

KOMMENTAR: No need for suppliers to fear off-shoring

Only two years ago the Europeans were great heroes of the aviation branch and some were beginning to see Boeing as a has-been. Today, the same discussions are back - but things are exactly the other way around this time. One thing is for certain, however: the airliner market is booming and both Airbus and Boeing are looking at full order books. The crucial difference lies in the modernization status of corporate, operational and manufacturing structures. Which is precisely the homework that Airbus is starting to tackle now under the heading of Power 8. And suppliers are called on to shoulder their share of the challenges and master more demanding task profiles in future. Above all, they will have to become more flexible and position themselves in such a way as to be capable of carrying the amount of "risk sharing" that Airbus demands. I recently visited a company that manufactures a component for the Airbus A380. The delivery period totals 150 days, and sub-suppliers distributed across Belgium and France account for a major share of this time. These transport distances, however, do not contribute to value creation. Such inefficiencies must be eliminated, and manu-

facturing streamlined. Every process step should be put to the test and rigorously examined. The pressure on suppliers will result in consolidation, especially with regard to smaller companies. Especially these smaller players, however, are more flexible and agile than the large-scale suppliers. In any case, Airbus suppliers hardly need to fear a major off-shoring wave. Such moves only pay their way in the case of standardized components that do not involve sophisticated materials such as composites. In the latter areas, European companies excel in the respective technologies. Moreover, shifting parts of manufacturing operations to more distant locations abroad would only extend the length of the supply chain once again.



Mike Herr, Managing Director Business Development at TBM Consulting.

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