

Inflight

www.inflight-online.com

September/October 2022
Volume 13 / Issue 5

Memorable moments

Getting the IFE content right

Guarding the gates

The evolving world of cybersecurity

The wow factor

Virgin Atlantic's new A330neo unveiled

90
YEARS



1932 - 2022



Components of success

Christopher Whiteside, Chairman and CEO of AJW Group, speaks with *Inflight* Editor Satu Dahl to share the highlights of the company's impressive 90 years in operation.

Component parts, repair and supply chain solutions provider AJW Group is a truly global business which today has operational hubs and local offices across Africa, Asia Pacific, China, CIS, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America. And this year is a very special year for the company – it is celebrating its 90-year anniversary.

Christopher Whiteside, Chairman and CEO of AJW Group says there have been many highlights during the 90 years of the company's existence, and one of its biggest achievements is surviving and growing in challenging external environments.

“The business was part of the war effort from the early 1940s, when Anthony James Walter’s airfield and business were taken over by the War Office,” he explains.

“In the early 1950s his property was returned, and Walter moved to dealing military surplus, mainly DC3, aka Dakota, aircraft parts – the plane accredited with the introduction of commercial passenger flights.

“The growing business was based at Gatwick Airport – back then nothing but a grass strip without a paved surface in sight.”

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

AJW Group has grown significantly over time, and during Whiteside’s tenure of more than 30 years the company’s first flight hour programme in the late 1990s was a pivotal contract. It marked a new era for the business

“

We pride ourselves on the personal touch with our sights on a future where we can use digitalisation to our customers’ benefit and free our people from most of their administration.

Christopher Whiteside, Chairman and CEO, AJW Group

”

and subsequently secured a deal to support Europe’s leading low-cost carrier.

“Ten years ago, in 2012, we opened our purpose-built warehouse and campus-style office space in Slinfold,” Whiteside says, explaining that 2012 was also the year the company launched AJW Technique in Montreal, moving into the maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) space and joining more of the dots in the supply chain.

“Those were both incredibly proud and transitional moments,” he says.

“More recently, on the back of the pandemic, AJW Technique Europe and AJW Technique Interiors came to market and we also launched our online retail space, AJW eventory, last year, which is going from strength to strength.

“Just last month, we won a major deal with JetSMART Airlines and extended a power-by-the-hour support agreement with one of our long-standing customers in LATAM. The future looks as bright as our 90-year history.”

The company has naturally evolved from its beginnings, as Whiteside recounts.

“In 1932, Anthony James Walter – Jim – set off from the south of England to compete in a yacht race between California and Hawaii. He journeyed six weeks over sea and land only to discover that the yacht race had been cancelled due to bad weather.

“While staying near Van Nuys Airport in Los Angeles, he decided that if he couldn’t race he would learn to fly. He took to the skies in a Piper Cub and, once qualified, decided to travel to the company HQ in Pennsylvania.

Joining the dots: AJW Group’s HQ in Slinfold, West Sussex. Right, the company moved into the MRO space in 2012 with the founding of AJW Technique.





Landmark: Christopher Whiteside officially opens AJW Technique's Component Repair and Overhaul facility in Montreal.

“He was granted an audience at the very top and asked if they would allow him to sell their planes back in England. As Jim visited the site in person, Piper granted him the

distribution rights for the whole of Europe.”

From those Piper days, AJW moved to military spares and, after continued growth, specialised in commercial aircraft, including

Vickers Viscount, BAC1-11 and later Airbus, Boeing and private jet fleets.

Whiteside adds: “At the beginning of my tenure, the bulk of our business was the supply of ad hoc parts, but we have evolved as integrators and supply chain enablers. We make a real difference to the efficiency of aviation due to the range of our experience and our agility.

“We pride ourselves on the personal touch with our sights on a future where we can use digitalisation to our customers’ benefit and free our people from most of their administration.

“Our vision of ‘transforming aviation efficiency’ is dynamic and reflects a philosophy of continuous improvement – agility in a fast-paced sector is a prerequisite for success.”

