

Career PATH

Can you walk us through your typical day at work?

I start with a walk through the Vallair hangars in Montpellier to see if there are any issues, then I catch up on the overnight industry news. Currently, the ‘births & marriages’ (start-ups, acquisitions and mergers) sector is very quiet, with the ‘funerals’ taking all the press. This is followed by team calls to both our facility in Chateauroux and the Vallair HQ in Luxembourg to find out what’s happening, checking on current and future workloads and any issues to be resolved.

A key part of my role is to manage the work flow and the smooth transition of aircraft through our facilities in France – we handle MRO and painting in Montpellier, whereas aerostructure repair, aircraft and engine teardown and recycling and materials management are undertaken in Chateauroux.

How did you get into aviation?

My aviation career started in 1978 with a nine-year spell in the Royal Air Force. This was followed by a period as a sub-contractor, prior to going as a ‘permie’ for Marshall Aerospace in Cambridge. It was here that I got the ‘big break’ and went into the



Malcolm Chandler, head of commercial & marketing of Vallair Industries, talks about his extensive career and passion for the aviation industry

commercial & sales director role. After several years, Marshall chose to concentrate on the military side of things, so I joined Lufthansa Technik in Ireland. After six years there, Marshall asked me to return to Cambridge as they were setting up in the civil aviation business again; the lesson here is never burn your bridges. After a short time there rebuilding the approvals and the team from scratch, an opportunity arose to join Vallair here in Montpellier, France. The rest is history.

What do you like the most about your job?

The job satisfaction and travel, as well as working in the ‘aerospace family’

environment. From my time in the RAF to the present day, there are very few countries I have not visited. I also enjoy the challenge of bringing productivity and quality changes to improve operations at MRO facilities.

What has been the most satisfying experience of your career?

I have worked on many unique projects, which may have been very tough at the time but gave great job satisfaction. Projects such as the Orbital Sciences Satellite Launcher, freighter conversions and VIP completions are some examples, but also introducing new aircraft types to a facility such as B747 and B777



aircraft have been immensely complex. To be involved in such projects from cradle to grave gives great satisfaction to everyone concerned. Currently, the most exciting project at Vallair is our new A321P2F cargo conversion programme. This will be launched and gain significant traction over the next couple of months.



What advice would you give to a young person entering the industry?

Do it. The industry is a bit tough now, but it will come back with greater demand, greener working practices and more opportunities. There are many ways into the industry, either through the armed forces, aerospace apprenticeship schemes or other allied engineering trades. In addition to hangar work, there is also engineering design, planning, logistics, law – the opportunities are endless. **M**

