



Word of mouth the driver of a plane speaking company

The Leader Questionnaire: Peter Bagnell is the project manager for Aero Inspection Ireland who have just opened a new office in Shannon. The company is one of the few doing better in the recession than before it

Tell us what the business is about? We inspect aircraft engines using a range of different methods including key-hole and fibre optic cameras. Our clients include Air Atlanta out of Shannon, and various engine leasing companies. We have 47 customers at the moment. At the moment, we are based in Ballymacashel, Mungret, but we will probably move our operations fully to Shannon to be close to the airport.

How are the duties of the company divided? The company was set up in 2004 through my family - my sister and my mother set it up. My mother would do the accounting and administration side, while my sister is the quality manager. I am the project manager, while we employ three full time staff.

Where were you born and raised? I was born and raised in Mungret, while I went to Ballybrown Primary School and Villers Secondary School. I still live in Mungret now, with my family.

How did you get to where you are today? I graduated from UL with a degree in science in September 2008, at which time I became project manager with Aero Inspection Ireland. Before that, I had been working with the company for six months. At the moment, I am completing my masters part time in business

management at UL. I had always had an interest in aviation, and was around when the company was being set up, helping out in the office, so going full time was a natural next step.

How have you grown the company? A lot of our business is word of mouth due to our inspection record, and the fact we have European safety certification. This is especially the case in Shannon where there are obviously a lot of aviation companies. Once you get into one company, they seem to share their information and recommendations around. We have also engaged a PR expert to help raise our profile. A lot of our work is done overseas - most of it in fact. We have guys all over Europe working for us.

Shannon Airport is having its own problems at the moment, with dwindling passenger numbers and lesser demand for aircraft. How have you responded to that? We have operations all of Europe, so we are not totally reliant on Shannon. But our work in Shannon is mainly with Air Atlanta and Shannon Aerospace. The return of the London Heathrow route has been a big plus for us. It gives us open access to Europe, and effectively the world.

What has been your biggest challenge since taking the project manager role on? The level of

work involved, and how committed you need to be. It's difficult, but enjoyable for me. On any day, I would be on the phone to any number of countries trying to arrange work for various clients. I would also travel to places at very short notice.

Away from work, what are your pastimes and hobbies? I enjoy movies, and I also DJ at the weekend in Aubars. That's about all the free time I have!

What are your goals for the upcoming year? We are looking to take on another full time inspector, increase our client base in terms of the number of aircraft we inspect. We are looking at steady expansion, although I have not set an exact target yet.

How are you responding to the recession? We have in fact got busier because of the economic downturn. The leased aircraft are being returned back quicker. In the good times, a lease would last for five years. But in the bad times, a lease can be just six months. So we have a higher turnover of engines.

In business and in life, who do you look up to? I feel that my biggest influence in business would be Richard Branson because of his fresh and dynamic approach to business, and because he encourages input from all levels of the company.



Peter Bagnell says the recession means plane leases are lasting as short as six months in some cases meaning they come back to Aero Inspection Ireland far quicker than they had before