

FAB S and LAB S

Zentech Models Resurgence in US Manufacturing



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In a world that is flat, where so much manufacturing has moved offshore and is dominated by massive firms, why would anyone want to be a contract electronics manufacturer based in the U.S.? Zentech CEO Matt Turpin, shown above, smiles when asked the question. He sees the company's mission as more than "putting parts on boards," although doing that well is the foundation of Zentech's business. Since its start in 1998, the Baltimore firm has honed a competency manufacturing highly complex designs for high reliability applications, whether small lots or runs of 100,000. On that base, Zentech has built a suite of value-added services, including inventory purchasing and management, board design and layout, test system development, final assembly, failure analysis, quick-turn prototyping and RF manufacturing and test.

To ensure the highest quality, Zentech invests in advanced surface-mount technology and process capability and employs best manufacturing practices. This includes automated optical inspection of solder paste components and completed assemblies, 3D X-ray technology and lean manufacturing. Their many certifications testify to this philosophy of ongoing improvement: ISO 9001:2008, AS9100:2009, ISO 13485:2003, JCP DD2345, IPC Class 3 Trusted Source QML certified, IPC J-STD 001 Space certified and ITAR registration. The company's name even reflects this commitment: Zentech is an amalgam of "tech" for technology and "zen" from the Japanese word Kaizen, meaning improvement.

Almost half of Zentech's business comes from defense and aerospace customers. These are familiar names: ARDEC (the U.S. Army's Armament Research Development Engineering Center), L3 Communications, NAVSEA (Naval Sea Systems Command), Northrop Grumman and Raytheon. From a start in C5ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance), Zentech has expanded to serving radar and electronic warfare. Its assemblies fly on

the F-16, F-22 and F-35, and the company is one of only two contract electronics manufacturer certified by the IPC Validation Service for space assemblies. The remainder of Zentech's business comes from medical, communications and industrial controls applications, where performance and reliability are demanded.

While the global electronics manufacturing services market is growing between 5 and 6 percent annually, Zentech will grow 30 percent this year, doubling the number of customers they serve. The growing customer base reflects the truism that new customers tend to become long-term customers when they experience how easy it is to do business with Zentech. To accelerate their growth, earlier this year Zentech acquired Colonial Assembly & Design (CA&D). CA&D brings a 30-year heritage as a prime contractor for electronics systems design and manufacturing, serving the Department of Defense and both military and commercial aviation. They strengthen Zentech's capabilities in engineering, product design, circuit design, machining, cable assembly and wire harnessing.

So why does Matt Turpin believe so strongly in Zentech, in a world that is flat and with such tough competition? He says, "The world has always been changing. The economic landscape has changed with it, as the world becomes increasingly 'flat' and those with competitive advantage emerge and become noticed. But, increasingly, businesses are finding that competitive advantage doesn't necessarily mean least expensive. Apple doesn't have the cheapest phones, Tesla doesn't have the cheapest cars and Zappos doesn't have the cheapest shoes – yet all of them continue to win and compete. Zentech loves to compete by ensuring that organizations are successful in bringing their products to market quickly, reliably, competitively and focused on lowest total cost. We are proud of the fact that thousands of people continue to have jobs because of our ability to help make their companies successful."

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