

# GROUND BREAKERS OF THE INDUSTRY

**Philip Stransky,**  
Vice President  
Sales and Relationship Management,  
Waypoint Leasing, Asia

Interview by Anthony Lam



In the business aviation sector, helicopter operators have been hit especially hard by the current struggles of the global oil and gas industry. Many operators have chosen therefore to reduce risks by leasing helicopters, instead of tying up capital resources and taking on even greater risks by purchasing one. In choosing a leasing company, it is imperative that one find a well-capitalized company with solid assets, headed by entrepreneurial managers who know the helicopter business and for whom leasing helicopters is the core business. No company fits the bill better than Waypoint Leasing, the world's largest independent helicopter leasing company.

Waypoint was founded in 2013 by a team of helicopter industry veterans, most of whom had firsthand experience as helicopter

operators. Waypoint's three major long term investors are MSD Capital, L.P., Quantum Strategic Partners, and Cartesian Capital Group LLC. Collectively these three fund investors lead the way, giving the Ireland-based Waypoint financial depth and reliability to face any challenges that may show up on the world economy's radar. The company now has \$1.4 billion in helicopter assets, representing a fleet of over 120 helicopters which are leased to operators in more than 20 countries around the world. Its clients value the integrity, experience, and commitment of Waypoint's leadership team and financial sponsors. Over the years the company has expanded from its roots in Ireland to open offices in Australia, Brazil, Singapore, South Africa, and the UK, making it more easily accessible to its clients around the world.

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Philip Stransky, Waypoint's Vice President of Sales and Relationship Management, Asia, leads the company's work in the Asia region. Philip came to the helicopter leasing business when he took a year off to attend business school after nearly a decade with SEACOR, principally in the marine business. While studying at MIT, he was regularly in touch with Ed Washecka, CEO of Waypoint, and his team, who were busy raising capital and getting Waypoint Leasing off the ground. Philip says, "Ed offered me the unique opportunity to return to Singapore, where I had spent three and a half years with SEACOR, to help catapult Waypoint's efforts in the region with the goal of becoming the largest independent helicopter leasing company. By late 2014, when I came back to Singapore, Waypoint had already successfully negotiated and signed a number of leases in Asia. Our goal was then to provide current and potential customers with a local contact and the ability to act immediately and follow up swiftly. Being on the ground has been tremendously successful, giving us the ability to work on opportunities with regional clients and to ensure that we provide exciting solutions in a time sensitive manner."

As a multi-national (France, USA, and UK) Philip grew up fascinated by aviation, clocking

up a good number of air miles. He was given his first taste of the helicopter business in 2009 which only further increased his longing to be in the industry. "The opportunity of joining Waypoint was the ideal way of matching my personal passion for aviation with a background in business development," says Philip.

Philip and his senior management team bring clients decades of experience, giving them a unique insight into the customers' needs for high quality aircraft, innovative financing options, and long-standing relationships with service providers. Philip approaches the company's role from the perspective of the operator and the end user. Waypoint's leasing solutions address not only the present needs of the client, but also anticipate the cyclical realities of the helicopter industry, positioning Waypoint to be able to address the needs and challenges that lie just beyond the horizon as well.

Waypoint's expertise is firmly fixed on the helicopter market. The company's fleet of technologically advanced helicopters include aircraft manufactured by Finmeccanica (formerly AugustaWestland), Bell Helicopter, Airbus Helicopters, and Sikorsky. Its fleet





ranges from heavy to medium to light-twin models, and its customers utilize these helicopters in oil and gas, search and rescue, hospital emergency service, firefighting, utility, and government support operations. Philip sums up Waypoint's competitive advantage this way, "Waypoint is run by those who are passionate about the helicopter business. Our senior managers have a firsthand understanding of operators' needs and their desire for the most suitable aircraft, innovative and flexible financing solutions, and strong long-term relationships with service providers. This is the edge that positions us ahead of the game."

Philip has been one of the groundbreakers in the industry. In 2015, Waypoint negotiated and signed a number of leases, and placing a new H145 in Papua New Guinea with Pacific was, for Philip, an especially gratifying achievement. He says, "We hope that the current year will continue to be a year of firsts, where we negotiate and sign new leases in countries which have so far eluded us."

That is not to suggest that his career path has not been without its challenges. When asked about the notable obstacles he has faced in the industry, Philip says, "Arriving in Asia in 2010 was challenging. I had been based in Mexico, and had done business in Europe and Africa. However, understanding the nuances of working in Asia takes time and patience, particularly learning the details of a variety of cultures. Every day has been exciting and I am continuously enjoying the experience."

Recognizing the many advantages of leasing over buying – including timely access to the required aircraft, matching of needs to supply, potential for worldwide operations, freeing up of capital, and avoiding risk and interest rates – many operators are turning to companies like Waypoint Leasing to meet their helicopter needs. The advantages Waypoint offers over other lessors are numerous. As a full service lessor, Waypoint offers numerous value-added services to operators, including flexible lease options, a global presence, competitive pricing, and flexible helicopter configurations. Waypoint's strong relationships with OEMs and its global presence make it one of the most attractive options of all helicopter leasing companies worldwide.

That is not to say that one is ever guaranteed smooth sailing, especially in a volatile industry like business aviation. Waypoint Leasing recognizes the challenges currently facing the market, particular with today's low oil prices. In addressing these challenges, Philip says, "With the oil and gas market challenged by

low oil prices, Waypoint has positioned its order book to focus on EMS and parapublic helicopters. At the Helitech 2015 show in London last October, we announced orders and commitments for up to 38 new rotorcraft. In a deal with Airbus Helicopters, Waypoint Leasing signed to buy up to 20 H135 singles over the next three years, making it the first lessor to offer the H135 in its portfolio."

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Waypoint also agreed to acquire 18 AugustaWestland helicopters, a mix of AW189 super medium twins, AW169 light intermediates, and the AW139 intermediate. At a time when other leasing companies who rushed into the market when oil and gas services commanded top dollar and are now dropping out due to low oil prices, Waypoint Leasing is not only continuing its service, but is expanding to meet its clients' needs even better.

With a wealth of expertise and experience under his belt, Philip knows what it takes to make it in this tough industry. In offering advice to those who want to succeed in the helicopter leasing field, he says, "Principally, you have to understand the needs of each individual customer. The beauty of being based in Asia is that I get to cover a huge portion of the world where there is a tremendous variety of customs and ways of doing business. Handling these challenges successfully while providing each customer with timely attention can lead to exponential growth of the business while also bringing great personal satisfaction."

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