

## AIAM MEMBER HIGHLIGHT



JR AUTOMATION™



JR Automation | Holland, Michigan

Bill Bigot, Vice President of Business Development

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Established in 1980, JR Automation is a leading provider of intelligent automated manufacturing and technology solutions that solve customers' key operational and productivity challenges. JR Automation serves customers across the globe in a variety of industries, including automotive, life sciences, aerospace, and more.

In 2019, JR Automation was acquired by Hitachi, Ltd. In a strategic effort towards offering a seamless connection between the physical and cyber space for industrial manufacturers and distributors worldwide. With this partnership, JR Automation provides customers a unique, single-source solution for complete integration of their physical assets and data information, offering greater speed, flexibility, and efficiencies towards achieving their Industry 4.0 visions. JR Automation employs over 2,000 people at 23 manufacturing facilities in North America, Europe, and Asia.

## TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

2,000+

Approximately 120 employees are engaged in aerospace activity

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF YOUR BEING LOCATED IN MICHIGAN?

"Michigan is a great area for automation talent because of the automotive sector being so strong. Automotive automation makes up about half of the robots sold in the US and that talent can also be used to help the Aerospace industry automate their production systems. Over the years automotive and aerospace organizations have enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, each advancing processes and technologies that support the other's business growth. While we are not necessarily located close to the aerospace manufacturing facilities, we are centrally located to the country and that gives us very good access to every aerospace location in the US."

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR COMPANY'S GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

"We have made a concentrated effort to apply our engineering skills to the aerospace industry over the past 3 years. Four years ago, we did very little business in this area (close to \$0 revenue). We have hired the right talent out of the aerospace industry to augment our automotive talent and this has really helped us grow our aerospace knowledge such that it is now a healthy portion of our business. Over this time, we have delivered world-first products and solutions to our customers that provide manufacturing capabilities that have not been available in the aerospace assembly process prior. We have listened to the voice of the customer and delivered what the market has needed for decades."

### WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS AND VISION FOR YOUR COMPANY OVER THE NEXT 5 AND 10 YEARS?

"We will continue to grow business with our aerospace knowledge base and continue to listen to our customers' requirements by enhancing the manual processes that make up so much of the aerospace industry. We want to offer fully automated or semi-automated processes to help the aerospace companies, to make them more efficient and less dependent upon skill levels with those manual processes. We feel we have the right people in place, such as our Aerospace vertical market VP, Bill Bigot and our Aerospace Chief Engineer, Randy Rounkles that are going to help us tremendously with this."

### WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU SEE THAT EXIST IN MICHIGAN FOR THE AEROSPACE INDUSTRY?

"We see a great deal of opportunity within Tier 2 or Tier 3 suppliers. They are the ones providing components to Tier 1 (Spirit) or perhaps to an OEM (Boeing, Cessna, Bell, Airbus). Opportunities also exist in the smaller to mid-size component markets with high volume or high variants. When rate, quality and repeatability are important, these are our customers."

### AS AN AIAM MEMBER, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING MICHIGAN AND THE AEROSPACE INDUSTRY?

"Many of the Aerospace companies that we are aware of in Michigan are on the small to small-medium size. They tend not to have excess cash or resilience. The current 737 MAX situation and COVID downturn in travel, leading to downturn in demand for new aircraft, will create a financial hardship on the smaller companies. We hope that many of these companies can supplement their aerospace market with other markets (auto, medical, e-commerce) to stay financially viable. The challenge will be for those companies to recover and reconnect with their customer base to bring back their business to pre-2020 levels. Companies will also want to look towards the future with alternative fuels, material, and structure to grow business in an evolving aerospace market."

### HOW DOES THE AEROSPACE ASPECT OF YOUR BUSINESS BENEFIT FROM THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY IN MICHIGAN?

"For more than 30 years the automotive and aerospace industries have traded secrets of technologies. Some examples are machining, fastening, composite structure/materials, new materials, adhesives/bonding, and automation. The most recent benefit came in automation of aircraft to improve rate, quality, repeatability, and reliability. While aerospace applications have much tighter quality and tolerance requirements, several current aerospace automation techniques were gleaned from automotive origins. Several OEM and Tier 1 aerospace companies have hired automotive mid to high level management to run organizations – emulating automotive run production."



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AEROSPACE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN