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World's largest Cessna Dealer

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An e-Commerce and web presence analysis of

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**Van Bortel Aircraft Inc.**

Arlington Municipal Airport  
4912 South Collins  
Arlington TX 76018

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## The small private plane industry

Most flight training is performed on Cessna single engine piston airplanes [1]. The 2 seat trainer, the Cessna C-150 series planes have been the backbone of pilot training, while the Skyhawk (C-172 4 seat) has been the most popular private airplane owned.

Think aviation, and you think Cessna. Our name is synonymous with light aircraft. Truth is, there are more Cessnas flying than any other name in business. It all starts with the Skyhawk – one of the most popular aircraft ever built. See for yourself how it can extend your adventure. And enjoy the ride.



Market hay days were the period following the Vietnam War; many returning military pilots bought private airplanes. By 1986 Cessna had delivered about 35,000 Skyhawks.

1986 was also the last production year for the 100 series airplanes, due primarily to soaring liability costs [2]. The company vowed to continue production if liability laws were changed to limit duration and extent of liability.

The laws were finally changed by the year 2000 as Cessna re-scheduled production of the Skyhawk.

During this time, Van Bortel, pursued aggressive search and buy strategies for obtaining low-time privately owned aircraft for inventory.

In the mid-1990's the company decided to deal in dual engine Cessnas and corporate jets.

## Van Bortel Aircraft Inc.

Situated at the Arlington Municipal Airport (Texas), Van Bortel Aircraft Inc. is privately owned and has co-resident affiliates in related businesses on the supply side.

Howard Van Bortel has been selling Skyhawks since 1985, his primary strategy has been buying low-time, non-damaged (accident), hangered top shape planes, refurbishing them and selling them with a 30 day 100 hour customer satisfaction guarantee.

The client is guaranteed an 85% buyback on returns within the first year.

### Products and services sold

#### Airplanes

Van Bortel has annual sales volume of about 75 craft; it maintains inventories up to 30 planes. 1992 was its peak year selling 200 Skyhawks [4].

#### Service

The company is a Certified Cessna service center for single/dual piston and turbine engine Cessnas. The shop is FAA certified for airframe, power plant and avionics work.

Detailing and paint shop services are also performed.

#### Parts

The company inventories all aircraft components and accessories, uses and sells new certified Cessna manufactured parts.

## Engines

The company is an authorized stocking distributor for new and overhauled certified engines. The company owns an affiliate engine overhaul and engine components company (Air Power Inc. [5]).

Piston engines have airworthiness of about 2000 hours and cost about \$ 25,000 to replace on a Skyhawk.



## Avionics

The company has a fully certified avionics shop and is an authorized dealer for most OEM's providing aviation products.

## Financial services

The company underwrites financing of sold planes and uses J. P. Morgan Chase Bank as counterparty.

## The Client

The client may result in being a seller of an airplane, in which case Van Bortel is the buyer, functionally, this results in a C2B or B2B scenario.

The client is either an individual (probably a pilot) or a corporation owning an aircraft and buying any of the following;

- airplane(s)
- parts
- avionics
- engine(s)
- service
- airworthiness certification
- financing
- tie-down and parking

## Site Promotion

Van Bortel Aircraft produces 450 hits with google, a quick analysis of the results gives a cross section of;

- Pilot magazines
- trade journals
- flying clubs and associations
- aircraft salvage companies
- OEMs link to them
- Trade-a-plane newspaper

## Costs

Description	Cost
Co-hosting with 500 MB space	\$ 600/yr
Content management and mastering	20,000
Web advertising – (estimated on search)	10,000
Approximate annual web costs	<b>\$ 30,600</b>

Web presence costs per aircraft sold ( \$30,600/75 ) is approximately **\$ 400 per airplane.**

