



DEVELOPING THE MAINLAND MARKET

INTERVIEW WITH SYLVIA ZHANG,
FASTRANSIT CEO

Interview by Litalia Yoakum

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"2008 to 2013 was a rapid development period for domestic business aviation," said CEO, Sylvia Zhang. "There were a few companies that were engaged in these services, however, lacked familiarity with the industry and professionals. This blank space in the Chinese business aviation market needed to be filled — and that's where Fastransit stepped in."

Until that point, Zhang had worked in business aviation through operational, sales and marketing positions at Air China and Universal Aviation & Weather. Her experience in varying facets of the industry opened her eyes to the absence of local ground handling providers, a service that is crucial to the operation of business jets.

Fastransit now serves most sectors of general aviation including private, ferry, medevac, charter, cargo, diplomatic and demo flights, covering about 200 airports in China.

Operating a business jet in the Mainland can often be a cumbersome task, explained Zhang: "When large-scale or significant events come to China, business aviation slots are always the first to be controlled. The process is time-consuming and difficult, making a business jet less efficient."

To reduce the headache and smoothen out the process, the Beijing-based company can obtain urgent landing or overfly permits within five hours, acquire slots at often over-capacity airports, coordinate parking, arrange air traffic control priority release and provide overall, round-the-clock operational services.

The company has now expanded to almost 20 branches throughout China. Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chongqing, Sanya, Urumchi and Shanghai's Pudong and Hongqiao airports are among the airports with the most general aviation movements and consequently, where Fastransit provides the most ground handling services. As Zhang explained, these are major cities — as well as cultural, political, and economic epicenters — that attract business opportunities for clients and the company itself.



Outside of China, Fastransit enjoys a partnership with Eagle Flight Service. The global trip support provider aids with corporate, charter and commercial flight operations, while Fastransit provides its ground handling expertise. For now, this is as much expanding as the company expects in the foreseeable future, preferring instead to focus on the business at hand – ground handling.

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“Our revenue has maintained sustainable growth year-by-year, setting the stage for the company to quickly develop,” said Zhang. Under the guidance of the now-industry veteran, Fastransit is constantly improving – upgrading its own structure to keep up with the market, new technology and customer needs.

Still, the industry faces challenges that Zhang and her team can’t avoid.

As airport infrastructure becomes a more pressing matter, aviation – particularly business aviation – companies are finding it difficult to operate. Zhang agreed: “Aviation infrastructure in China is limited, and so far, there is no dedicated business aviation airport. Business jets share runways with commercial flights, putting a strain on lead permits, slots and parking, thus making our work increasingly important.”

Such is the case in many of China’s third- and fourth-tier cities where infrastructure hasn’t kept up with demand, making it difficult for business jet requirements to be met.

However, the government’s effort toward boosting the industry should prove to be successful, explained Zhang, as “investment in infrastructure foreshadows the booming of China’s business aviation industry, and will equally be beneficial toward the growth of Fastransit.”



Just as in the early days of her career, Zhang continues to see potential in the business aviation industry of the world’s second-largest economy. “Consumption in China has been climbing, becoming the growth driver for the country and tourism has also notably expanded,” both good signs for the industry, said Zhang.

For now, she stressed the importance of China-based business aviation companies understanding cultural differences and implementing cross-cultural management, to compete on an international level and “usher in the spring of an improved industry”.

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