

Eight Questions

Question 1: What changes have you seen across the commercial aviation industry since the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, and did this impact your work moving forward?

During the pandemic, many airlines and aircraft lessors were forced to park aircraft due to early lease terminations, cancellation of deliveries and the overall illiquidity of the market at the time. This created opportunities to acquire younger aircraft for disassembly, further expanding our inventory pool.

Over the past couple of years, we have taken time to examine the extra services we could provide that would benefit our customers and broaden our appeal. As a result, we opened an engine teardown facility in Dublin, secured Part 145 line-maintenance approval at our hangar in Knock (Ireland West Airport), opened a new facility in Dallas, focused on deepening our partnerships with the lessors of aircraft and engines

EirTrade Aviation is a global aviation asset management and trading company headquartered in Dublin, Ireland. It offers customers a comprehensive range of asset management services, including end-of-life asset management, engine and aircraft parts trading, aircraft storage and disassembly, engine disassembly, consignment programmes for aircraft parts, technical storage and services.

Ken Fitzgibbon, CEO, spoke with *Air International*

worldwide; and widened our global representations in Europe.

The shortage of available manpower since COVID-19 has significantly impacted the industry. Many people left the industry or took early retirement during the pandemic, and as businesses scale back up their operations, this personnel supply is no longer available. Now that aircraft utilisation has recovered, the manufacturers (OEMs) cannot produce new aircraft quickly enough due to supply chain delays, so airlines are taking on older aircraft to meet their demands for growth. These aircraft need engineering and repair shop support, plus spare parts provision – and

disassembly. There are many of these opportunities in the marketplace, creating a strong future pipeline, so we are not concerned about the lack of teardown stock.

In fact, since the pandemic, many aircraft have been parked at airports without engines, and these need to be dismantled.

At Shannon Airport in the west of Ireland, for example, there are several, yet the airport authorities require operators to obtain planning permission to undertake the work; this is somewhat inexplicable and we'd like to see airports being more accommodating to help clear this backlog.

more environmentally friendly, from engines to materials, what plans and processes does EirTrade Aviation have in place moving forward?

In the aviation industry, having the right approvals and accreditations is essential to instil confidence in our customers. We are members of AFRA (Aircraft Fleet Recycling Association), which outlines the best practices and procedures for disassembling aircraft.

At EirTrade, we can dismantle a narrowbody aircraft in 15 days, so all our processes are streamlined and very carefully managed to achieve these turn-around times. Everything we disassemble is in keeping with industry best practices. Still, we



Have you found a shift from one to the other recently, as operators deal with a global financial crisis, and in terms of each, can you discuss the respective benefits?

It depends on the operators and what they need to efficiently and profitably run their businesses. Both options have their place. The decision centres around what capital they have and how best to work with it. And this can change as their businesses evolve.

For example, Ryanair started leasing all their aircraft and engines, but now they are cash-rich they own all their assets, which places the inherent value firmly into their business.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
EirTrade Aviation has become the leading independent supplier of Boeing 787-8 parts to the industry
All images via EirTrade

A specially designed cradle allows the undercarriage to be removed at the start of the teardown process

EirTrade Aviation's headquarters is located in Rathcoole, County Dublin, Ireland

Engine stand leasing and sales have become a significant part of EirTrade Aviation's current business

all of these aviation businesses also have staff deficits.

EirTrade Aviation's experienced team and wide range of services positioned EirTrade with the opportunity to become the first USM (used serviceable material) company to disassemble two B787-8 aircraft. This has allowed EirTrade to become the leading independent supplier of B787 material.

Question 2: EirTrade Aviation has just disassembled its first Boeing 787-8, but there is talk across the industry that fewer airframes are becoming available for teardown by MRO companies; what are your views on this, and should it be a cause for concern by MRO companies?

At the end of a lease, a lessor must decide about the aircraft. Should the aircraft be transitioned to a new lessee? Is there still green time on the engines? Or should the aircraft be traded? However, if the maintenance costs are too high, the aircraft might be more suited for

Question 3: Regarding engine inventory and overhaul, what models are proving the most popular and in demand? How are you meeting this demand?

All engine material is in high demand currently. At EirTrade Aviation, we focus on a wide range of narrow and widebody aircraft and engines.

To meet the demand, we need to buy more engines, and these are sourced through the tendering opportunities we are invited to participate in.

Here, we rely on the skills of our team to identify the right assets for our portfolio and keep our inventory current and revolving.

During COVID-19, we also looked at new technologies that would improve efficiency and release our people from 'spreadsheets'. We pride ourselves in being a data-driven business to facilitate an efficient decision-making process.

Question 4: With the requirements for commercial aviation to become

support innovation in carbon fibre recycling and encourage companies or individuals developing new processes to talk to us.

We have also innovated at our facility and continually look for ways to improve our work. Last year, we designed and built a special cradle to support the narrowbody fuselage during teardown. This enables the high-value components like the landing gear to be removed at the beginning of an aircraft disassembly, realising value quicker.

Question 5: Can you explain the process of sourcing aircraft, engines and parts following an initial request from the customer? What can be the challenges during this process?

The key is identifying and acquiring the right asset under the correct terms. If we do this, it paves the way for every project to be successful.

Finance is the biggest challenge, as it is for most businesses. Ensuring that secure funding is readily available means we can take advantage of opportunities at the

right time. Businesses are thriving in the aviation aftermarket. Maintenance, repair, and overhaul industries attract investors, and the returns are promising.

Question 6: How would you like to see the industry develop over the next five to ten years? What changes must be implemented across commercial aviation to improve your work?

I feel the industry is still quite cautious and is focusing on what it knows how to do well. At the same time, the recovery steadily grows, and the supply-chain problems and workforce shortages resolve themselves. Advanced systems and robotics will inevitably be disruptors/improvers, but that will take time.

One thing that is true to say, however, is that 'money' makes the magic happen. Without investment to spearhead change, developments will be slow and steady, and no quantum leaps are envisaged.

Question 7: EirTrade operates both a lease and sale side across its sectors.



Question 8: How do you spend your free time away from aviation? Do you have any hobbies or interests?

I have a great interest in cars and motor sport generally. Even though I fly a lot for business, I still love to travel and explore new places and cultures. **AI**