

Bright Engineering develops long-term growth opportunities in aerospace and defence

Lancashire precision manufacturer Bright Engineering is currently preparing for a busy period as the 2024 Farnborough International Air show looms large on the industry calendar.

Bright will be again exhibiting on the Farnborough Aerospace Consortium (FAC) pavilion, a formula which has worked extremely well for the business on several previous occasions. Providing valuable access to the heart of the exhibition, and with its own dedicated area of the stand, participation with FAC allows Bright the opportunity to scope out new leads and opportunities, and critically a base for hosting meetings with existing customers who will be at the show.

Sales turnover increase by 10% and USA exports up by 20%

The sales strategy for Bright Engineering in the last couple of years has been threefold: firstly latching onto opportunities in aerospace as the sector enjoys a sure and steady recovery. Secondly, the growth of defence opportunities has been significant – Bright having seen a major upturn in the sector equating to roughly 10% of turnover. Finally, diversification across a number of manufacturing sectors remains a sure way of ensuring growth and stability.

Bright counts a number of advanced manufacturing sectors among its client base, including green energies, motorsport, semiconductor, science and laboratory. Sales director Steve Amey comments: "This deliberate diversification across our target industries, and particular efforts to back up our core turnover with new and emerging opportunities has been key to Bright's ongoing growth and stability. In fact we expect to increase sales turnover this year by a further 10% and grow our exports to the USA by around 20% compared to existing levels."

Significant investment in new technology

Over the last two years Bright Engineering has made multiple investments to strengthen its core offer and guarantee a robust quality offering for customers. This started with a major investment in the inspection department, doubling the floor space and modernising the facility.

With a view to making its inspection offering more data-driven and having information on tap for its Tier 1 and OEM customers, Bright invested in the latest measuring equipment, featuring Bluetooth integration and dovetailing capability with its Progress Plus ERP system.

Investment in equipment from companies like Keyence has been most appreciated by the client base, as it provides Bright with the opportunity to measure multiple parts at the same time, compile data quickly, efficiently and accurately, and assist customers with first article validation and any technical queries that arise following assembly of the product.

Steve Amey continues: "Investments in quality technology have a real and immediate impact on customers. Machining centres



costing £300,000 are key to the operation but customers are comfortably familiar with them.

"What customers really appreciate is a supplier willing to invest directly in quality, how we measure, trace, track and pack the product to ensure its conformity. We have had multiple large customers tell us that our inspection facilities are more impressive than their own. We are really proud of what we have created."

Bright achieves BAE Systems approval

In fact Bright Engineering was able to demonstrate its capability so effectively that it was recently awarded BAE Systems approval, an achievement that is not regular or commonplace for most medium-sized subcontractors. As a fairly new, but highly capable supplier to BAE Systems Air Sector, Bright is well positioned for future growth and supporting new programmes.

Bright is proud of its ongoing commitment to apprenticeships and it counts a number of current trainees, and recently time-served engineers as contributors to BAE Systems projects. The business has also supported a number of young people through degree apprenticeships.

Director Jon Hoyle explains: "Operating our business in the Lancashire aerospace belt brings with it a number of opportunities, as well as competition, but it keeps us on our toes. It's easy as small business owners to say we can't compete and we can't offer decent opportunities, but we definitely can."

On a number of occasions now we've taken advantage of the Apprenticeship Levy system to provide high quality, funded degree programmes for our employees, and everybody wins. We get motivated, capable individuals who can support our growth and get involved in exciting aerospace prototype projects."

The company has also recently invested in 3D printing and intends to use it to streamline its fixture manufacture for both CNC machining and inspection. Bright believes this is yet another example of a modest investment having a sizeable positive impact on efficiency, as well as improving customer experience.