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GROWTH GENES

Start-up firm AeroDNA Group is making great strides in the emerging markets' aerospace sector, writes *Lawrie Holmes*

AeroDNA is unusual for a start-up in that the firm was determined to target overseas markets from its inception in 2010. With 34 staff located in the UK, India and China, AeroDNA is forecasting group revenues exceeding £2m over the next 12 months.

Such dramatic growth reflects the firm's ambitions. The group comprises three divisions: AeroDNA Enterprises facilitates joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, and supports industrialisation of world-class facilities; AeroDNA Technology provides cloud-based software solutions to improve aerospace manufacturing performance and supply chain connectivity; while AeroDNA Sourcing takes US and European aerospace supply chains global.

Chief executive Tom Dawes established his first business in 2003 after identifying an opportunity in the global aerospace supply chain following five years of PhD research at the University of Liverpool. In 2005, he acquired a well-recognised aerospace company – King & Fowler – that had been established in 1887 and provided aerospace surface treatments to most of the world's leading Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) such as Airbus, GE and Rolls-Royce.

In 2006, Dawes recognised an opportunity to replicate the processes and infrastructure of King & Fowler into emerging economies and established the first independent aerospace surface treatment company in Eastern Europe. After selling King & Fowler, Dawes joined

Tony Guo, a Chinese national who also studied for his PhD at the University of Liverpool, and established AeroDNA to provide cloud-based software solutions that standardise best-practice aerospace business processes and enable companies to secure and retain customer approvals whilst at the same time improving business performance.

Dawes says: "Through the UK Trade & Investment Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) we travelled to India to meet engineering companies that had shown an interest in our software. However, it became clear their requirements were more fundamental and they needed guidance on technology-transfer strategies to establish a robust autonomous supply chain.

"We saw this as a major opportunity and recruited a core team of technical experts in Bangalore and Hyderabad to support Indian companies through the steep aerospace learning curve. We have found the most successful approach is to facilitate joint ventures, acquisitions, technology licences and strategic alliances between established Western aerospace companies and ambitious Indian engineering firms, as this fast-tracks the technical learning curve and builds on local knowledge to create robust supply chain networks."

AeroDNA set about building a model that fosters relationships between governments and private enterprises in emerging markets, and businesses from developed markets with specialised

expertise in the field. The firm also supports SMEs through to multinational OEMs such as Boeing and BAE Systems.

Dawes says AeroDNA helps Western aerospace companies identify partners in emerging economies and create new business opportunities with some of the world's leading OEMs. "We have many Indian clients that are looking to partner with niche aerospace companies" he states. "This offers a great opportunity for ambitious UK manufacturing companies."

As a direct result of working with UK Trade & Investment, in just six months AeroDNA secured long-term contracts with 10 Indian organisations. It will work with these clients to develop aerospace divisions worth between \$10m and \$1bn, providing significant sub-contract and technology-transfer licence opportunities for its Western customers.

With continuing support, AeroDNA has entered into several joint ventures. For example, the company will lend its name and expertise to both an academy and a separate centre of excellence, to deliver leadership and technical skills to the industry long-term.

Last May, AeroDNA opened an office in Bangalore and Hyderabad that will help the company deliver in its most opportune market. Later this month, it will exhibit alongside \$1.4bn Indian engineering company Amtek, one of its leading clients, at the Farnborough Air Show. Having achieved so much in such a short time, it seems that the sky is the limit for Dawes and his team. ■

UKTI SUPPORT

Neil Semple,

UK Trade & Investment's advanced engineering team

"We worked together by facilitating the opportunity for AeroDNA to meet these major Indian companies. Without UK Trade & Investment's help, it would have been almost impossible for AeroDNA to meet these firms independently."

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