

A practical flight school booking system

GENAV PROBOOK product review by Kenneth Armstrong

ONE OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES for flight trainers is matching students to instructors, and that combination to available aircraft. Mix in weather-related delays, limited office hours, aircraft maintenance requirements and pilot personalities, and the resulting concoction can burden any flight training school or club.

Victoria Flying Club (VFC) manager Gerry Mants has assessed several electronic systems for student bookings and chose GenAv's Probook software because it is so user friendly and relatively inexpensive considering its power. (ProBook ONLINE is an optional component available to ProBook users—for schools that wish to have a distance Internet-booking capability.)

Program developer Stephane Way invested years developing the product, and additional time working with VFC staff to personalize and customize features to VFC's requirements. In fact, the program has been evolving so much with enhanced features that it was somewhat challenging for this writer to assess the software as newer, better versions kept eclipsing the older ones.

GenAv ProBook excels because it is far more than just a method for clients to book flight time, an instructor and aircraft. The scope of the programming allows a flight school to integrate bookings, training schedules and record keeping in one complete Windows environment.

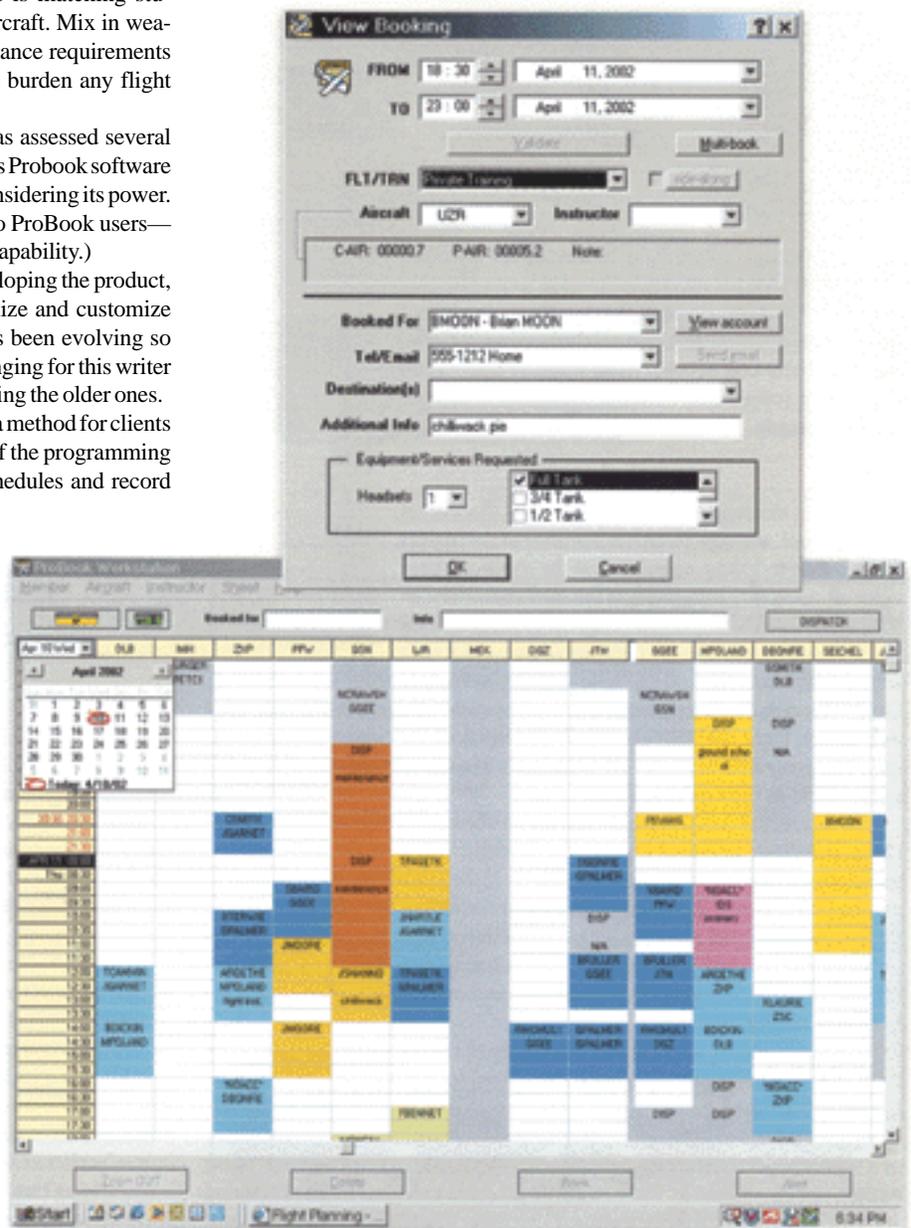
A few examples will illustrate the utility of the package. Students can log onto the booking system via VFC's web site 24 hours a day, seven days a week and schedule flights without the need of a receptionist to take their calls and peruse the booking sheets. Let's say a VFC student is working on his commercial licence. He can make an entry on the screen (essentially, the school's virtual booking sheet), noting that he can accept ride-along or "cost sharing" passengers and other pilots to help subsidize his flying training. Another pilot can view the same booking sheet online and decide whether she wants to e-mail the PIC who has booked a flight to see if he will accept a ride-along. Quite frankly, ProBook's features are so numerous and extremely capable, it isn't within the scope of this review to cover their diversity.

