**Best Business Women Awards - Fly Affinity**

### New Business Category Questions

**About the business (249 / 250)**

FlyAffinity revolutionises private charter travel with a unique business model offering transparent, fixed fees and fully disclosed pricing - a rarity in our industry. We provide a seamless travel experience, allowing members to arrive 20 minutes before take-off with access to over 7,000 aircraft worldwide. Our model ensures cost savings are directly passed on to our members, making private charter travel more affordable and straightforward.

A London to Hong Kong flight typically costs £175,000 with a £17,500 brokerage fee, but FlyAffinity members only pay a fixed fee of £3,000. This significant cost saving highlights our commitment to transparent pricing. Our dedication to customer satisfaction has led to a 100% client retention rate and steady growth in our membership base, boasting a 40% increase year-on-year.

We started as Plane Changer and strategically rebranded under Affinity Aviation Group, positioning ourselves 2-3 years ahead earning credibility in the industry's eyes. Anticipating that larger companies might adopt our charter model and move quickly, we partnered with Andy Hoy of Affinity Aviation, a well-respected industry peer. Establishing this strategic partnership led to a £1 million turnover by year 2's first quarter.

FlyAffinity is committed to ethical business practices and exceptional service. We maintain detailed records of member's preferences, enabling us to offer highly personalised services. Our aviation professionals, with qualifications from Universal Aviation Operations and the Royal Butler Institute in Customer Service, are available 24/7 to meet our members' needs. This commitment and expertise have established FlyAffinity as a trusted name in private aviation.

**How does your business differ from its competition? (246 / 250)**

FlyAffinity sets itself apart through expertise, transparent pricing, and unwavering customer service. Our team, formed by Caroline Talboys brings extensive backgrounds in aircraft operations, customer relations, and private aviation management. This allows us to offer unparalleled service, and our female leadership embodies a unique perspective, emphasising empathy, multitasking, and personalised service, greatly enhancing our client interactions.

Unlike other brokers who obscure costs with hidden fees, we offer a straightforward, fixed-fee structure. This clarity ensures our clients know exactly what they are paying for, instilling trust and loyalty. Furthermore, our membership is free for life, enhancing the value we provide to our clients.

Our collaborative shareholder structure, where the team holds 75% of the company's shares cooperatively, ensures dedication and hard work, benefiting those committed to our success. Founder Caroline Talboys was keen to adopt a cooperative business model, ensuring women were on par with male peers. We strategically recruited top-level management and cooperative founders to build a strong foundation and enhance credibility.

We promote a family-flexible work environment, recognising the importance of work-life balance. This approach benefits team members and translates into better client service. Our dedication to these principles underscores our commitment to transforming the industry and fostering a more inclusive and ethical environment.

Our personalised service further distinguishes us from the competition. Each client receives individual attention, ensuring their unique requirements are met. This commitment positions FlyAffinity as a leader in the industry and the preferred choice for travellers seeking reliability, integrity, and excellence.

**What research did you do before you set up your business? (245 / 250)**

Before establishing FlyAffinity, we conducted extensive research to identify gaps in the charter brokerage market and understand customer needs. Our initial analysis revealed significant dissatisfaction among private flyers with fluctuating broker transparency. We recognised this opportunity and developed a business model centred on openness and customer-centric service.

We meticulously planned the business, testing various booking systems and software to find the most efficient and user-friendly platforms. Our team used their skills and knowledge to set up our website, IT infrastructure, operational workflows, and financial models.

To further refine our business plan, we sought feedback from industry mentors and conducted several rounds of reviews. Engaging a marketing agency, we evaluated our branding and messaging to ensure our value proposition resonated with potential clients. We invested a significant portion of our limited funds in these efforts, operating on a shoestring budget of just £40,000.

Our research also extended to ethical considerations in the aviation industry. We aimed to address the unethical practices prevalent during the pandemic, where brokers exploited high-net-worth individuals with exorbitant fees. Adopting a fixed-fee model, we positioned FlyAffinity as a fair and transparent alternative that was warmly received by our growing membership base.

Additionally, we gathered feedback from potential customers and industry professionals to validate our approach. Andrew Hoy, a veteran in the sector and now a shareholder, provided invaluable insights that helped shape our business strategy. His support underscored the viability of our model and reinforced our commitment to transparency and excellence.

**Why are you passionate about your industry? (250 / 250 words)**

Our passion for the aviation industry is deeply rooted in our team's collective experience and genuine love for delivering exceptional service. As women who have built our careers in various facets of aviation, a sector that remains significantly underrepresented in the UK, we bring a unique perspective emphasising empathy, multitasking, and personalised service, greatly enhancing client interactions.

