

WORK EXPERIENCE DAVID McROBERT

# Flying, 9/11 and a brand new start

After deciding aeronautical engineering was not for him, David McRobert began a varied career that has seen him run a flight school at the time of the September 2001 attacks and launch a strategic marketing consultancy

## Tell us about your career to date

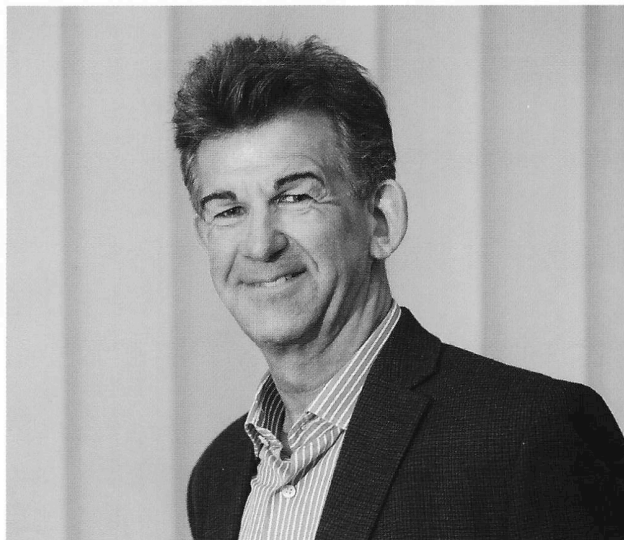
Well, it's certainly been varied, exciting and rewarding. As a graduate aeronautical engineer, I knew sitting in front of a drawing board or computer screen wasn't for me. I wanted to be customer-facing, at the heart of business decisions, and close to aircraft. Then started a long and interesting journey through the world of engine services, professional flight training, business aviation and the supply chain. It sounds rather clichéd, but I'm lucky to have travelled the world and met, worked with and been inspired by many great people.

## What sparked your interest in aviation?

It started when I was really young. My father was a very keen aero modeller and spent weekends flying his radio-controlled aircraft, often with me chasing after them when the signal was lost. Fortunately, he then learnt to fly and subsequently set up a private pilot training school. Weekends thereafter saw me either flying light aircraft, which led to my private pilot's licence at 17, or engaged in my other aviating passion, hang-gliding.

## What have been the high and low points of your career?

That's a difficult one. One low point followed the tragic events of 9/11 when I was chief executive of the professional pilot training school at Oxford. The global airline pilot training market took a major downturn and most airline customers cancelled



McRobert obtained his private pilot's licence at the age of 17

their training schemes. My worst moment came when an airline's head of training called me to say that they were stopping all training immediately. The sadness of having to deliver the message to 30 students, young men and women, shattering their aviation dreams, was overwhelming and will always live with me.

Many high points are associated with winning contracts and successful business development projects, but probably the most notable and exciting came with launching my own business.

## Tell us about your current venture

My new business is called Octant Marketing, which is a strategic aerospace and aviation marketing business. It's "strategic" because our primary focus

**"Our industry has matured to the point where markets have become far more homogenous"**

is to work with business leaders to help build business value by developing and aligning business, marketing and brand strategies. I started it with a partner after working together for a year on an exciting and successful commercial aviation global supply chain project, where we worked with the company's senior team to redefine their value proposition and launch a stronger brand. During this project,

and from our market research, we recognised that many other aerospace and aviation businesses would value similar services, and so Octant was born.

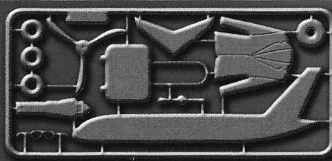
## Why is having a strong brand strategy so important for aerospace and aviation companies?

It's very simple. Many markets have changed rapidly in recent years and our industry has matured to the point where markets have become far more homogenous, making it increasingly difficult for businesses to differentiate products and services. Surprisingly, in our industry, comparatively few businesses have really focused on developing their brand to differentiate themselves, whereas in other industries this is regarded as essential to convey who they are, what they do, why they do it and, crucially, why they are different. A strong brand strategy, aligned with robust business and marketing strategies, will create value in so many ways and, thankfully, more chief executives now acknowledge that their role needs to include being "chief brand officer" to achieve this objective. ■



Find out how other aerospace colleagues spend their time at [flightglobal.com/workingweek](http://flightglobal.com/workingweek)

If you would like to feature in Working Week, or you know someone who does, email your pitch to [kate.sarsfield@flightglobal.com](mailto:kate.sarsfield@flightglobal.com)



## Build your career

Try Flightglobal Training's new site for the fastest route to building your aerospace and aviation career



Flightglobal Training

Training courses to take you there  
[www.flightglobal.com/training](http://www.flightglobal.com/training)