

“WE MUST ACT NOW”

World Aero’s Phil Randell explains concerns for future generations of manpower in MRO

Attracting a fresh generation of talented workers into aviation maintenance is a concern for many MROs worldwide and an issue that’s likely to hamper growth plans, in particular of large organisations.

Recent generations have shied away from hands-on jobs, in favour of following more ‘white collar’ careers. Ups and downs in the aviation industry and the devastating effect of the pandemic has only exaggerated this.

I was fortunate to have been one of many who received a respected apprenticeship with the UK Ministry of Defence at A&AEE Boscombe Down, England, which set me up well for my career, then as a licenced engineer and eventually to wheel and brake MRO at World Aero.

However, like many other centres, this training school and its annual output of talented technicians has fallen away.

Aviation maintenance must be shown as an attractive, respected, interesting and potentially lucrative option to what have recently become more traditional career choices.

In talks I’ve given to young people, there has been a lot of talk of AI. Whilst World Aero and I are embracing the ideas that AI can bring to us and our industry, it’s plainly obvious that as it stands, there is no way for AI to replace the maintenance engineer.

Sure, it can offer guidance and assist with troubleshooting, but skilled human interaction will always be required.

If we fast forward 10 years, a great number of ‘white collar’ jobs will have been replaced by AI and the job market



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PHIL RANDELL
owner and chief executive, World Aero

may well be very different from what we see today. So perhaps being an ‘AI proof’ aviation technician is worth consideration after all.

One of the other challenges which I feel greatly dampens enthusiasm for working in aircraft maintenance, and evident from my experience in wheel and brake MRO, is the ever-increasing burden of regulation.

Indeed, at every opportunity, when asked what the biggest risk to our business is, I always unwaveringly state ‘over-regulation’. Whilst some of us thrive on it, and it is of course of paramount importance to a senior

▼ World Aero provides aircraft wheel, tyre and brake MRO component repairs and AOG services for commercial or corporate jets

technician’s role, in reality the vast majority of the workforce just want to come to work in a well systemised business, do their job with pride and go home again.

While many industries offer just that, aviation and its quagmire of ever-changing requirements is just a turn-off for many, especially workers who are undertaking a supervised low or semi-skilled function.

As industry leaders, we have a duty (not to mention a desperate need) to encourage newcomers to choose aviation maintenance as a career. Lack of visibility, the unavailability of training schemes and over-regulation, this ‘perfect storm’ has led to a decline in the number of skilled workers available and we must act now. ●



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