

## Re: Orbital X-Prize?

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"Bootstrap Bill" <wrcousert@yahoo.com> writes:

- > *What if Bill Gates were to offer \$1 billion to the first person to achieve*
- > *orbital flight twice in one week using a fully reusable space craft. Could*
- > *it be done in less than ten years and without any government assistance?*

\$1 billion? With no doubt, yes. Even the usual suspects could do that. Fly a person twice to orbit, hah. Easy as a piece of cake if you have a billion to throw at that. Well, not exactly easy, but doable. At least when you have a business plan after doing it twice. (Not very different than the X-Prize which is not exactly rewarding when you're just after the \$10 million, even for Scaled Composites)

Now, if you'd add "...and do something useful there, like dock to a space station, keep it running, fly more than twice (like, 100 times), keep astronauts trained for the flights, keep the infrastructure running, prepare for EVA, have some redundancy, do real science (or whatever you want to do there), etc", I could express some doubt. Maybe 10 or 100 billion?

I'm a bit surprised that there are adventures proposed for private entities which wouldn't get NASA *\*any\** budget at all. Must be the thrill factor, which is not granted to NASA that easy.

To be honest, for a next X-Prize I would propose an Atlantic-Prize. Have a reusable craft go from the continental US to Europe (and/or reverse in one week) via a ballistic flight. This is (much) more demanding than the X-Prize, but still quite less than orbit. It could mean competition between european and US companies. And it could even be somewhat useful, since a joyride by going up and down is one thing, but to be able to fly from New York to London in 1 hour is appealing to the very rich maybe enough to spent lots of money on it, even after the first two flights have been accomplished. Don't forget to give them astronaut's wings. This could scale up a bit more than going up and down.

Jochem

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"A designer knows he has arrived at perfection not when there is no longer anything to add, but when there is no longer anything to take away."  
- Antoine de Saint-Exupery