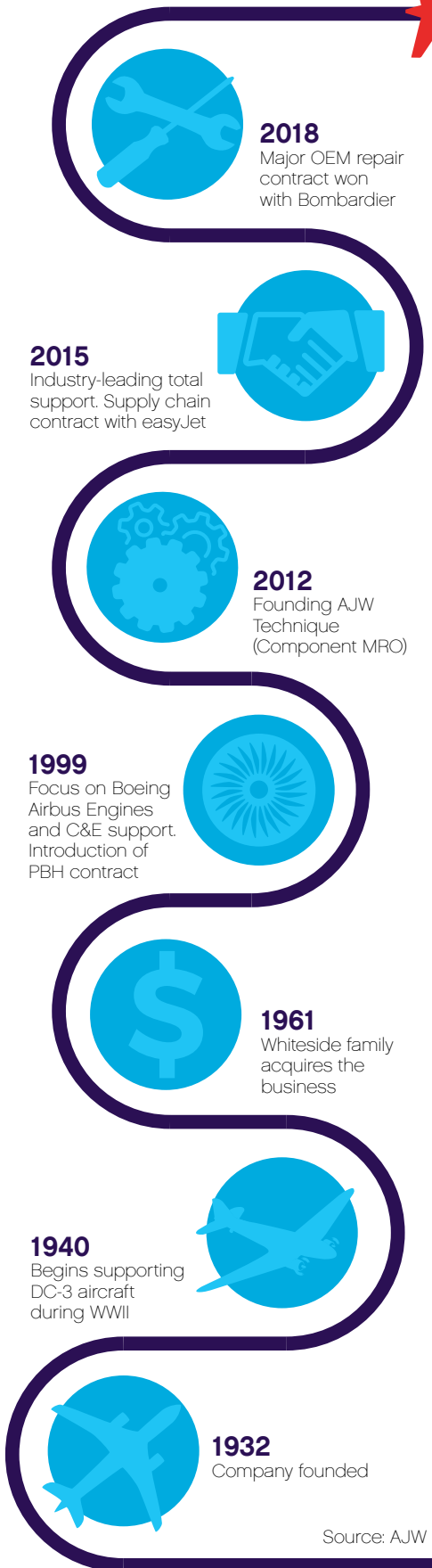
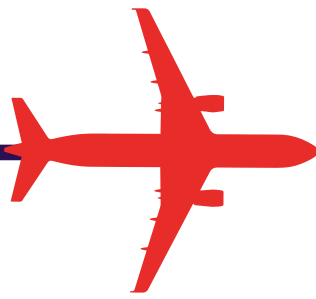
INNOVATION IN CABIN INTERIORS

Last year, AJW signed a 10-year partnership agreement with Autostop Aviation, the largest and most prolific seat cover manufacturer in Europe, launched AJW Technique Interiors,

**WORLD
AVIATION
FESTIVAL**

4 - 6 October 2022 | RAI, Amsterdam

BOOK NOW AND SAVE



2018
Major OEM repair contract won with Bombardier

2015
Industry-leading total support. Supply chain contract with easyJet

2012
Founding AJW Technique (Component MRO)

1999
Focus on Boeing Airbus Engines and C&E support. Introduction of PBH contract

1961
Whiteside family acquires the business

1940
Begins supporting DC-3 aircraft during WWII

1932
Company founded

Source: AJW

and exhibited for the first time at the Aircraft Interiors Expo in Hamburg in June.

The alliance between AJW and Autostop offers airlines an effective nose-to-tail interiors solution, extending a tried and tested supply chain, fulfilment and MRO service, promising excellent reductions in transportation costs and delays. So what exactly does the partnership entail?

“Airlines are laser-focused on driving down costs, boosting revenue and meeting the demand for sustainability,” says Whiteside. “This means that they are looking for cabin products that offer fuel savings through weight reduction, durability – offering a longer cabin life to reduce waste and cost and reducing their carbon footprint.”

As Whiteside tells it, AJW Technique Interiors delivers a fully tailored solution for the design, development and production of replacement seat covers in the revolutionary new synthetic leather, SkyLeather.

Designed by Autostop’s experts, SkyLeather is a vegan, eco-friendly material available in any colour and grain. Adapted to the exacting quality and compliance standards of the aviation industry, it is cost-effective, lightweight, and durable, as well as being soft to the touch, antimicrobial and easy to clean.

“As well as substantial cost savings, the 100% polyurethane material has low levels of

volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and is formulated to allow an easier fitting process for complex seat shapes – meaning seat covers stay the same shape and look freshly installed for longer,” says Whiteside.

