The PAC 750XL:

A Plane of Many Roles

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The word "airplane" often conjures up the image of private pilots and commercial airlines. Rarely do we envision cargo planes or planes used in mining support or medical procedures. The truth is that working planes, or to use the vernacular, "utility aircraft," encompass more than the average person considers. Philip Esdaile and Ray Ferrell of Utility Aircraft recognizes this when they discusses their company and the PAC 750XL. "Utility Aircraft struck us as a name that addresses the aircraft operators who use their aircraft to generate revenue in the less glamorous, yet essential roles." Utility Aircraft caters to these less glamorous roles in a number of different fields.

Mining operators need aircraft that will lift heavy loads from short runways. These operators need the capacity to carry cargo, passengers, or both. They also need dependability with low maintenance and acquisition costs. Geological survey operators need these qualities along with the ability to out-climb rising terrain and docile handling characteristics. Surveillance operators need these qualities, plus a quiet plane that has great visibility and the ability to loiter unobtrusively. The PAC 750XL is more than equipped to handle all of these demands. As Esdaile points out, "The overall low operating costs of the plane shine in every role."

The PAC 750XL, though capable for much more, is primarily used as a skydiving plane. These planes are "turn key" configured for operators. "Historically, operators have had to bear the expense of modifying aircraft to meet their needs. We identify the needs and deliver an aircraft ready to work. The operator just has to 'turn the key,'" says Esdaile. This is great, considering the often extensive modifications needed to general aircraft for this type of work. The PAC 750XL "is a natural fit," says Esdaile, "for operators who are struggling with old Cessna and Piper piston twins."

Critical parts of older aircraft will have to be restored or reinforced, often at great expenses to the operators. Compare the cost and time of replacing the PAC's flap motors, for instance, to other planes. Larry Pennington of SkyDive Suffolk in Virginia says of the PAC 750XL, "if the flap motor goes out, it takes about 15 minutes to change it. It's bolt in, bolt out, and it only costs about $75 a motor." For an older King Air, the flap motors cost roughly $1500, for a motor small enough to fit into the palm of your hand. You could also take into account the rising costs of fuel. The PAC 750XL uses about 12 gallons of fuel per load, whereas other planes can take up to 30 gallons of fuel per load. The older piston twins require the more expensive fuel as well as lots of time and money to replace fatigued parts. Because the FAA has now determined that one turbine engine is just as safe as two piston engines, the PAC 750XL "is the most affordable new turbine on the market, and nothing else can lift a heavier load from a shorter runway."

The skydiving industry has embraced the PAC 750XL because of these perks. According to Esdaile, skydiving "is a world-wide industry that requires robust, high performance aircraft with

low operating costs." The PAC 750XL fits this description. Utility Aircraft understands skydiving operations and has modified the planes with several skydiving-specific items. Some of these include rugged interiors for constant abuse from parachutes, harnesses, buckles and jumpers, crew intercoms and PAs, internal handrails, jump steps, padded floors and pilot-controlled jump doors. There are plans for future modifications as approved by the FAA.

The PAC 750XL is based on the CRESCO model. One key difference between the two planes is the cabin area size. The cabin area of the PAC 750XL is about the same size as the cabin of a Beech 18. The Pac 750XL is a 750 HP plane with lowered wings capable of cruising between 155 and 165 knots. Developed in the hill country of New Zealand, the CRESCO model had to be capable of landing and taking off on rugged terrain. These short take-off and landing capabilities were the inspiration behind the PAC 750XL. The PAC 750XL can climb to 13,000 feet, drop 17 sky divers and land roughly 16 minutes after take off. That's an average of three drops per hour! That means less time for potential jumpers to get nervous, and a higher turnover for busy days.

The PAC 750XL did not originate as a skydiving plane. The heavy load capacity combined with the short take-off and landing times appeal to many industries. The PAC 750XL began in the agricultural industry. With its large hopper and high weight capacity (up to 4,400 pounds!), the PAC 750XL seemed perfect for agricultural use. Due to a smaller market and an increasing interest in skydiving, the PAC 750XL has instead become one of the premier skydiving aircraft. Those very qualities that are so beneficial to agrarians also work very well for drop zone operators. As Pennington says, "It's definitely proven to be one of the best investments I've ever made. It's a good airplane; it's a very solid airplane. It's a very plain airplane, but for the type of business that I do, it's by far the fastest, most economical plane out there."