

Eight Questions

Danny Hakker was appointed CEO of MAAS Aviation in October 2024, having previously been the company's chief financial officer the year before. With more than 20 years of experience in the transport and distribution industries, among many others, his enthusiasm and vision for the company look set to increase the group's commercial focus and drive new changes

Question 1: *Since you have been appointed CEO, what has been the biggest challenge to date and how have you overcome it?*

It's still early days for me as CEO of MAAS, but one of the biggest challenges we face as a business is navigating industry demand volatility while ensuring that we remain operationally efficient and competitive.

Managing seasonality in the aircraft painting sector is another ongoing challenge. We have traditionally seen this in our MRO work but are now also experiencing it on the OEM side of our operations, mainly due to supply chain issues. This requires us to find solutions for issues such as skill-set retention while scaling up and down our workforce at different times of the year. One way we're addressing this is through secondment programmes, where our teams move to different locations depending on the seasonal requirements.

Of course, escalating operating costs, supply chain and production issues, and recruitment and retention challenges all pressure the sector. But these challenges are not exclusive to MAAS, the aircraft painting and coatings market, or even the broader aviation industry. They are far-reaching business issues that we must all adapt to.

Within MAAS, we foster a culture of continuous improvement, encourage honest and open feedback at all times, and empower our colleagues to make swift decisions when needed. Collaboration and leveraging a strong team remain the most effective ways to overcome challenges.

Question 2: *Where do you see MAAS Aviation developing within the sector?*

Our main priority is to consistently deliver the high-quality painting standards we are known for, working in partnership with our customers to optimise their operations. We are also focused on strengthening our position as a global leader in aircraft painting by expanding our geographical footprint and advancing our technical expertise.

On the MRO side, MAAS will continue to invest in modern facilities that allow us to diversify our customer base and serve airlines with mixed fleets. Regarding our OEM partners, we see opportunities to further support them with outsourced supplementary surface solutions, allowing them to focus more on their core activities.

We aim to pioneer sustainable practices, be solution-oriented for our customers and deepen our relationships with commercial and private aviation clients. We will always focus on providing unparalleled quality, operational excellence and customer satisfaction.

Question 3: *What do you think will happen regarding paint processes and techniques in the next few years?*

Automation is a key area for development, especially given the personnel challenges faced by the industry. Repainting aircraft is a very labour-intensive process, especially the stripping, cleaning, masking and preparation phases. However, these can also be extremely difficult parts of the process to automate. Where very detailed masking, lining-out and sanding are needed, a robotics solution would likely

not be cost-effective, but it's an area we continue to monitor and explore.

In my opinion, automation is still a very long way off in the MRO sector due to the different configurations of each customer's aircraft. However, there is more scope for it in OEM operations, as repeatability is key.

Another area likely to become commonplace much sooner is the use of digital technology and augmented reality for virtual training in painting techniques to develop and improve skill sets. This technology is already available and is proving to be very effective, not to mention also quite good fun! I had the pleasure of trying it myself recently while at the MRO Europe tradeshow in Barcelona in October. Exo-skeleton suits are another interesting technology that has entered the market and is being looked at as a tool to support people with labour-intensive sanding jobs, for example.

However, the most significant innovations are in the paint systems being developed, which are much more environmentally friendly and deliver great advances in drying times. These more sustainable and often waterborne solutions are fast replacing the older chromated products. In the automotive sector, water-based products, and UV technology to aid drying times have been established for a long time. Still, the additional testing and approvals needed in the aviation sector means it takes a lot longer to break through. But many have been introduced now. In terms of the next big jump, it's likely to be the introduction of water-based and dual-cure technologies to enhance processes further.



Question 4: The aviation sector must balance its work with an ever-increasing set of green environmental rulings. How do you believe MAAS Aviation can meet these, and how, if so, do they impact current processes?

At MAAS, sustainability has been a crucial part of our business plan for many years, and we work hard to be as 'green' as possible in all our operations and facilities. Since 2022, we have been reporting our emissions as part of the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). We are very proud of our progress and recognition of our efforts to manage our environmental impacts. While this positions MAAS as a pioneer in our sector, our objective is to implement further carbon reduction initiatives and realise a 'B' score by the end of 2025. The goal is to reduce our Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 55% by the end of 2030 vs 2023.

Furthermore, all our sites in the Netherlands, Lithuania, Germany and the United States are ISO-14001 accredited. Our paint bays all have underground sump systems built below the hangar floor to ensure no waste chemicals or contaminated water ends up on the apron or local area. We also continue to expand our procurement of certified 100% renewable electricity across our locations,



with our Lithuanian facility leading the way. In the United States, we offset our utility usage to ensure that our operations there contribute to our overall carbon reduction goals.