# Marketing

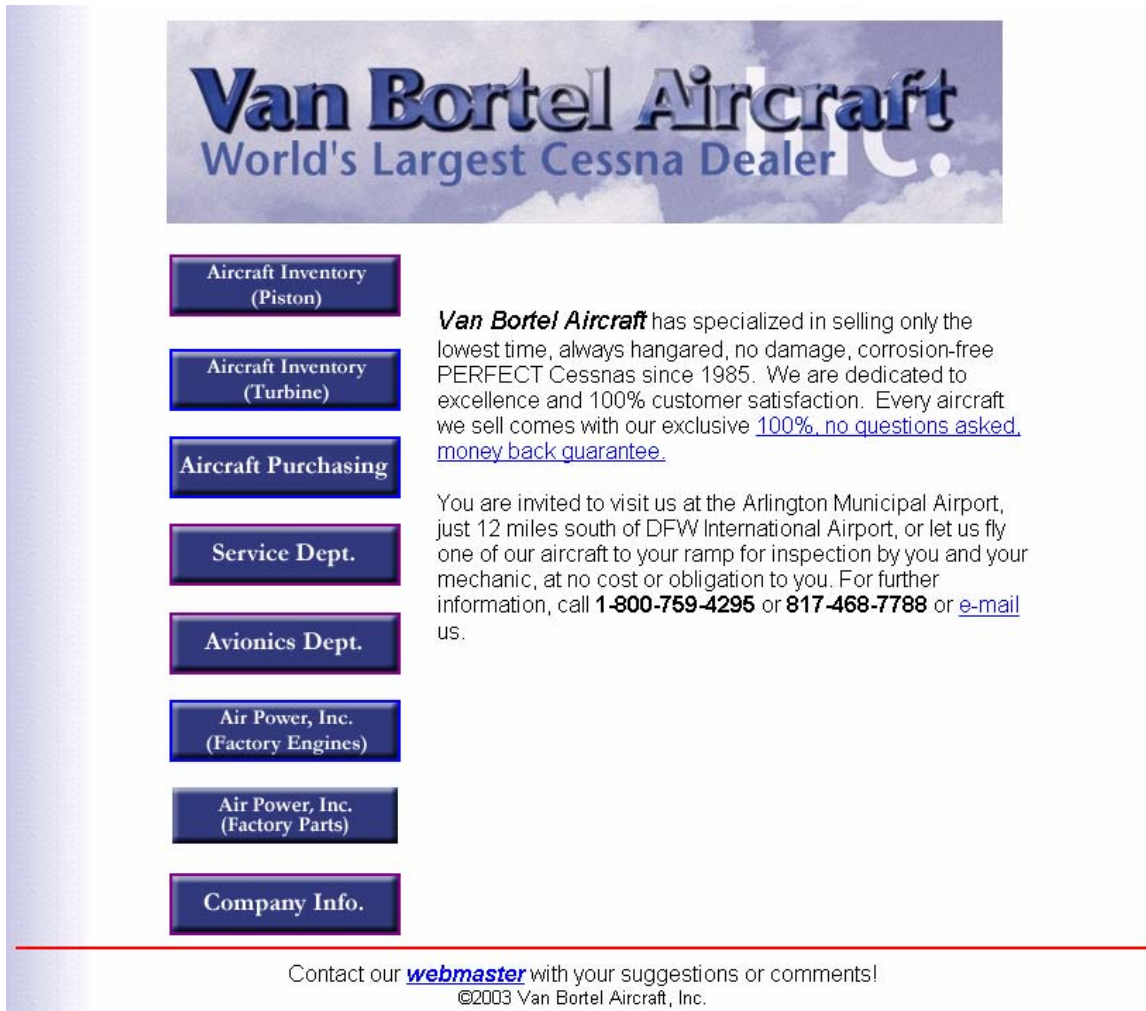
## Bricks and mortar

In the classic sense, Van Bortel Aircraft Inc. is a “bricks and mortar” type business, the airplanes it sells are serviced and re-certified airworthy once a year while they benefit directly from repairs upgrades and replacements.

The company owns and uses domain name [www.vanbortel.com](http://www.vanbortel.com). It webmasters its own virtual domain and administers it remotely.

Two full time people manage the domain, one is programmer/analyst/webmaster the other maintains domain data (inventory updates, announcements, email redirecting, client follow-up).

## Clicks and bricks marketing



**Van Bortel Aircraft**  
World's Largest Cessna Dealer

**Aircraft Inventory (Piston)**

**Aircraft Inventory (Turbine)**

**Aircraft Purchasing**

**Service Dept.**

**Avionics Dept.**

**Air Power, Inc. (Factory Engines)**

**Air Power, Inc. (Factory Parts)**

**Company Info.**

***Van Bortel Aircraft*** has specialized in selling only the lowest time, always hangared, no damage, corrosion-free PERFECT Cessnas since 1985. We are dedicated to excellence and 100% customer satisfaction. Every aircraft we sell comes with our exclusive [100% no questions asked money back guarantee](#).

You are invited to visit us at the Arlington Municipal Airport, just 12 miles south of DFW International Airport, or let us fly one of our aircraft to your ramp for inspection by you and your mechanic, at no cost or obligation to you. For further information, call **1-800-759-4295** or **817-468-7788** or [e-mail](#) us.

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Contact our [webmaster](#) with your suggestions or comments!  
©2003 Van Bortel Aircraft, Inc.

The site has an unobstructed banner and flash free root page, it provides the following content to complement the company's bricks and mortar business.

## Links to aircraft inventory

Airplane inventory is broken into two sections, piston and turbine; each section has a list of available aircraft hyperlinked to a detailed page describing the plane and its accessories.

At the bottom of the list is a link to a client “finance application” for pre-approval. The current finance rates are clearly published in a sliding scale of increased purchase amount.

Pages are rich in pictures providing multiple views of the plane.

## Buying aircraft

This page supplies a form for local printing of a Pre-Purchase Questionnaire for buying aircraft. The form is not filled on-line but meant to be faxed back by the seller.

## Services

A page displays the 800 number and the products serviced, here should have been a service email address, or one for each service specialty.

## Avionics

An appropriate email link is provided while their FAA endorsements and certifications are clearly identified.

Links to all suppliers are displayed on this page.

The bottom part of the avionics frame also has a promotional banner linked to the supplier of the avionic.

