

At a recent AEA International Convention & Trade Show, AEA President Paula Derks asked member companies the following question: What's working for you? Derks challenged AEA members to share their success stories, best practices and ideas that are working for their respective companies. This article is part of a series that highlights how AEA member companies recognized challenging economic circumstances, and how they responded and overcame them.

What's Working?

Business initiatives that are elevating companies to success

STORY BY THOMAS INMAN

Passion fuels Constant Aviation's growth in Cleveland

Constant Aviation of Cleveland, Ohio, started in 2005 with the purchase of an existing maintenance organization tied to a fixed base operator. At that time, the company employed about 20 people, working in maintenance and avionics. Working for the company is passion, which allowed it to grow at a double digit-rate every year for a decade.

Constant Aviation outgrew the available space at Hopkins International Airport and started an operation at Cuyahoga County Airport to the east of Cleveland. The Hopkins facility specializes in large airframes, whereas the Cuyahoga facility specializes in small- and mid-sized aircraft.

In the anniversary year, the company had grown to more than 500 employees. By 2015, Constant Aviation had added a multitude of capabilities, and in Cleveland, had grown from one hangar at Cleveland Hopkins, to nine facilities in Cleveland operating over two area airports.

During the anniversary year, through the Constant Aviation Rotable Exchange, the company added a 15,000-square-foot showhouse facility that allowed it to increase the available parts inventory by an additional \$5 million, bringing total inventory to more than \$45 million with more than 50,000 line items. The new showhouse became the primary location of the main distribution facility and has a state-of-the-art inventory system.

The mobile AOG team expanded that year. The company completed the first installation of Rockwell Collins Venue Cabin Management System in the Legacy 600, added a Midwest regional sales manager, a new AOG operations manager, entered an agreement with Liebherr-Aerospace for support of the landing gear installed on the Embraer Legacy 600/650/Shuttle Executive Jet family of aircraft, named a Bombardier program manager, began offering a PMA'd kit to reinforce Beechjet 400A/XP steps, signed a multi-aircraft installation agreement, redesigned the website, and added a vice president of AOG operations. The





*ABOVE: An AOG crew arrives to do their work.
RIGHT: A Citation gets an inspection.*



anniversary year accomplishments provide plenty of evidence of the passion with which Constant Aviation operates.

Throughout the years, the company invested in itself with passion, adding a larger back shop, composite, and interior shops; however, none is more prevalent than the investment made into engineering and avionics.

“I am personally and intimately involved,” said Steve Maiden, president and chief executive officer. “We focus on customers and employees who are the front line with customers.”

Backing up Maiden’s claim is the NorthCoast 99 Award. Earned in September 2015, the award recognizes Constant Aviation as one of the best workplaces in Northeast Ohio. By winning this award, Constant was recognized as creating an extraordinary workplace that attracts and retains top performers. The company has won this award in multiple years.

Maiden believes Constant Aviation’s passionate focus on customers and employees is the main reason the company came out of the Great Recession in a much better position than when it entered. He said it’s been a “luxury to grow.” The focus on customers resulted in becoming the company focusing on niche platforms.

“We are not somebody for everybody,” Maiden said. “We have dedicated hangars of excellence for our niche platform types, and we are industry leaders for the niche.”

Within the niche is Beechjet. The company holds and supports many STCs on that platform. The company has completed many retrofits and knows the airframe extremely well. Constant Aviation has teamed with Nextant to share unique capabilities.

“More so than any other MRO out there, we want to be a partner for owners and operators,” Maiden said. “That has allowed

us to grow as much as we have by connecting with the Beechjet community.”

This year, along with Nextant, the company offered a Beechjet Operators Conference in Cleveland.

“We are pleased with the result of our first Beechjet Operators Conference,” explained Jay Heublein, executive vice president for Nextant. “We had more than 75 attendees present to hear discussions on a wide range of topics, including operational items, future upgrades, mandates, and tips for maintenance. We also are thankful to our vendors for coming out and adding to the experience.”

“The event was such a success that we want to make it more accessible,” Maiden added. “We are excited to announce that we will be hosting similar conferences at our facilities in Las Vegas and Birmingham. The positive reception of this event is encouraging; we feel that it will help the industry learn more about the Beechjet.”

Shortly after the conference, Constant Aviation rolled out a 400A/XP/CT ADS-B Out upgrade. It is offering a low-cost solution for those looking to add ADS-B equipment to their Beechjet 400A/XP/XT.

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Constant's ADS-B Out package includes TDR-94D transponders (two each), an upgrade to GPS-4000S (if required), and the addition of an annunciator light in the cockpit. Package prices vary based on the aircraft's current configuration and range from \$34,900 to \$68,900. This installation can be accomplished at any of Constant's three facilities or on-site at the customer's location with a downtime of two to three days.

"We are excited to offer a solution that allows the ability to meet the regulatory requirements as well as prepares the aircraft for future upgrades, such as LPV or Pro Line 21," said John Wasmund, avionics product development manager for Constant Aviation. "Additionally, Constant is offering a credit toward a Pro Line 21 upgrade when an ADS-B installation is purchased. The credit will provide 100 percent of the amount spent on the ADS-B installation toward the upgrade to Pro Line 21. The upgrade can be done at the same time as the ADS-B installation, or if the customer chooses, at a later date. It's a smart



A Beechjet flight deck at Constant Aviation

decision to invest in these modifications sooner rather than later because the deadline is fast approaching, and scheduling will become increasingly difficult the closer we get to the end of 2019."

Constant Aviation also brings passion to dedicated maintenance support. The company committed to nonstop aircraft maintenance by providing anytime support during the Republican National Convention in July.

During the convention, three airports in Cleveland were supported by Constant's on-site 24/7 AOG division. Two of those locations are outside the 10-mile security zone for flight

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travel, meaning that flying to these airports had the added advantage of avoiding any interruptions caused by the temporary flight restriction in place for the week. Having a mobile support team for aircraft maintenance at these locations helped ensure fewer interruptions for travelers. In addition, dedicated hospitality areas were available for crews making the trek to the city.

“It was an exciting time for the city of Cleveland, and we didn’t want that excitement to be diminished by any maintenance needs,” stated Paul Witt, vice president of AOG operations. “We carefully planned our service for the convention to accommodate guests and created a smooth operation for the air traffic coming in and out of Cleveland for the entire week.”

“We got a lot of press and phone calls regarding the RNC,” Maiden said. “That is kind of a walk in the park in our everyday business.”

With 55 AOG technicians supporting nearly 20 main hubs, the company is supporting major events on any given weekend. Typically, the AOG maintenance crews pre-located for large-fleet customers. During the RNC, lots of private travel came in and out of Cleveland, and the company saw a great opportunity to set up at surrounding airports to support owners and 135 fleet operators.

“We’ve been fortunate to have this growth over the 10 years, and yet we’ve grown conservatively through word of mouth and customer satisfaction,” Maiden said. “Constant Aviation is extremely passionate toward team members, and we have a unique culture to provide exceptional customer service, which has given us the opportunity to grow and reach more customers. We want to be here for the long term, being innovative and focusing on customer service.”

Indeed, passion has fueled Constant Aviation’s growth. □

To learn more about Constant Aviation, visit constantaviation.com.



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10200 West York Street
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Tel: 316-522-4981
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