

AVSIM Commercial Utility Review

Flight Simulator Graphics Solutions



Product Information

Publisher: [FS-GS](#)

Description: A service company that can help clients get the most out of their computer and the flight simulator experience.

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NA

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NA

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MSFS 2004

Reviewed by: [Matt Clement](#) AVSIM Staff Reviewer

Introduction

Let's be honest for a minute. Flight Simulator, for many of us, is as much about the tweaking as it is about the flying. Not everyone is blessed with the latest and greatest supercomputer from Alienware or Falcon Northwest. And those that are blessed, are still finding themselves scouring the forums trying to figure out how to get their simulator to run at peak performance. For those that are still scratching by with a 1.8 PIII, the path to Flight Simulator 'nirvana' becomes a true test in frustration, and for many, failure.

For 3 years, starting with the introduction of FS2002, I fell into that first group. After struggling for 3 months to get FS2002 to run on a 1.3 Pentium 3, I took the plunge and spent \$2300 on the best hardware available at the time. On paper it was a beauty (by 2003 standards), a 2.8 Gig Pentium IV with an ATI 9700 Pro graphics card. I could hardly wait to get my new baby home and show FS2002 who was boss. But low and behold,

FS2002 wasn't ready just yet to be conquered. Even on what I thought was a dream machine (remember now, 2003) I was still plagued with all our FS favorites—blurries, jaggies, stuttering, the list went on and on. I spent a week trying to fix things on my own before diving head first into the forum universe, searching for answers. I spent another month trying one fix after another and still no joy. I finally gave up and bought a RC airplane.

My time in the RC hobby lasted about 3 months, before an incident involving a bad engine and a train put me out of business. I now had a decision to make—spend 4 or 5 hundred on a new plane, or give FS2002 another try. The boss informed me that the next RC plane I bought had better be free, so goodbye RC Flying Club, hello FS2002. I knew that more forum diving was ahead, but I had high hopes that after being out for more than a year someone had figured out how to get FS2002 to really hum. During my hunt, a friend of mine who was familiar with my plight told me about a guy who had totally changed his flight simulator experience. He claimed that he now ran the sim with 100% traffic, and every slider maxed out while getting 100% smooth performance. I would have had my doubts, if not for the fact that this was a guy I trusted. I was directed to the website of a company called Flight Simulator Graphics Solutions (fs-gs.com). Testimonials similar to my friends could be found in abundance right on the front page. While accolades from everyday simmers are one thing, it's even more impressive when folks from well-known groups like Aerosoft, Lago, and I3D are also singing the praises of this service. With my interest peaked, I sent an email application for service. A few hours later, a gentleman contacted me, Michael Greenblat. We set up a time to do a phone interview, and I was told to be sure to have several hours available so that all the bases could be covered. The transformation was about to begin!

Looking For Answers (in all the wrong places)

The biggest problem I had in finding answers on forums was that more often than not, the answers were wrong. A lot of guesswork is involved when you are trying out other people's ideas, because we all have very different and unique systems.

When you consider the millions of combinations of processors, video cards, motherboards, etc. that exist, it becomes easier to understand why what works for Joe, will do nothing for Tom. The other problem is that while forum gurus may have their hearts in the right place, many of them just aren't qualified to offer technical advice. It all comes down to a lot of guessing.

Working with FSGS eliminates all of this guesswork for you. Michael spent years as a Microsoft engineer and network developer learning how components work together, and figuring out how to get each piece of an individual system working together as efficiently as possible. It is also worth noting that Michael rarely suggests a client replace any part of their system, but focuses instead on how to get the best performance out of what the client has, because often times they didn't know what their system was actually capable of.

I spent a long time trying endless combinations of sliders in FS2002, trying to get that

perfect blend of beauty and performance. The most surprising part for me during Michael's service was when he told me to "max every slider" in the FS2002 menu. I replied that he must have been joking. He wasn't! 2 minutes later I was enjoying the Seattle area scenery in a way I never thought possible. No jaggies, no stuttering, no blurries, and beautifully sharp visuals—this was a whole new simulator! So what's the secret? Read on...

System Unification

The key to the success of Michael's service is a process called System Unification. Michael provides a very detailed account on his website of how he designed this process, which I won't attempt to reproduce verbatim, but it goes something like this: Every computer, no matter what category it falls under, has a certain amount of untapped potential. Most of you are probably thinking, "Overclocking", but system unification has nothing to do with frying your video card.

Michael's process doesn't put more strain on your system, but actually releases undue strain and allows your computer to operate at 'peak efficiency'. It is impossible to disclose too much without giving it away, but needless to say, what Michael does isn't something you are likely to find on a forum and would involve many years of researching, testing, failing, and most of important of all—not flying. It is also important to note that Michael's method isn't to just tweak FS9, or mess with your BIOS settings. Think of it as an Extreme Home Makeover, without the bulldozers!

