

Re: top ten reasons there'll be faster progress

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.space.policy/2006-06/msg00890.html>

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 - *Date:* Mon, 26 Jun 2006 19:29:21 GMT
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On Mon, 26 Jun 2006 18:46:11 GMT, in a place far, far away, throopw@xxxxxxxxxx (Wayne Throop) made the phosphor on my monitor glow in such a way as to indicate that:

: Joe Strout <joe@xxxxxxxxxx>
: – Flight rate. So far, about 500 humans have ever been in space.
: Virgin Galactic plans to fly about 500 passengers per year. Manned
: space launches currently happen at a rate of about half a dozen
: (launches, not people) per year; Virgin will be flying more than once
: per week. And of course, VG will not be the only game in town; Space
: Adventures also seems pretty credible to me in their plans for
: suborbital tourism. So in a few years, we're looking at a flight rate
: orders of magnitude higher than what we have now. Even if this is
: suborbital rather than orbital, this will result in a much faster
: feedback & revision cycle, and so faster progress.

My problem with this one is that you can revise and improve suborbital flight all you want, and you're still no farther along than the X15 was, in terms of basic capability. Is there some reason to think this will spill over to orbital capability?

Yes.

Suborbital will gradually increase its speed and altitude to the point that it becomes orbital, in a more natural progression than occurred with the unnatural jump to Apollo, which was a cost-is-no-object response to the needs of the Cold War.

: – Once the cold war rivalry as justification for space development
: evaporated, the space community seized on science as its raison
: d'etre. This was a mistake; space science is almost entirely pure
: research, and there isn't much money in that (in the short term
: anyway);

My problem with this is that there has been lots of money to be made for less costly launch capability for some time. Slots for comm satellites,

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weather satellites, mapping satellites, and on and on.

Not really. For the most part, launch costs were not significant drivers of those projects to demand lower ones.

Projects like

Iridium might have been profitable if the costs of keeping the satellites up and supplying more were less.