

Choosing the Best from the Best



OEMs in the aerospace electronics industry have the pick of the country's best contract manufacturing businesses. How should they choose the ideal partner to safeguard their business with important customers?

The UK aerospace industry is the second largest in the world and is worth over £22 billion, according to the most recent survey by industry body ADS Group. The industry as a whole provides over 100,000 jobs, and employment is rising. But conditions are tough in both civil and military markets worldwide, as airlines face rising operating costs that ultimately place pressure on equipment prices, and as governments become increasingly careful with defence spending. To thrive today, technology companies in the aerospace sector must deliver highly innovative new equipment on time and at ultra-competitive prices.

Which is why OEMs producing [aerospace or defence electronics](#) need to choose their manufacturing partners wisely. An accurate and comprehensive supplier evaluation is essential, and the Quality Management System (QMS) is an ideal place to begin. In some cases the OEM's customer may insist that all companies in the supply chain operate a [QMS qualified to AS9100](#). This is particularly true of organisations that have been closely involved in developing the AS9100 specifications. Others may allow more freedom for OEMs to select a manufacturer based on their own criteria, which could be as simple as already having a long history of successful joint projects. This is actually a very good basis on which to make a selection.



Active-PCB Solutions has doubled its floor space and capacity

Standards

Ultimately, the OEM needs to be sure that the chosen CEM can deliver to the agreed specification, on time, and in the required quantities, with no deviation in build quality, and with all necessary documentation such as certificates of conformity and traceability data readily available. To provide evidence of this, the CEM should be able to describe the procedures that are in place to [support new product introduction](#) and minimise any threats that may delay or prevent delivery. Business performance data such as on-time delivery statistics, the time taken to respond to quotes, kitting

times and records of supplier on-time deliveries, and information about repeat orders from customers can also provide a reliable indication of the type of performance the OEM can expect.

These are Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that an OEM must be sure to assess when auditing a candidate manufacturing partner. AS9100 obliges organisations to record this data in order to maintain their QMS certification. The advantage for an OEM is that an AS9100-qualified manufacturer is able to share this information readily and clearly. [Active-PCB Solutions](#), for example, includes a comprehensive set of KPIs as part of its corporate presentation. This effectively relieves much of the OEM's responsibility to ensure that basic issues are covered, and can help to streamline supplier evaluation. AS9100 also formalises requirements for continuous improvement of aspects such as product quality, staff performance, and training.

Differentiators

One of the major differentiators of an AS9100 QMS, compared to a general-purpose QMS such as ISO 9001, lies in the stipulations surrounding product realisation and particularly assessment of any hazards that may prevent delivery. This assures the OEM customer that any risks such as non-delivery or component obsolescence are understood in advance and procedures put in place to minimise their consequences.

It is also worth pointing out that companies may differ in the way they implement their QMS. AS9100 requires the QMS to meet minimum criteria, but Active-PCB has strengthened its AS9100-certified QMS in relation to issues such as traceability, and has implemented procedures so that the top-level quality manual flows down through work procedures and specific build instructions to support a true NPI service for customers. This has effectively streamlined processes, enabling very fast turnaround times.

As a final note, cooperation and communication throughout the project is important to achieve the best possible results. [Active-PCB](#) encourages dialogue with its customers through services such as the Feedback Report provided with every build, at no extra cost, which provides an aid to continuous improvement. Cooperation that gets results is a true measure of whether the two companies are really a good fit.

Are you looking for a CEM or would you like to discuss a project?

Call us on **+44 (0) 118 9310292** to discuss your requirements or to arrange a visit and discover how Active-PCB Solutions can help you with your manufacturing needs.

Active-PCB Solutions Ltd
Unit 4 Acre Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG2 0SU

Telephone: +44 (0) 118 9310292

Email: sales@active-pcb.com

Visit our website: www.active-pcb.com

