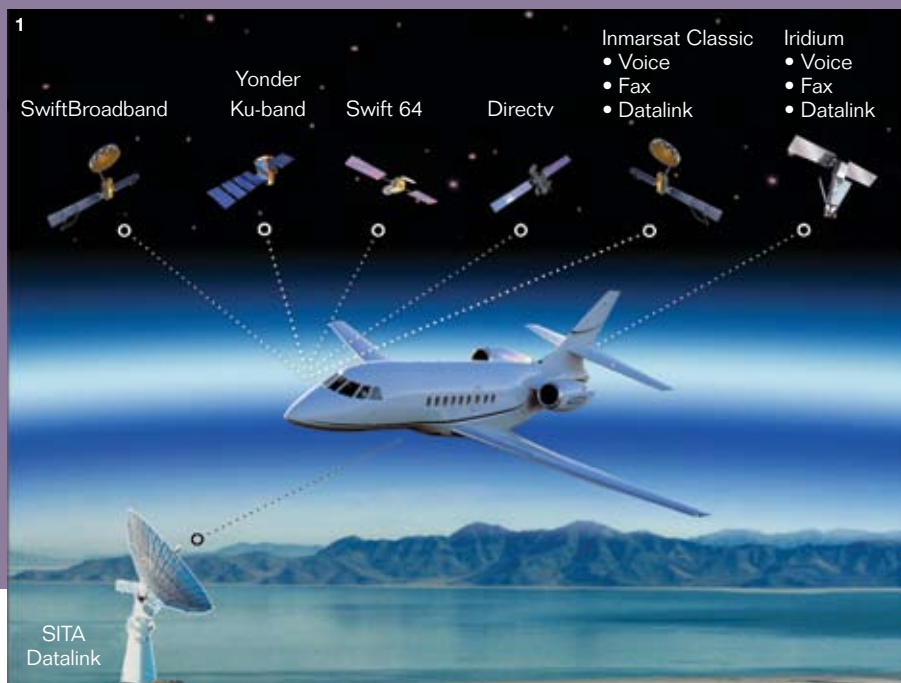
Satcom Direct has developed applications for its customers that work regardless of the communications systems installed on board the aircraft, enabling pilots, schedulers and maintenance personnel to have the tools needed to communicate on or with the aircraft, as long as they have an internet connection. Pilots can view interactive weather, request clearances and file flight plans all from an iPad. Passengers can use their own personal smartphones to make calls from the aircraft. Ground crews also have the capability to message the aircraft while it's in flight, see real-time usage information and track the aircraft worldwide.

"Another aspect of connectivity that gets overlooked by many operators is flight deck datalink, yet there are creative and comprehensive options available," says Natwick. "One such option is FlightDeck Freedom from Satcom Direct, which gives operators the capability to do more than could be done with legacy services, and at the same time makes datalink simple to use."

Using this package, flight departments can choose their preferred flight planners, track their aircraft fleet globally, utilise mobile applications and use interactive messaging – all for a simple annual fee.

With so much choice, choosing a communications service provider can be a daunting task. "Evaluate their billing capability, real-time account access, value-added applications for utilising the services and most importantly the support they offer," advises Natwick. "If your system is not operating when you need it, everyone on board and those on the ground supporting the aircraft are less effective. In many cases, the flight could be cancelled. Remember, choosing the best service provider is not simply about cost; it is about how easy it is to get connected and stay connected, so pilots can concentrate on the most important aspect of their mission – the flight – and passengers can concentrate on the things that are important to them."

1. Connectivity options for business aircraft



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