## Links to engines and engine components

These links refer to the affiliate company, which claims cost plus 10% margin on engines and components; it too is clean and informative with 800 phone access and email address.

## Company contacts

The site has clear identification of the company, 800 number, fax, local phone numbers, sales email addresses and the company mailing address.

## Policy, Payment, Security

### Policy

The aircraft sales and service business

The aircraft business is governed by FAA airworthiness regulations established by the manufacturer of the craft and type certified by the FAA.

An FAA certified service shop is obligated and empowered to enforce and report annual aircraft airworthiness, typically 5 logs are maintained for each aircraft (airframe, power plant, propeller, avionics and flight log).

FAA policy is adhered to and enforced by employees or contractors licensed to endorse airworthiness to FAR [7] guidelines. This dictates a strict documentation trail of anything performed and installed on an aircraft.

The site clearly identifies the company endorsements, authorizations and certifications, and has a clear policy of customer satisfaction as expressed by return guarantees.

## Payment

A client credit application is provided for clients, no attempt is made to capture payment on the web site. The company takes all major credit cards when orders are placed over the 800 phone line. Funds transfers to their bankers JP Morgan are fully supported and they take payment by mail.

## Security

FrontPage extensions provide read-only and directory level security. Considering this site is primarily static, the existing security strategy will suffice.

# Technology

## Capabilities

### Hosting

The company is co-hosted on an Apache server supporting FrontPage extensions and full control of email pop3 and smtp services. The platform supports most database engines and scripters [6].

### Documents and content

Blank contract forms and are served as HTML or Adobe pdf documents, both are intended for local printing and manual filling. Document delivery is left to the discretion of the client (fax, scanned and emailed, mailed).

None of the domain content is served under secure pages (SSL).

Pages are static and are subject to update when a new aircraft enters inventory or one is sold out of inventory.

### B2B

The company transacts B2B with most of its suppliers (avionics, engines and Cessna).

### FAA

The FAA also supports web-based airworthiness fillings [3] and maintains a database of incidents and airworthiness directives.

## The Industry

The aviation industry is highly regulated by the FAA.

### Ethics

To a large extent, ethics and social responsibility are directly linked to issues of airworthiness and safety regarding the interpretation of FAR and the authorizations granted to the AMO (Approved Maintenance Organization [8]).

The seller and maintainer of aircraft simply cannot fake it; intrinsic to the regulations is the enforcement by highly qualified licensed FAA individuals extensively supported by document trails (logs) and approvals.

### Van Bortel business politic

There is a clear expression of “the contented customer” and “quality aircraft” on the site, which is re-enforced by open published contracts; one gets the impression of the importance of client retention as the body politic. This is supported by a liberal return policy and a clear knowledge of loss risk at the outset of the aircraft purchase.

Inventoried aircraft have multiple picture views with detailed sub-system and accessory descriptions.

The site supports this with journal authored clips from notable contributors in the industry.

## Summary analysis

### The business

#### Aircraft

Van Bortel Aircraft Inc's focus is clearly the remarketing of Cessna aircraft. It seems shortages of 100 and 200 series products have moved the company towards sales of dual engine and turbine craft.

The present content presentation seems appropriate for this business model.

#### Service and parts

Service is an activity supporting aircraft sales; its ownership of Air Power Inc represents a costs advantage to power plant work. Selling parts and components for aircraft requires manual document processing and direct contact with the client.

This area needs improvement.

#### Payment

Airplanes and their ownership have big-ticket item costs and expenses. It's questionable whether e-Commerce sales and payment are viable, pilots will visit and fly the plane before making a commitment, so the handling of payment is appropriate in that the personal contact is necessary.

## Recommendations

### Contracts and applications

It would seem appropriate in the paperless society to not require the internet user the necessity of printing before filling forms then the subsequent faxing or mailing of them.

Forms should be filled interactively and submitted if possible through the client machine for authentication. For reasons of privacy, these forms should be served under SSL.

### Service enquiries

There should be a secure form for client service enquiries, this form should be directed to someone in the company responsible for this activity, if possible these forms should be assigned a reference sequence.

### Parts enquiries

There should be a secure form for parts enquiries, this form should be directed to someone in the company responsible for this activity, if possible these forms should be assigned a reference sequence.

### General craft sales feedback

A general secure comment form would be useful for general enquiry.

## References

- [1] The Cessna story - <http://cessna.com/story/milestones/index.chtml>
- [2] Liability Analysis - <http://www.meyersaircraft.com/Common/Market%20&%20Liability%20Analysis.html>
- [3] Aviation XML repository - <http://www.jouve.com/News/arbortext.html>
- [4] Van Bortel quality - <http://www.vanbortel.com/story/gaflyer.htm>
- [5] Air Power Inc. - <http://www.factorycylinders.com/>
- [6] SBC webhosting - <http://webhosting.com/pages/shared/unixpack.shtml>
- [7] FAA FAR - <http://www2.faa.gov/fsdo/tpa/certif.html>
- [8] FAA AMO - <http://www2.faa.gov/avr/iasa/part6.doc>

[Remarks to my KIT mailbox](#)