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Picture PERFECT

In only six years, Eirtech Aviation has built itself up to be the premier company for aircraft finishing, engineering, and asset-management services in the aviation industry.

Images by Tarmo Tulit

With customers including the King of Bahrain, as well as some of the most luxurious airlines in the world, Eirtech Aviation aims to be the best at what it does: providing aircraft finishing, engineering and asset-management services for clients worldwide. The company has built its reputation on quality services and excellence in customer experience. This has helped it to expand internationally and to continue to grow in the past six years.

CEO Niall Cunningham has more than 20 years of experience in the aviation industry, and has been with Eirtech since 1997. "I started in the aviation industry working with Trans Aer Airways," Niall says. "What we were doing was wet leasing aircraft. I worked on the

introduction of the Airbus A320 into Ireland at that point in time, primarily working commercially on wet leasing of aircraft. After that, I relocated to Shannon, and we set up a company here doing aircraft refinishing work. That company subsequently became a Lufthansa Technik company called Lufthansa Technik Painting Shannon. In 2009, I led a management buyout to take over the company."

Since the management buyout, Eirtech has expanded its reach in Europe, including purchasing new facilities in the Czech Republic and Italy. "After the management buyout, we acquired a lease on a Dublin facility and we had that in operation nine months later, which was additional wide-body capacity for the company," Niall explains. "In terms of what we were doing in Europe, we were looking at being able to cater for large fleet

sizes and being able to cope with our increasing customer listing. We had the opportunity a year later to purchase two branded facilities in Ostrava in the Czech Republic, and they are two narrow-body facilities—purpose-built, state-of-the-art buildings. We started operating those successfully in central Europe."

It was during this expansion that Eirtech established its reputation and began to acquire a number of high-profile customers, including Qatar Airways and the Bahrain Royal Flight. "We had a number of tier-one customers and had developed a reputation for high quality in terms of the aircraft refinishing business. Effectively, the business had grown over that period to a point where we had some large airline customers and we started doing a lot of VIP work with various heads of state. >

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We had a need for an additional wide-bodied hangar and we sourced a facility in Rome at Fiumicino Airport,” Niall says.

“We have also been adding an additional side to our company, which is going back to 2010 where we built up Eirtech Aviation Services, which is a sister company. That operates in the field of design engineering, providing CAMO [Continuing Airworthiness Management Organisation] and technical asset management effectively for a lot of the finance houses and lease companies.”

After the success in Europe, Eirtech and Niall started looking to other markets to expand. “We have started doing a lot of work in the Middle East and Asia, so we’re looking at some expansion in those

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areas. And we were also looking at a US market at that point in time. In 2014, there was a previous consolidation in the US of two companies. One was called Leading Edge Aviation Services and the other company was Associated Painters. We joined up with those two companies, so the three companies now form International Aerospace Coatings or IAC. That gives us footprint in Europe and it gives us a footprint in the US. That gives us 33 lines of

aircraft running at any given time in 16 hangars.”

Despite this success, there have been difficulties in building Eirtech over the past six years due to challenges in the industry. Aircraft finishing on its own is a fairly new market, having previously been a service provided only by maintenance companies. “As a result of this, in many cases the correct resources were not allocated to it,” Niall explains.



“What we really had to do was start from the ground up in building systems and processes that would be robust, where we could get high quality on a consistent basis. The main challenges that we had at that point in time were to get consistency of product and to develop robust processes and systems for all the various different aircraft types that one would find oneself working on.”

Niall says that one of the ways that Eirtech overcame these challenges was to ensure that everything it did was extremely high quality, and that its customer service was second to none. “We believe the service that we provide has to be a high-quality service,” Niall says. “We instil into our staff on a regular basis that what we want to see is repeat customers. Getting repeat business is the greatest endorsement for your products.” Niall believes that collaboration with their customers and suppliers has also been key to Eirtech’s success.

“In terms of offering quality products to the market, being able

to offer flexibility is another key factor. As a result, the multiple facilities that we operate was part of the strategy that we had; that we would be able to be flexible around our customers’ ever-changing needs within the aviation industry and also to be able to cater to large brands under one organisation. Those values are translated to our staff. We have a high retention level and we invest heavily in training programs and also in systemised approaches.

“We take a proactive approach when working with suppliers. We work on research and development with a lot of the suppliers. We’re always with them in terms of developing products and seeing what the industry wants, to see how we can improve what we’re offering to the markets. We do that environmentally to ensure that we are best placed in the market in that sense but also in terms of processes and maybe challenging convention a little bit and seeing what are the ways we can undertake these processes. Typically, we would work with the aircraft and the paint manufacturers. We spend a lot of



time with them when they are developing products and testing and trialling.”

One of the key focuses of Eirtech, something Niall believes differentiates it from its competitors, is its focus on environmental sustainability. The company considers this to be an integral part of its business and ensures it pursues policies designed to conserve and recycle, moving away from processes or activities that are harmful to the environment. Niall says this is important for many customers. “It is a critical focus for us because we don’t believe that the aircraft operators wish to export their problems and that they also feel that they have an obligation in terms of environmental awareness and compliance. From that point of view, it is important that we ensure and demonstrate to our customers and our staff that we are using best practices at all times and we are not creating any additional problems.”

In the future, Niall believes the changes in the industry will provide more challenges for Eirtech, but that the future is bright for the company. “I think what we’re looking at, in terms of the amount and volume of the aircraft that are operating, is that we are looking constantly at more environmentally friendly products and ensuring that’s what is available to the market and to customers. And at the same time, reducing turnaround time in terms of the time that the aircraft are spending the ground. The future of the company is robust in the markets in Europe. There is sufficient capacity in those markets and we’re continuing to develop the US markets, and the Middle East and Asia are in focus in terms of expansion.”



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