

EPIC AIRCRAFT

Rick Schrameck, Chief Executive Officer, Epic Aircraft

Epic Aircraft rocked the general-aviation industry when the company introduced the Epic LT in 2004 as a high-performance (3,000-fpm climb, 1,200 hp and 350 ktas) kit plane. Since then, Epic has come up with four models: the Dynasty (a certified model of the LT); the Elite (yet to be certified, single-pilot twin VLJ); and the experimentals Escape (a pressurized single-engine turboprop) and Victory (a five-seat VLJ).

Epic Aircraft CEO Rick Schrameck was the man behind the vision of this revolutionary company, which uses feedback from customers in the homebuilt market to contribute to the downline production of the certified – and soon to be certified – versions. An avid pilot since the early 1970s, Schrameck discusses the importance of the homebuilt industry in the build process of aircraft manufacturing.

FA: You caused quite a stir in the general-aviation community when you offered the million-plus dollar, 1,200-hp jetprop Epic LT as an “amateur built” kit aircraft. That flies in the face of what most of us think of when we talk about a kit plane.

RS: It doesn't have to. People who want to build their own planes should have more choices than spending 12 years in their garage building a little two-seater.

FA: In researching this interview, we read a number of articles written about you in your previous career in high-tech. You were often called a “serial innovator.”

Is allowing customers to build these high-performance aircraft really a new way of doing business? Or is this just a way to beat the high costs of certifying an airplane?

RS: It's a way to bring the most value to customers for the money. To use another type of industry as an analogy, look at the movie rental business. Lots of folks offered movies for rent, but then Netflix came along and offered to send the movies directly to your home for the same price. Boom, they grabbed the market because customers got a lot more bang for the buck. By allowing our customers to follow the FAA guidelines for building their own airplane, Epic owners get a whole more bang for their buck.



much better understanding of how things work and why they work that way. That makes for better, safe pilots. So offering pilots the opportunity to be integral in the construction of their aircraft is ultimately a good deal for all of us.

FA: I have been told the FAA did not immediately embrace your thinking that your “average Joe” could come in and effectively build 51 percent of an airplane as complex as the ones you sell.

RS: The FAA came in and inspected our customer-build process and gave it two thumbs up.

FA: But there are proposed changes to the FAA’s amateur building rules, and some of those changes are quite controversial. Where does Epic stand?

RS: Much of the aviation community, including the Experimental Aircraft Association – which is the mainstay of amateur builders – disagrees with many of the proposed changes. We take an “if it ain't broke, don't fix it” position on the new rules. Many of the proposed rule changes will make things more complex than they need to be, and the general-aviation community doesn't need that. It's a huge benefit to all of us for pilots who want to build their own airplane to be able to do just that.

FA: How so?

RS: Because when pilots are part of the build process, they end up with exponentially more knowledge about their aircraft. They have a

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