Seat cover manufacturing, carpet kitting, headrest covers, literature pockets and life vest pouches are also on offer, along with unparalleled savings driven by economies of scale all delivered from one factory location, which offers reduced shipping and manufacturing costs and convenience for the operator.

Lean manufacturing and embedded Six Sigma principles mean seat covers are manufactured to a tolerance of 1mm and products are released with EASA (European Aviation Safety Authority) Form 1 certification. AJW Technique Interiors also enjoys active and full partnerships with EASA Part 21J and EASA Part 21G organisations to support any retrofit projects.

Whiteside adds: “Our plan to leverage our considerable experience within supply chain and the MRO markets by mounting a one-stop-shop, bespoke interiors offering onto the tried and tested template of world-class parent entity, AJW Technique in Montreal, has certainly driven a huge amount of interest in the world of interiors.”

NEW DYNAMIC

Regarding the latest developments for AJW when it comes to the MRO market, Whiteside notes that the last two years of sector turmoil have changed the dynamic in the industry.

Nose to tail: AJW Technique Interiors’s replacement seat covers use SkyLeather synthetic leather.





Using SkyLeather, AJW Technique Interiors delivers a fully tailored solution for the design, development and production of replacement seat covers.

“ We have come such a long way in 90 years and our focus has shifted to the next 10 and where we will be at our centenary. ”

**Christopher Whiteside,
Chairman and CEO, AJW Group**

“It is driving far closer strategic alliances between us and our airline, aircraft manufacturers, component OEM and MRO partners,” he says.

“Our prime objective is to deliver improved cost and reliability efficiencies for customers and strive for optimum efficiency and profitability whilst keeping our customers at the core of everything we do.

“That means working with partners that understand our business, exchange reciprocal work based on core competencies and collaborating to innovate and collectively expand.

“We manage a streamlined vendor supply chain of 60 primary repair workshops with 700 approved facilities and spend US\$400m annually on almost 100,000 repair orders.”

Whiteside says the company is rapidly expanding its services in North and South America and is delighted to welcome JetSMART and their growing fleet of A320 NEO and CEO aircraft to its flight hour programme solution.

“The signing of the Chilean-based ultra-low-cost carrier is testament to our outstanding customer relationships, founded on dependable turnaround time, cost, and quality, reinforced earlier this year as AJW Group was recognised as one of the top suppliers in the region during the ALTA CCMA & MRO

Conference. This strategic contract reinforces the expansion of our capabilities across the Americas and builds solidly on our continued success with key operators in the region.”

NEXT-GENERATION CAPABILITIES

AJW Technique Europe is set to expand into a series of other capabilities to complement the repair services offered at AJW Technique in Canada.

“With the accelerated replacement of ageing aircraft, we are focused on developing our next-generation equipment technical capabilities,” says Whiteside.

“Our investment in a sole distributorship agreement with Honeywell for the Boeing 737 MAX ADIRU, the A320NEO ADIRU and a suite of Boeing 787 components has done just that – allowing us to increasingly develop our in-house MRO capabilities at AJW Technique.

“The Honeywell product lines are current production aircraft types which are being delivered with a significant backlog of deliveries going forward which will require the support that the AJW Group can offer.”

Digital is very much a part of AJW’s core strategy to create value for the business and its customers.

“Our digital roadmap is reflective of industry trends and continuously iterating,” says Whiteside. “On the back end, we are

integrating solutions that are capturing tribal knowledge and facilitating training of new hires, especially as the industry faces growing concerns of retirement, skill gaps and recruitment difficulties.

“At AJW Technique, for instance, we are building a tablet application which encompasses the technician’s workflow with the goal of maximising component touch time.

“We have also explored asset tracking solutions using Bluetooth, RFID and ultra-wide-band technologies for tooling and unit tracking within the facilities which facilitate traceability and asset management.”

AJW is also far ahead in machine learning and artificial intelligence – the company has built dynamic pricing models, predictive sales and procurement forecasting tools, as well as manpower forecasting, and continues to pursue new discoveries in predictive maintenance through the use of machine learning algorithms, as well as blockchain.

“On the front end, our e-Marketplace presence continues to grow with new features to our customer portal and AJW eventory marketplace,” says Whiteside. “We have come such a long way in 90 years and our focus has shifted to the next 10 and where we will be at our centenary. We have strong foundations and ambitions that will keep AJW progressing for decades to come.” ■