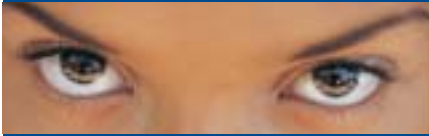


## Making inroads into defence

The threat of competition from Far Eastern and Eastern European sources is enough to concern any UK Contract Electronics Manufacturer, but as Newcastle-under-Lyme based company, AWS Electronics tells EMP, the future looks optimistic as inroads are made into the defence sector.

AWS Electronics is a medium-sized CEM with over 240 employees and a claimed \$10M turnover growing by 25 per cent per annum. Constantly investing in both equipment and training, the latest equipment purchases and upgrades are designed around the need to convert to lead-free manufacture and AWS offers many services to support customers through the conversion process,

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AWS Electronics is a specialist contract manufacturer. We provide outsourcing services to a range of demanding industries including food, IT/communications, scientific/medical, aero/defence and rail sectors.

From complex PCB assemblies and quality cable harnesses to delivery of complete product, fully tested. From design to procurement, assembly to after sales services, we bring a clearly focused vision to your specific requirements.

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ranging from analysis of bills of materials to complete re-specifying, re-sourcing and re-design to accommodate lead free alternatives.

Involvement with the defence industry began over five years ago, making a range of products from high power satellite communication base station units through missile control PCB assemblies and cable assemblies.

In recent years defence prime contractors have been re-directing their sourcing efforts to complement traditional defence industry suppliers by finding companies that will manufacture to defence standards at commercial prices. AWS report that this has led to substantial growth in its defence workload and scope, bringing in business as a major cable contractor within the Bowman programme, land vehicle communications cables, land static communications platform design and build, ship-borne communications rack design and build and PCB assemblies for aircraft, missile control systems and missile tracking equipment.

In the past two years, the company is reporting growth rates of 48 per cent and 36 per cent respectively and AWS believe that the defence sector accounts for much of that growth. Although two of its defence customers have worked with AWS for three years and one year respectively, most AWS customers have been partners for over five years. Indeed, it is the company's proud claim that all major clients have been retained through high quality and service levels throughout its 31-year history.

The company aims to work in a flexible manner to respond to all the needs of its clients. Business development manager, Mark Howitt explains: "In one example, a long-standing client asked us to manufacture a 100-fold increase in their normal order of PCB assemblies, for delivery within three months. In a second example, an urgent requirement was placed on AWS for some communications racks to be designed and built at such short lead-times that even the staff that placed the order believed it impossible to meet. When AWS delivered on time, some even had to cancel their holidays to receive them. Owing to our pool of expertise and flexible structure, we were able to accommodate this – simultaneously with the PCB assembly order mentioned above and a major increase in other workloads – without reducing the service levels given to other clients."

In order to undertake this work, AWS has invested heavily in equipment, training and resources. It has trained up almost a hundred staff to IPC 620 Class 3 and has recruited an accredited trainer so that they can train any new recruits quickly. This complements the \$300k investment made in its cable assembly facilities and the \$350k investment made in its electronic and assembly business. This includes lead-free training and equipment and additional training to IPC 610 Class 3 for electronic assemblies and to J-standard 001 for surface mount.

As well as aero-defence, AWS provides medium-volume electronic manufacturing services to other demanding industry sectors such as medical, rail, food and scientific equipment with capability for manufacturing PCB assemblies, electrical and electronic sub-assemblies and finished products and cable and wiring harnesses.

AWS believes its strength lies in the range of value-added services the company can offer. Comments Mark: "As well as manufacturing capability, we offer a broad range of value-added services, such as design and production engineering, parallel engineering with clients' development teams, prototype manufacturing, kitting, line-side delivery, after-sales services such as repairs,



refurbishment, upgrades and obsolescence management. Our engineering support is localised, being in the same time zone, language, processes and culture. Production, technical support and deliveries are extremely responsive to customers' fluctuating demands - and the attitude of the entire workforce is 'can-do' and positive. The way in which the company is organised is designed to assure clients of dedicated, flexible and complete manufacturing services."

▶ AWS Electronics  
[www.empmag.co.uk/awselectronics](http://www.empmag.co.uk/awselectronics)  
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## Defending the supply-chain stronghold at DSEI

Electronics Manufacturing Services provider TTtms, is enhancing its profile in the defence industry by exhibiting at the DSEI show in September – the largest international showcase for defence and military aerospace technology.

TTtms is a manufacturer of electronic and electromechanical assemblies and finished products for UK and US defence industries. The company has among its customers, a number of leading industry names and has had involvement with several high profile projects including:

- Supply of assemblies to BAE Systems for its NLaw project, for use within the missile's guidance systems
- A 10-year agreement with Ultra Electronics to share manufacturing of certain sonobuoy components for the UK Ministry of Defence
- A long term contract with the Harris Corporation for its Bowman Radio programme
- Bid activities on various Joint Strike Fighter programmes



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