

EXECUTIVEPROFILE

SPACE CASE

Robert Botticelli looks to boost LI's aerospace and defense industries

As president and chairman of the board of ADDAPT (Aerospace & Defense Development And Peace Time Transition), Robert Botticelli is charged with promoting Long Island's aerospace and defense industries.

Currently, Botticelli heads RBX Associates, a sales and strategy consulting firm. An expert in manufacturing processes and supply-chain management, Botticelli has spent more than 30 years at various companies in the area's aerospace and defense sector.

On Dec. 4, the Tilles Center at Long Island University in Brookville will host the Defense and Aerospace Supply Conference, which will focus on how the industry can grow and stay competitive.

What is ADDAPT and who belongs to the group? ADDAPT is an aerospace and defense trade group made up of Long Island-based companies. ADDAPT was originally founded in 1989 as Aerospace & Defense Development And Peace Time Transition. It was formed to acknowledge the impact of first Fairchild Republic and then Grumman Aerospace companies leaving Long Island. Most of the current Long Island-based aerospace companies have roots in originally serving Grumman and Fairchild. This remaining supply chain has had to adjust, adapt if you will, to both new customers and markets, particularly in shifting from a high percentage of defense business to the aerospace commercial markets. ADDAPT primarily provides our valued members with public advocacy, networking and education and training.

What are some of the biggest obstacles for Long Island's aerospace and defense industries to overcome? Having lost original equipment manufacturers



Photo by Judy Walker

such as Grumman and Fairchild requires Long Island companies to increase their exposure and networking beyond Long Island and the Northeast in general. Many Long Island companies have established themselves with other OEMs and namely Sikorsky--now Lockheed--in Connecticut. But much more must be done to expand our support for other aerospace and defense companies. Long Island companies also face high costs to do business on Long Island as well as difficulty finding trained machinists. Companies must adopt formal lean enterprise and continuous process improvement in order to remain competitive and relative.

What types of aerospace and defense parts are being made right here on Long Island? Long Island aerospace and defense companies manufacture and distribute many types of aerospace and defense products including but not limited to machined products, sheet metal, assemblies, hardware/fasteners and related products. Machined parts include all build-to-print parts including aircraft landing gear, flooring, bulkheads etc. Assemblies are an assembly of various machined products. CPI Aero is an example of a company providing much assembly work as more OEMs look to outsource their machined products and assembly work. Further, Long Island has finishing companies that provide anodizing, heat treat-

ing, paint etc. Together these companies represent a supply chain that can build most any large assembly and provide supply-chain management services to large OEMs and subcontractors. Part of the ADDAPT mission is to market ourselves as a unified supply chain versus individual companies.

With overall employment levels near an all-time high, are aerospace and defense companies having a harder time hiring the right talent? Yes, it's particularly difficult to hire trained machinists as the older generation leaves the workforce. ADDAPT is working with universities and high schools focused on such training namely Farmingdale State and Suffolk County Community.

What other countries are Long Island-based aerospace and defense manufacturers doing business with? Aerospace and defense is by definition a global market and as such Long Island companies find themselves dealing with most all friendly countries that have an aerospace industry, including all of the European countries, Canada, South America and many countries in Asia. South Korea has a very strong aerospace network and relationship with the Lockheed company.

How has the U.S government's aerospace and defense spending been lately? The sequester following the end of the

Iraq war has greatly impacted the defense business on Long Island. Spending on aerospace defense products is down. A perfect example is the Sikorsky Black Hawk helicopter. Many Long Island companies support this Black Hawk program. During the Iraq war the Black Hawk build rates were far greater than they are now. Such program slowdowns have a major impact on Long Island companies.

What is your organization doing to uphold and advance the rich tradition of aerospace and defense industries on Long Island? ADDAPT is continuously promoting the rich tradition of aerospace and defense on Long Island. We often hold our events at the Cradle of Aviation Museum which displays this rich tradition. Frankly, Long Island does not in my view fully appreciate the value of the aerospace supply chain on Long Island. That is, after losing Grumman and Fairchild OEMs, most folks do not think of Long Island as a major aerospace player. Yet, I remind folks every time I speak that aerospace is still in its infancy. Space is the only remaining frontier. If we embrace it we can maintain and expand our aerospace presence, or else we will slowly shrink. I often joke that I work at Spacely Sprockets as in the Jetsons. We will have individual hover crafts one day as we have cars today.

— DAVID WINZELBERG