



Universal Aerospace

By Jennifer Ferrero, APR

Superpowers in Aerospace Manufacturing

As a “Super” Tier 2 supplier, Universal Aerospace of Arlington, Washington is a passionate aerospace precision machining and assembly manufacturer providing their global customer base with everything from commercial aircraft cockpit security door kits to a wide range of commercial passenger seating and cabin furnishing products.



Universal Aerospace Co., Inc. is looking for longevity in the commercial aerospace industry. In the past several years they have developed a business model focused on securing long-term customer contracts, developing 21st-century employees and investing significantly in technology and facilities.

Sean Myers, vice president of sales, said that they are considered a “Super” Tier 2 supplier because, “We provide fully integrated services to our customers as a value-added proposition.” He said that their customers are seeking optimization with their supply chain and suppliers who can provide more comprehensive solutions in their products and services.

Myers added, “At Universal Aerospace we have placed a heavy emphasis on increasing our technology, upgrading our systems and onboarding qualified people who have the industry knowledge to serve our customers. To this end, we strive to offer our customers the ability to purchase fully finished components and assemblies which can be introduced directly to their production line.”



They can do this through a wide range of CNC machining work centers, a fully equipped sheet metal fabrication facility, and a team of dedicated assembly technicians.

“We also are able to offer metal finishing and cosmetic treatments via our metal finishing business, Aero Finishing LLC, which is co-located in the same industrial park and holds both NADCAP and AS9100D certifications and recently received Boeing approval,” Myers summarized.

He said that they continue to look for ways to add value, increase efficiencies and improve the customer experience.

They are doing something right because they have successfully been in business since their founding as a machine shop in 1990 by Jeff Pettit, president/CEO. Today they have 163 employees within Universal Aerospace Co. and 51 employees at Aero Finishing, LLC, their sister company.

Currently the company is involved with supporting mostly aerospace programs and is proud to have parts and assemblies flying on board most of the Boeing and Airbus commercial aircraft — and the soon-to-be-introduced Mitsubishi Regional Jet (MRJ), through their customers who are Tier 1 integrators.

Myers said that one of the newer and very popular projects is through their supply of highly aesthetic parts and assemblies that will be introduced on a nondisclosed customer airline. Universal Aerospace has been selected to provide custom trim pieces and components that will be featured on a premium cabin product offering that is in development by a Tier 1 interiors supplier.





“We are working closely with a major cabin and seating customer to create truly bespoke custom finishes that will be applied to metal substrates. The combination of using custom finishes, along with manufacturing the completed end item components and assemblies, will all be handled by our team at Universal Aerospace. The finishes are a very involved process to create the right shape, size, attachment, features, and finish. The airline customer has exacting aesthetic requirements which must all be integrated seamlessly into the finished product,” said Myers.

Another exciting new product development is under way with a leading aircraft interior integrator who is designing and delivering premium cabin furnishing and seating products.



