

## VVIP Completions Move Right Along

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By Rich Piellisch/ShowNews



Everyone has felt the recession, but for one industry segment it's been something of a good thing--widebody completions, where business is off, but only slightly, and the few cancellations have allowed providers to move other eager customers off of the waiting list and into the hangar.

"We deal mostly with heads of state and royalty, and I guess they really haven't had that much trouble," says Jerry Gore of Gore Design in Texas. His firm recently expanded and is planning to expand again. "Business is great," says Gore.

Sounding a more sober note is EVP Sloan Benson of Greenpoint Technologies in Washington. "The worldwide financial crisis has put a crimp on the availability of financing," she says. "Fortunately, our current efforts are in the head-of-state arena and those customers have budgeted and planned these projects some years ago.

"High net worth individuals will continue to be a difficult market in which to sell," Benson says. "In my opinion, we are just now adjusting to the lows that will be our 'norm' for some time."

But the recession has eased supply chain pressures. Whereas last year, big-cabin outfitters were having problems with things like seats and even aerospace-grade sealing tape, material today is not a problem.

"It is incredible how many engineering firms and seat firms, and suppliers are saying that we have got extra capacity now, and we are anxious for your business," says David Edinger, the new CEO at Comlux Completions USA, which is expanding in Indianapolis. "Virtually all of the outside vendors out there seem to be hungry."

Jack Lawless, the new president of Associated Air Center, says his firm has reduced its supplier base by half as it's introduced new performance-based parameters--changes that will remain in place going forward."

By the same token, the slowdown elsewhere has made it easier to find qualified technicians and top-notch craftsmen, both contractors and full-time hires. "We have been able to staff up here incredibly easily," says Edinger.

"We have picked up some good people," says Gore, "and we will be hiring more."

*Photo credit: Gore Design*