GenAv's mission is to reduce workload for instructors, dispatchers and management staff through the use of computers and real-time booking data. Many tasks such as answering the phone, taking or changing bookings, filling out pilot training records, and recording flight times can be shifted to the computer.

Examples of power

When a student or other pilot makes a booking at the school or over the Internet, she can instantly learn the aircraft and instructor availability, specify her planned aircraft use and any special instructions—such as equipment needed: fuel load, headsets, chocks, tie-downs, etc. The flight school computer then checks her medical validation, currency and other data to immediately approve or reject the booking. If another pilot wants that same time slot and aircraft, he can input a waiting list request, and an e-mail will be sent if a cancellation occurs advising of the availability. Dispatch receives a flag on the computer with any booking or cancellation and can immediately communicate with the individual.

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ProBook's on-site electronic booking sheet (main screen) splits into two parts with the bottom half becoming the dispatch console (not shown). Detailed booking information can be easily retrieved simply by double-clicking on any colour-coded time slot. Top, inset: An individual booking record lists all relevant data, including flight duration, total current and predicted air time of the aircraft for maintenance scheduling purposes, customer's telephone, e-mail, equipment needs and more.

VFC's Gerry Mants points out that his staff are able to sign onto the system from all of their LAN workstations, allowing them to directly and quickly serve customer needs. Improved productivity provides benefits for everyone from staff to customers.

How it works

ProBook accounts are divided into five categories, each with differing functions and security privileges.

The management/staff account has the ability to customize the ProBook program with the addition or deletion of instructors and aircraft, booking availability, types of training flights available, password management and governance of the statistical data concerning the school.

One level down, dispatch authority allows the viewing of flight events and bookings and provides, if necessary, confirmation for booking requests. This protocol can be configured to allow the server to immediately approve booking requests. Alternatively, the confirmation can be sent instead by the dispatch staff. The approved staff would also have the ability to issue "flight sheets" to students/pilots prior to flight. These include data such as emergency contact number, expected date and time of return, additional equipment requirements and special instructions.

In the category titled "internal staff customized accounts," approved individuals are able to use a generic log-on ID in a common staff work area to exercise the same privileges as the instructors'. This might include the accounts payable staff, for instance.

The lowest security/capability level is that of the "guest". These accounts allow students to view and manage their bookings at the school site using their account number and password information. Guest privileges do not allow customizing of the booking sheet insofar as view dates and hours. Of course, with on-site booking, a staff member would have this information available to help the student or renter pilot pick the most suitable booking slot(s).

Now you can afford a **professional booking system** for your school!

- REAL-TIME BOOKING**
(watch the screen as it happens)
- ON-SITE SERVER & WORKSTATIONS**
(you control the system)
- USER-FRIENDLY INTERFACE**
(point-and-click visual display)
- INTERNET ACCESS** (optional)
(24/7 for customer and staff convenience)
- MAINTENANCE SCHEDULING**
(countdown to next maintenance)
- COLOR-CODED BOOKINGS**
- DISPATCH CONSOLE**
(monitors Internet bookings & flight events)
- REVENUE STATISTICS**
(see the results)
- LOCAL TWILIGHT HOURS**
(night rating checks & grounding time)

AFTER

2½ years of development ... INTRODUCING

PROBOOK

A software booking system designed for flight schools and charter operations. Maximize staff efficiency by reducing paperwork and phone calls. Fully online and interactive, ProBook is a booking system that allows the business manager to draw information any time of the day with the click of a mouse.

For more information, go to: www.genavsystems.com
Special introductory offer, call: 250 884-2256



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