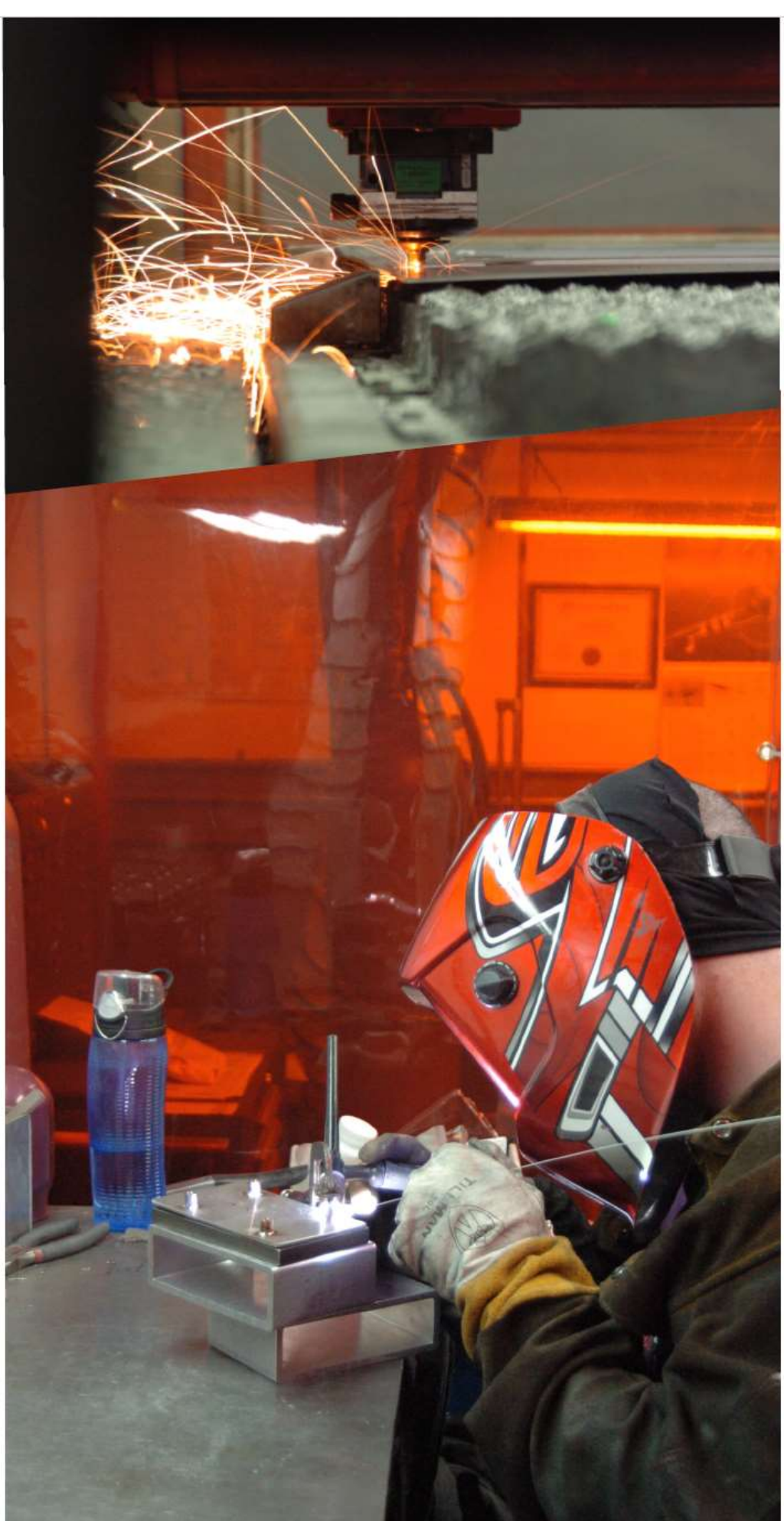
Universal Aerospace has been a long-standing partner supplier and is providing deployable meal table assemblies, welded seat back frames along with other key components and mechanisms that become part of our customers' final assemblies. When completed, these products will be introduced on both the Boeing 777 and Airbus A350.

“Highly aesthetic metallic components are a big part of our business, especially for cabin furnishings and seating products,” added Myers.

With so much work in seating and tray tables, when asked if there will be self-cleaning tables in the future to help prevent the spread of germs, they said that it wouldn't surprise them if the seating manufacturers are working on it! They said, “What's important for us is to ensure that we deliver table assemblies which perform in accordance with the customers' specifications and that the passenger has ease of use with a reliable design and proper functioning.” They are collaborating with Tier 1 customers to help them achieve their goals of producing lightweight reliable and high-quality products which can be manufactured at an optimized price — which they say is a differentiator in their work.

Aside from sitting and enjoying a complementary drink on one of their tray tables, you will also see their handiwork in the flight deck cockpit doors for the Boeing 737 (interior cabin security flight deck door).

