

Play to win!

**MARKETING®
DEPARTMENT**

WIN MORE AEROSPACE BUSINESS

**6 Actions Small Michigan Aerospace
Manufacturers Can Take to Win More Business**

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Aerospace has never been more prosperous. Boeing and Airbus have a backlog demand for 40,000+ new commercial planes. Space truly is the new frontier, with launches nearly every day. DoD continues to fund programs, and there are exciting new possibilities for up-and-coming air mobility technologies. These all add up to growing opportunities for Michigan suppliers.

Whether you've already earned your AS9100 or you're an automotive supplier looking to pivot, with the correct positioning, marketing, and sales strategies, smaller Michigan companies can win and secure more aerospace business. Although every company and supplier is unique and deserves its own approach, here are some things that business leaders should seriously consider if you want to gain market share and build aerospace industry relationships.

Shift the inside sales team approach from transactional order takers to being proactive and conversational.

Procurement lists and RFQs are only as good as your customer relationships and company reputation. Unlike other commodity-driven industries where price and fast turn-around times win, the aerospace supply chain prioritizes advantages like quality, front-end processes, value-added services, and experience. This means inside sales teams, which traditionally process quotes, need to adjust their approach to think more like outside salespeople. Aerospace sales is much less transactional and more conversational.

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Sales teams with high aerospace win rates have a few things in common:

- They don't wait for the phone to ring. They're knowledgeable and proactive, connecting with current customers, asking for referrals, expanding their networks on LinkedIn, building CRM systems, making cold calls, and asking for orders.
- They ask smart engineering and quality-driven questions and are prepared with smart answers.
- They align their sales process and messaging to the prospective company's brand messaging and promises.

Understand, position, and sell your competitive advantage.

Because of strict manufacturing requirements and standards, there are fewer competitors in the aerospace industry. But smaller suppliers will be challenged against larger, more polished and sophisticated competitors with deep capabilities.

Yes, your brand identity must be polished and professional, but equally important is making sure your competitive advantages are front and center in your messaging. It's critical to understand precisely the one or two things that make you uniquely valuable to aerospace companies. **What's the one claim that you can make that no one else can?**

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Frankly speaking, if you can't identify that critical selling point, then you and your team better start developing a competitive advantage that fills a gap in the supply chain. Examples of unique selling points are:

- robust inventory programs
- deep DFM processes
- sophisticated front-end design
- prototyping services
- special materials
- product testing teams

Aerospace buyers value niche experts and companies that provide specialty products and services. In fact, a lot of government contracting is starting to trend less toward large "turnkey" companies and more toward niche companies.

Be prepared to collaborate.

As aerospace suppliers work downstream, they value engineering expertise and tend to attract manufacturers whose teams and processes are geared more towards problem solving and opportunity thinking.

Company leaders and business developers should make sure you have people on board who are capable of talking to engineers at an in-depth, highly competent level. And make sure you get these people involved in the sales process early on.

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Engage industry organizations.

Local, state, and national Industry organizations, like Aerospace Industry Association of Michigan (AIAM) and the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), serve as connectors. Becoming actively involved with organizations like these is an excellent way to make very high connections. Here's how:

- Build strong relationships directly through people who work for these organizations. Key organization employees can often be your greatest advocates. They have large networks and bring value to their members by making introductions.
- Attend trade shows and member events! People are there to network and find opportunities — don't lose out. Keep in mind that when it comes to aerospace trade shows, bigger isn't always better. The more local the trade show, the more effective it will be for your company, especially when you're just starting out. We've seen some really small manufacturers show up at big trade shows without the resources to look competitive.
- Volunteer your company and your team to support those organizations. It provides a platform to connect within a trusted network. Whether your people serve on a board, speak at an event, or support a scholarship, if you play your cards strategically, you will make many connections.

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Ensure your marketing and messaging reflects what's important to aerospace.

First and foremost, look polished and professional. Next, make sure your presentations and marketing materials feature qualifications that are really important to aerospace. They will create immediate credibility. Here are a few:

•**Competitive advantage(s) (see above)**

- AS9100, HubZone, minority-owned and other accreditations should be prominent on your website and printed materials
- Quality and continuous improvement policies for your manufacturing processes
- Ongoing capital investment in technology and manufacturing equipment
- Made in the USA – if you're truly committed to 100% American manufacturing
- Your culture and people. Yes, the primes and contract manufacturers recognize that companies with a great culture are stable, have reliable production capacity, and are focused on quality.

If you don't have in-house resources, hire a good local B2B marketing and PR firm that understands aerospace to provide an outside perspective and strategic advice.

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Ask for referrals.

Your greatest resource for new clients is the clients you already have. If you have loyal, happy clients, don't be afraid to ask for referrals. They can connect you to other divisions, suppliers, and companies.

If your company is looking to increase production and profits and has a strong quality management system, a motivated sales team, and the ability to manage detailed government regulations and paperwork, aerospace may be right for you.

Do your research, build your capabilities, and spread the word. Aerospace is no longer just the domain of big businesses — smaller companies can win a piece of the aerospace pie too.



**Call us direct to understand how we can help
you position your company to win!**

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