He also goes beyond simple things like driver updates and removing spyware and introduces you to parts of your computer you likely never knew existed, leading you by the hand every step of the way. Michael works through each and every part of your system; changing and fixing items that only pertain to your individual system—which is the most important part. There is no single set way to implement System Unification. Michael couldn't post a 'How To' thread and expect folks to have any success. This is because for each unique machine, there is a unique solution. In fact, my first call to Michael simply involved me telling him what my system specs where—it wasn't until he had researched the particulars of my hardware that we began working out the kinks in the second call. Once the actual work begins, Michael's service becomes a true course in computer design and the windows environment.

You could plunk down a few hundred bucks at your local community college in a computer course and not learn half of what Michael teaches you in a single evening—no kidding. It's this knowledge that you gain that is perhaps why Michael's service is the best value of any FS product on the market. Remember the old Chinese proverb about teaching a man how to fish? Well the same is true here. Once you know what to do, you can apply Michael's work to your machine even after a reformat. And of course, Michael offers lifetime support—so long as you don't make any serious hardware changes (like buying a new computer for instance).

Getting help with new versions of flight simulator are included and when FS2004 came out, Michael was ready and willing to help me whip the new kid into shape. Michael is also available to his clients whenever help is needed with installing a major new add-on, such

as the recently released Ground Environment. This keeps clients from having to spend their flight time in a forum, looking for answers that may or may not do anything for them.

A Strong Guarantee

After using Michael's service, my first thought was "It's a miracle". Michael is quick to point out that what he does is no miracle—he can't turn water into wine or get 30 FPS in FS2004 out of your Dad's old 286 either. What he can do is ensure that your computer is absolutely, without a doubt operating as fast and efficiently as it possibly can.

This means that even a relatively old computer like mine (3 years old last month) is running FS2004 at a level that I'm absolutely thrilled with. I wish that there was an easy way to show you the improvements I'm talking about, but without seeing it firsthand it is very difficult to describe the total transformation that has occurred since my first meeting with Michael.

Test System

2.8 GHz Pentium 4
Nvidia GeForce 6800
1024 Mb Ram
SoundBlaster Audigy
Thrustmaster Top Gun II

The only major change I have made after 3 years is the switch from my old 9700 Pro to a stock Nvidia 6800. Even still, I average 25-30 FPS with Active Sky, Ultimate Traffic, all of Flight1's scenery enhancement products, and usually FS Passengers running while flying the Aeroworx B200 King Air out of KPDX. The best part is, if you were to see my sim—and the FPS counter wasn't visible, you would swear that you were looking at 40 FPS.

At major airports, like KSEA, my FPS counter shows the usual drop to 21 FPS or so—but again you would never know by looking at it the scenery going by. I wish I could better explain this curiosity of Michael's service, but seeing is believing, and Michael won't charge you a dime if you are left unconvinced (though I doubt you will be). That wasn't a typo; if you aren't satisfied with the FS-GS services, you are not charged.

That may sound like one of those late night television commercials; you know the "Try for 30 days and return for a full refund, etc" types that we've all seen. But in this case, if you are not satisfied, you simply don't owe FS-GS a thing. Likewise, if Michael feels he cannot help you get FS2004 running on that 900 Meg P II, he'll tell you upfront and not waste your time with false hopes and snake oil. Michael is confident in doing this because after working with 300+ clients over the last 3 years, he's rarely had a dissatisfied customer. So that leaves even the most skeptical among you with little excuse to not give FS-GS a try.

Conclusion

I've tried very hard to not sound too sensational while writing this review, but I must say that I've never run across a product that has totally revolutionized my flight sim experience as FS-GS has. Pretty scenery and complex aircraft are fantastic, but not if they are going by or flying at the speed of slow.

Michael's service will at first seem quite expensive, going currently for about \$70. But when you consider the lifetime support offered (no more forum diving) and the new way you will be enjoying FS2004, you will consider it quite a bargain down the road. Also consider that Michael will literally spend 5-6 hours with you, just in the initial session.

Part of Michael's service is resolving hardware and software issues that can, in turn, affect flight simulator performance. Most major manufacturers charge for an hour of time what Michael is charging you for the life of your current setup. Add in the many hours that he's available to help you after the main service, and \$70 is not just a bargain, it's dirt-cheap. Two smooth years later, I certainly feel that I have recouped my investment and then some.

As long as your computer can meet the minimum requirements and you are able to leave what you think you know at the door, FS-GS can help you. Another major plus to the service is the benefits you reap not just in FS2004 but in everything you do on your machine. You'll notice that the internet is faster, the machine boots up quicker, other games run better, and in general that your system just hums!

Applications for service can be found on their website and potential clients are normally contacted within a few hours. I can't recommend FS-GS enough, and suggest you check them out at www.FS-GS.com.

What I Like About FS-GS

- Transformed my 3 year old machine into better than new condition
- Wealth of knowledge gained about FS2004 and Windows XP
- Very novice friendly step by step instructions
- Enjoying Flight Simulator at never-before-seen levels of fluidity and detail
- Lifetime support for machine in current configuration
- No-charge guarantee if not satisfied with service

What I Don't Like About FS-GS

- Absolutely nothing!

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FS-GS

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