Our team's journey includes extensive experience in the aviation industry, showcasing our dedication to customer service. This commitment is driven by a shared passion for ensuring every customer feels valued and cared for.

During the pandemic, we recognised unethical practices in the industry, where brokers exploited clients with exorbitant fees. This fuelled our desire to create a business model prioritising transparency and ethical practices. By adopting a fixed-fee model, we aimed to provide a fair and straightforward service, which our growing membership base has warmly received.

Our passion also extends to advocating for women in aviation. Having a predominantly female leadership team sets us apart and represents a necessary shift in an industry traditionally dominated by men. We are committed to promoting a family-flexible work environment and supporting women in business. Our involvement in industry events and associations, like our membership to Women in Aviation international, aims to inspire and support other women in aviation.

To further feed our passion for aviation, we attend regular industry exhibitions, association webinars and airshows. Most recently attending EBACE in Geneva and flying a fully electric aircraft which will support our industries desire to reach net zero.

**What activities have been instrumental in the growth of your business? (249 / 250)**

Several activities have been instrumental in driving FlyAffinity's growth. A significant factor has been our investment in comprehensive marketing strategies. We are developing promotional videos and launched our Advocate Programme, which incentivises members to refer new clients by offering 20% of the service fees for the lifetime of the referred member. This initiative has significantly boosted our visibility and client base.

We partnered with Roehampton University, involving students in various projects that have brought fresh perspectives to our operations and helped us develop a new service called Flight Guardians.

We have also been endorsed by DiCasa Jersey, who have made us their only preferred private aviation service provider, a huge honour given their properties start from £7 million+.

Attending and exhibiting at industry events like Elite London, where our professional presence and engaging booth attracted significant attention, reinforced our brand’s reputation and generated positive feedback.

Our focus on personalised customer service has been a significant driver of growth. We provide tailored experiences to meet each client’s unique needs. For example, spraying the cabin with Jo Malone for a client with specific fragrance preferences and flying to a remote Island with Ribena as one member’s child would only drink this particular brand unattainable locally.

Our transparent pricing structure, eliminating hidden fees, continues to be a cornerstone of our business, and we have streamlined our operational processes by adopting new technologies and systems, reducing costs and increasing efficiency. This internal optimisation has allowed us to focus on growth and customer service.

**How do you deliver great customer service? (248 / 250 words)**

At FlyAffinity, delivering excellent customer service means building lasting relationships through exceptional personalised experiences. We start by understanding each client's unique needs and preferences, allowing us to tailor our services.

We work with high-net-worth individuals who demand the highest levels of discretion and privacy. These clients trust FlyAffinity because we prioritise confidentiality, as our team is trained to manage sensitive information and maintain strict confidentiality protocols.

Beyond personalised touches, we excel in handling unexpected situations efficiently and carefully. For instance, when an autistic child left his favourite bear at the airport, our team swiftly retrieved it and sent it via taxi to their holiday home. February 2024, a well known explorer had forgotten it was Valentines Day and his wife was meeting him after 3 weeks away. Our Flight Guardian swiftly purchased Swiss Army chocolate knifes and Rose Champagne to save his bacon. Additionally, we sponsored Alfie’s Wish's first-ever charity ball, which raised £21,000, supporting a charity close to our hearts.

Our exceptional service often inspires clients to express their gratitude in meaningful ways. Our team members have been gifted holidays, hampers, flowers and one employee was even sent a rug because their child loved it. These gestures illustrate the deep relationships we build with our clients and the high level of care we provide.

Our family ethos, driven by a predominantly female leadership team, emphasises empathy, multitasking, and collaboration. This supportive environment translates into a 100% client retention rate as our clients appreciate our authentic family-oriented approach.

**What challenges have you faced starting your business? (249 / 250 words)**

Starting FlyAffinity came with significant challenges that tested our resilience and resourcefulness. One of the primary hurdles was the financial constraint. Operating on a shoestring budget of £40,000 meant that every penny had to be accounted for. We did not have the luxury to hire external experts initially, so we relied heavily on our skills and sweat equity.

We underestimated the importance and cost of effective marketing. Our initial attempts, done in-house, were not as impactful as needed. Realising this, we sought external help, but the costs were daunting. For instance, quotes for branding refresh and marketing strategies often exceeded £27,000, which could wipe out our budget. Eventually, we invested £9,000, a significant chunk of our funds, to get professional input on our marketing efforts.