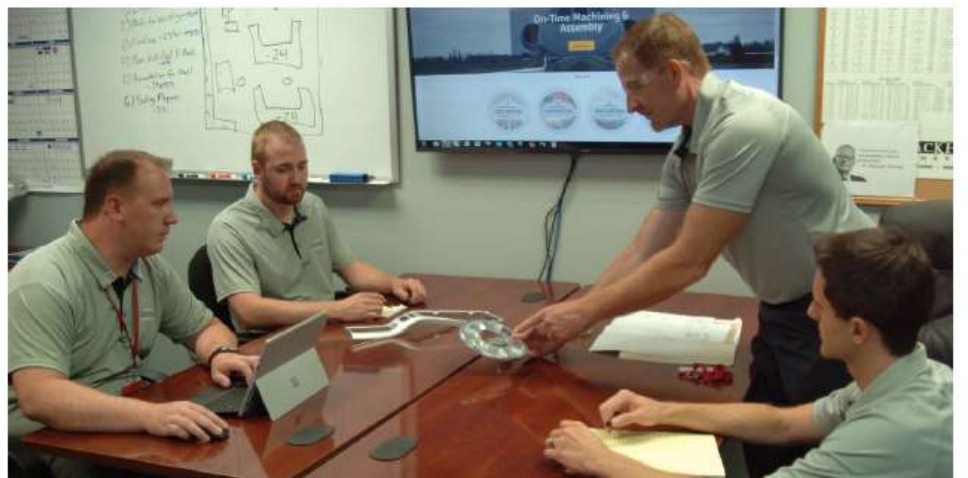
To reach their goal of longevity in the aerospace industry, they have worked to develop long-term contracts. In 2016 they were awarded a multiyear supplier agreement to deliver Boeing 787-10 substructure assemblies. “This was a major achievement for us and we are honored to be selected to provide content on such a revolutionary aircraft,” said Myers.





He also said, “We were selected this year for a multiyear Boeing 777x (next generation) program.” They were selected to produce precision and sheet metal parts primarily for the framing around the passenger and cabin doors which includes the upper liners, bracket liners, stiffeners, brackets, clips and plates. That is a 12-year work statement.

Universal Aerospace is pushing for series production workspace — longer-term contracts. They are working hard to gain longer-term series production work. “We are set up to run long-term high-quantity programs for our multi-national customers. That is the emphasis we have from a sales perspective,” said Myers.



The 21st Century Factory and Employees

Jason Luckie, operations manager, is a classic manufacturing company success story. He's been with the company for six years and has rapidly advanced from machinist to lead, then to supervisor, and was named Director of Operations in July 2018.

Myers said, "He has been part of the transformation of the facility to a 21st century factory."

According to both Luckie and Myers, they are very invested in growth for employees from a training and opportunity standpoint.

Luckie said, "We are really committed to employee advancement, education and servicing our community. We are about the people. We are willing to train people and help them to grow in their career and we support the community through donations, time and training."

They have been especially invested in helping train the next generation of employees through time and donations to the Everett Community College, Advanced Manufacturing Training and Education Center (AMTEC). Luckie routinely works with AMTEC as well as Arlington High School to set up plant tours, offer curriculum development support, and training. They have donated equipment for training to AMTEC.

In addition to training investments, Luckie has worked hard to set up technological advancements in the factory. This includes lean manufacturing improvements and the implementation of FactoryWiz, which allows them to monitor productivity, "We have a dedicated productivity plan to increase productivity a minimum of five percent year-over-year." They are currently at 99.85 percent regarding customer quality satisfaction and have shipped 445,252 pieces in the past 12 months.

With their four-building campus in Arlington, Luckie said, "The campus meets our needs and we are continually investing in technology to support our customer. The goal is to ensure they receive the highest level of support."

They said they are always looking at technologies to bring on and have recently made investments into FabriVISION 2D technology for integrated sheet metal inspection. Another purchase they've recently made is for a Chiron Automated Extrusion Profile Mill — the first like it in the United States.

If you are reading this and think that Universal Aerospace sounds like a pretty good bet — you could be in luck. They are actively hiring and with their long-term contracts, it could be a great place to make your career.



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