

**FLYBE FAILURE** WHAT NOW FOR UK REGIONS?

# AIR

## INTERNATIONAL



MILITARY | COMMERCIAL | BUSINESS | UNMANNED | ENGINES | SYSTEMS & FUTURE TECHNOLOGY



# SHUT DOWN

## COVID-19 INDUSTRY BATTLES ON



**GERMAN HEAVY-LIFT** SIKORSKY GOES HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH BOEING





# Going Digital From End to End

Digital transformation integrates complex technology into all areas of a business, changing how it functions and delivering value to customers. AJW Group's chief information officer **Han-Ley Tang** and chief sales officer **Tom de Geytere** explain how it works within the aviation spare parts sector.



Aftermarket service providers of aviation components have long understood the need to help their customers improve efficiency. Much of the focus to date has been on making incremental engineering improvements to gradually optimise processes and shave costs. This means making technological transformations and investing in digitisation.

The ordering process is the first area where digitisation takes effect. In general, aviation is a legacy industry, so changing existing systems necessitates understanding the processes used by different customers. This is a challenge for any outsource expert. So before implementing any changes, AJW talks to a large number of stakeholders to fully understand the dynamics of the business and consider the technical implications of any proposals. The aim is to ensure it puts in place a modern, flexible and extensible set of application programming interfaces (APIs) – a standardised way for applications to 'talk' to external systems – that will reduce transaction friction and ensure everything interacts smoothly and efficiently from

end to end. This means challenging the process from the moment an order is logged into the system, including the information exchanged, through to how the order is fulfilled at the conclusion.

Looking at its systems from the customer's perspective, AJW launched a new portal that is built on in-house technologies. It is responsive, interactive and mobile, as well as desktop-compatible, enabling clients to access their orders from their desks or on the go. It gives 24-hour interaction with customer service teams, 365 days per year, regardless of where you are in the world and with no transaction delay. Creating this portal has also enabled AJW to streamline all of the back-office processes – reworking the front end user input to be intuitive, quick to respond and transparent in showing process milestones. AJW has also gone a step further and offers the potential to directly integrate the clients' equipment with their software and core systems, so you can raise an order on your own system which automatically shows up on AJW's.

Developing these processes and migrating away from its legacy forerunners has involved years of planning and investment while

working with major customers such as easyJet and Bombardier to build, test, support and maintain it. As a result, these APIs can be implemented in any business in a matter of weeks. AJW's technology team can deliver proof-of-concept within two days, and develop a working integration in test mode within a week. It takes just a further week of full connectivity in a test system for the customer to approve – a process that would have taken as long as three months to deliver with the legacy system.

On the customers' side, AJW has added functionalities in the portal that allow for more collaboration and communication, stepping away from multiple exchanges of emails to using chat functions instead. The new interactive interface enables customers to check the status of their orders and their history with an operator in real time. This enhanced experience is faster and less prone to error, while ensuring that the data and process remain integrated. AJW has also generated precise time stamps to accurately measure how quickly it can respond to each customer, resolve an issue and measure success rates.

## Contracts and Trade

Coming back to the core business, AJW has two major streams, with transformation being planned the same way for both. Half of AJW's business is contracted: extremely process-driven with contractual obligations that are translated into systems. The second stream could be described as a fast-paced trading business that is operated on a more agile scale. It is managed on a deal-by-deal basis and is responsible for around 150,000 transactions each year. There is a contract flow with clear expectations and KPIs of what AJW needs to deliver, and there is also a non-contract flow called supply service, which trades components.

To deliver its tailored approach to these two distinctly different business lines, the company has developed information technology that profiles its engagement with the customer to deliver a consistent level of interaction, be it larger contracts or cross-selling opportunities. This allows AJW to both provide bespoke products and services to its customers or remain very basic if required, yet still offer its entire range. The technology

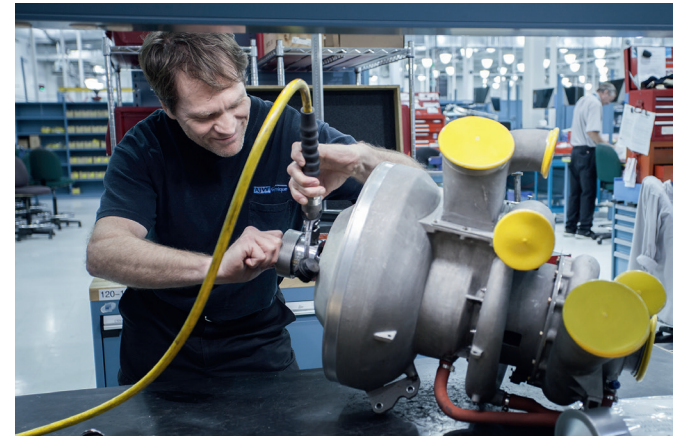
**AJW's new portal is built on in-house technologies. It is responsive, interactive and mobile as well as desktop-compatible, enabling clients to access their orders from their desks or on the go.**

is simple but gives each customer an ideal path to conclusion, driven by specific customer needs. The company can also tell clients about industry innovations, what is best in class, as well as preview upcoming products and explain their advantages. It aims to positively transform their customers' journey from a request or bid request to the delivery of a part.

On top of improving the order process, AJW has updated its existing systems to show customers and parts holders the status of transactions at any stage from enquiry to delivery. Effective analytics have also been hugely useful on a 360° basis, as AJW has used the data to plan and prioritise orders, looking at historic patterns on aircraft parts that need repair and maintenance. Beyond the focus on customer experience, a commitment has also been made to render the process as near paperless as possible.

Further digital transformations are planned at AJW in the next year or so, with a focus on further integration within its customers' systems. This has been implemented with major customers, but proposals are being developed with smaller businesses too, with a consequent array of technical and cultural implications. Within a year, the company's ultimate objective is to give the customer almost an instantaneous answer to their question.

AJW has tackled digital transformation from end to end, looking at internal processes and culture, as well as the systems and processes of customers and partners. By identifying lessons learned and taking smart, timely, well-costed and sometimes bold actions in recent years, the company has been able to shape its business to serve the aviation industry for years to come. **AI**



**ABOVE and TOP:** Maintenance, repair and overhaul of countless specialist components is undertaken at AJW Techniques in Montreal, Canada.

**OPPOSITE:** The end-to-end digitalised package begins from the moment an order is logged into the system through to fulfillment.

**BELOW:** Traditional engineering practices continue alongside high-tech processes at the warehouse of AJW Group's UK headquarters.