Team dynamics also presented difficulties. Initially, we had three directors, but it became evident that one was not contributing effectively. This individual was a close friend, and deciding to part ways was incredibly tough. However, it was necessary for the business’s growth, health and morale. This experience taught us the importance of having a committed and aligned team from the start.

We had to evaluate and choose user-friendly systems, ensure compliance with aviation standards, and integrate new technologies to streamline our processes and reduce costs. Finding that we could not upscale effectively without significant investment in software and CRM which had not been identified in our initial business plan.

Despite these challenges, our determination and strategic adjustments have positioned FlyAffinity for growth and success.

**Financials**

**Share your turnover, gross and net profit to date and your forecast for 2023/24.**

Fly Affinity Limited has demonstrated strong positive trends in both turnover and profit over the analysed period. The key highlights include:

* Turnover growth: The company's turnover increased by approximately 51%, indicating robust sales or service revenue growth. In the most recent fiscal year, our turnover reached £1 million, up from £660,000 the previous year.
* Gross profit: Our gross profit substantially increased by 70%, reflecting effective management of direct costs. This has been a result of optimising our operations and streamlining our processes.
* Net profit: Although we are not yet profitable, we have significantly reduced our losses. Our loss before taxation and retained loss decreased by about 88% in the last financial year, demonstrating improved financial management and operational efficiency. This reduction in losses is a promising sign of our progress toward profitability.

We anticipate continued growth with a forecasted turnover of £xxx and improved net profit margins. Our strategies to enhance market visibility and expand our membership base are expected to drive these financial gains.

The financial data for Fly Affinity Limited shows a promising trajectory. The significant increase in turnover and the considerable reduction in losses suggest that we are on the cusp of profitability. The improvements in gross profit and the effective management of costs are positive indicators of our company's financial health and operational success.

**What are your growth plans over the next 3 years? (245 / 250)**

Over the next three years, FlyAffinity has outlined ambitious growth plans to expand our membership base, enhance our service offerings, and increase market visibility. Our primary objective is to boost our membership, drive revenue growth, and elevate brand awareness. To achieve this, we are investing significantly in marketing strategies, including the development of promotional videos and the launch of The Advocate Programme, which incentivises current members to refer new clients with a 20% commission on service fees for the lifetime of the referred member.

To support our growth, we are reviewing and optimising our operational processes. We have consolidated multiple systems into a more efficient platform, reducing costs and streamlining workflows. Additionally, we are expanding our team, having recently hired a Business Development Associate to enhance our outreach efforts.

Maintaining our 100% client retention rate is crucial as we continue providing the exceptional, personalised service our clients expect. Feedback from operators, such as ***"We wish all our chartered flights were through FlyAffinity,"*** reinforces the potential for achieving these growth targets. We aim to become known as a critical player in the private charter space by joining several industry boards and associations to promote our brand among peers and potential clients.

These strategic initiatives, coupled with our commitment to transparency and customer service, will drive FlyAffinity's growth and establish us as a leader in the private charter industry over the next three years, ensuring sustainable development and long-term success in the highly competitive private aviation market.

**Share your business achievements over the past year (247 / 250)**

Over the past 12 months, FlyAffinity has achieved significant milestones that underscore our growth and success in the private charter industry. One of our most notable accomplishments was breaking £1 million pound turnover. Our presence at the Elite London event, was highly praised. Attendees remarked that we "had the buzz of the place" and our stand attracted the most attention, projecting an image of a large, highly professional company.

Our reputation among aircraft operators has also strengthened considerably. Operators often receive up to 200 requests daily, with many being non-viable. However, they now prioritise our requests because they recognise the credibility and preparedness of our members. This has cemented our strong relationships with our partners.

Financially, we are on the cusp of making a profit, which is a massive achievement for us so early in our business. Our client retention rate remains at an impressive 100%, reflecting our commitment to exceptional service and customer satisfaction. Additionally, our membership has significantly increased, contributing to our overall growth.

We have also made strategic decisions to enhance our marketing efforts. By redirecting investment towards marketing, we launched The Advocate Programme, incentivising referrals with a 20% commission on service fees for the lifetime of the referred member. This programme has been instrumental in boosting our visibility and client base.

Our internal processes have been optimised by consolidating systems and adopting new technologies, resulting in cost reductions and increased efficiency. This operational improvement supports our scalability and positions us for continued growth.

**Business Bio (50 words)**

FlyAffinity revolutionises private charter travel with transparent pricing, exceptional personalised service, and a commitment to discretion and privacy. With a predominantly female leadership team, we offer unparalleled travel experiences, maintain a 100% client retention rate, and are recognised as a trusted leader in the private aviation industry.