



Weak brands will damage aerospace consolidation, warns industry expert

Aerospace businesses currently seeking to boost capacity or growth through acquisitions, or maximise their value at sale, could suffer without a more sophisticated approach to branding.

That is the view of **David McRobert**, a senior aerospace executive with 20 years' experience of leading and developing businesses in the aerospace sector. McRobert has co-founded Octant Marketing, a strategic marketing company specialising in aerospace and aviation, to address what he sees as an endemic failing of the industry.

McRobert says: "With parts of the aerospace industry struggling to cope with demand and global competition, industry consolidation has an important role to play, as we've seen in recent deals by companies like Senior and MB Aerospace.

"However, engineering businesses are notoriously 'left-brained' and often underestimate the value of brands and the importance of brand strategy in achieving their commercial goals, particularly where M&A is part of the strategy.

"Brand, reputation and industry profile contribute to company performance and corporate value. Businesses that fail to differentiate themselves with a sharply defined brand strategy and clear value proposition are in danger of inhibiting value.



David McRobert

"In the case of consolidating companies, a well-defined brand is crucial for attracting partners, gaining a strong negotiating position and achieving successful business integrations, both culturally and operationally. And, in markets such as aviation, where safety, reliability and quality are all essential attributes, a stronger brand can build and leverage existing reputation."

McRobert speaks from extensive personal knowledge. Having started as a chartered aeronautical engineer at Rolls-Royce, he moved into executive roles with businesses including H + S Aviation, Honeywell, BBA Aviation, PremiAir and, most recently, aerospace parts and distribution group Kapco Global.

At Kapco Global, McRobert led a global strategic review and brand development project, which resulted in a major redefinition and alignment of brand, business and marketing strategy. In this process, he collaborated with, and now partners, award-winning brand strategist **Chris Harvey**, whose experience includes Unilever, Virgin Atlantic, Bosch, Thomas Cook and many large manufacturers and business service providers.

McRobert says: "Chris is a hugely experienced brand and marketing professional and very skilled in managing complex marketing challenges. Through our work together at Kapco, we realised we share a frustration that not more aerospace and aviation businesses appreciate the importance of brand strategy, but also great optimism and excitement at the value created when companies begin to harness this potential."

Speaking about their new partnership, Harvey says: “At Octant Marketing, we are focused on creating a ‘sweet spot’ where all three business imperatives - business strategy, brand strategy and marketing strategy - are properly aligned. This is the place where sustainable competitive advantage lies.

“I have seen this approach bring huge rewards in many other industries, and aerospace businesses could enjoy similar gains. With seismic changes now underway in this industry, including globalisation, consolidation, new competitor economies and the involvement of the investment community, complacency is no longer an option. Brands and brand value matter.

“The current global outlook offers huge opportunities for farsighted businesses, especially those that have, and can communicate, a clear vision for their company and a brand with values.”



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