MAAS Aviation has developed its own unique recycling technology, which allows us to recover 80% of the solvents we use. These solvents are then redeployed to clean equipment such as paint guns, lines and pipes. In addition, all the dry materials we use in the painting process, such as paper, plastic sheeting and tape, are also recycled.

Question 5: We work closely with all of our partners, especially the major aircraft paint manufacturers, to ensure we use the latest coatings and techniques, which reduce fuel usage and carbon emissions during the aircraft's lifetime.

TOP RIGHT:

Each aircraft painted requires 5km of masking tape to complete the average job. In addition, the paint shops use paper and plastic sheeting equivalent to the size of 35 football pitches

All images via MAAS Aviation

BELOW:

The specification of ultra-modern facilities reflects MAAS Aviation's design expertise, which includes fully climate-controlled paint shops, computerised management systems and high-lux lighting



It's safe to say that we take environmental sustainability extremely seriously. Over the next three to five years, we plan to implement more measures to continue reducing emissions and further limiting our environmental impact.

What are airlines expecting from their paint finishes now regarding duration, durability, etc? What are the 'golden rules' that must be followed before a finished aircraft rolls out for the client?

Our airline customers expect their coating finishes to look great and perform well until their next heavy maintenance checks, which are usually every six to eight years, depending on their routes and environment. Using the latest pre-treatment technologies, coupled with basecoat clearcoat systems and our high-quality painting techniques and processes, we see excellent longevity in the coating systems we apply, at times extending well beyond our customers' scheduled checks.

All repainted aircraft undergo various stages of inspection throughout the process to ensure compliance with the Structural Repair Manual and Aircraft Maintenance Manual. The final inspections are very thorough for quality and safety. In line with our Quality Management System, key milestones are built into the process, which are checked, recorded and signed for by our specially trained supervisors and the on-site engineer.

The team physically checks all critical parameters (film thickness, temperature, humidity, substrate temperature, adhesion, gloss, etc), which are recorded in the customer work pack and double-checked by the engineers. This diligence and commitment to the highest quality of work ensure that every aircraft that leaves one of our facilities is a gleaming representation of our customer's brand and will stand out on runways worldwide for many years to come.



Question 6: MAAS Aviation recently completed two A319s for the Hungarian Air Force. Are you investigating the military sector? If not, what other sectors does MAAS Aviation have a presence in, such as business jets and corporate?

MAAS has a long-established history supporting airlines and leasing companies in the commercial sector. We also support military, cargo, VIP business and corporate jet customers, manufacturers and MROs. We are most well known in the commercial aviation sector, but have extensive experience and expertise in the VIP/corporate sphere. Due to the nature of VIP customers, this is not often widely publicised.

MAAS is recognised globally as one of the leading specialists in complex and detailed liveries. We are proud to have painted several high-profile aircraft, such as the Embraer Profit Hunter Tech Eagle, and have worked on many more discreet projects, painting BBJs, ACJs, Gulfstreams, Globals and Challengers for high-net-worth individuals, corporates and governments.

Question 7: Looking toward the future, what would you like to see develop across the aircraft painting and finishing sector? What do you believe it needs?

Looking forward, I expect consolidation in the sector, and there is a need for more

LEFT:

Globally, MAAS Aviation can paint 580 aircraft a year

BELOW:

In partnership with Embraer, MAAS Aviation created the striking Profit Hunter paint scheme for the E195-E2, which the aircraft wore as part of a sales demonstration tour by the OEM

investment in workforce development to ensure skilled professionals are available to meet future demands. Painting planes is physically strenuous work, so it's not for everybody. But when done well, it is true craftsmanship, and we need to do more to attract and retain talent in the sector. This is a real challenge and one that the whole MRO industry needs to be addressing and fast! Forecasts report that fleets are growing and will double in the next 20 years, so a collaborative, industry-wide approach to solving this problem must be needed.

I would also like to see further advancements in sustainability and greater co-operation between service providers and paint companies to streamline processes.

Question 8: On a personal level, how do you spend your free time? Any hobbies that you enjoy?

Outside of work, I enjoy watching my children's hockey matches and coaching a hockey team for players with disabilities. I genuinely enjoy their energy and spontaneity. My partner and I often visit museums and love going on city trips. My camera always comes along so I can photograph street art. I play padel with friends to stay fit and enjoy working in the garden. On weekends, I love to cook, especially the famous recipes from my dad. **AI**

