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Leadership

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By following a slow and steady expansion strategy, AMAC Aerospace's Group Executive Chair and CEO Kadri Muhiddin has built a global enterprise that is thriving.

Unlike many businesses that saw sales collapse during the COVID-19 pandemic, AMAC Aerospace, a leading VIP completion and maintenance center, saw higher levels of interest as the pandemic unfolded.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, we had an increase in business because when aircraft were not flying, owners of the airplanes, especially the corporate ones, updated interiors and systems and made the best out of the situation," explains Kadri Muhiddin, Group Executive Chair and CEO.

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“We commend our workforce because they take the weight of the responsibility we give them.”

Thanks in part to the concept of a flat management style and the removal of bureaucracies, AMAC Aerospace has gone from strength to strength. The trusted workforce is the single most important factor that AMAC Aerospace points to as evidence of the success of the business. Barriers between on-the-ground employees and management are reduced as much as possible, and transparency is encouraged, Muhiddin says.

“We commend our workforce because they take the weight of the responsibility we give them,” Muhiddin tells *The CEO Magazine*. “They are the reason AMAC Aerospace is sitting on top of the industry. There really isn’t any critical thing that happened in the life of AMAC Aerospace to make it a success, except that it started with hard work and we’re still working hard, with any changes starting very, very small.”

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EXPANSION PLANS

Muhiddin and his team are always on the lookout for acquisition opportunities to expand what the company is able to offer to its customers. The business typically focuses on acquiring small companies that complement its business, with ongoing conversations with potential acquisition targets taking place at the moment.

In the nearly 15 years since AMAC Aerospace was founded, and acquisitions have been a major source of growth. The company has spread from small cities in Switzerland and now has a major global presence.



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“We first branched out in Zurich,” Muhiddin explains. “Now, we are in London, France, Turkey, Lebanon, and we recently opened a regional operational office in Saudi Arabia, which we have future plans for.”

Unlike other organizations that have either pulled back on expansion plans or stopped searching for acquisitions completely, AMAC Aerospace has remained committed to expansion and recruitment, despite the challenging economic environment across the world and the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

“If you think about the history of AMAC Aerospace, we’re always on the move and we’re always expanding. That should tell you how active the company is,” he says. “We hope to execute our growth plans within a year-and-a-half from now, which will see the company much bigger than it is now and with a wider platform of operation.”

STAFF COMMITMENT

Like many other industries, firms operating in the aviation sector have faced economic headwinds in recent years, forcing job cuts. Despite hiring consistently since 2007 as the business has grown, AMAC Aerospace has never carried out any major job cutting program.

“We’ve never exercised that option, which unfortunately some of our competitors do. We don’t feel happy about it because it’s sad to see colleagues in the industry losing their jobs,” Muhiddin says. “Every single person that works in AMAC Aerospace is a link of a long, strong chain. If we feel that this chain is weakening, we can come together and offer support.”

One of the central policies that AMAC Aerospace has benefited from is an open-door approach toward any ideas. If anybody in the organization has any questions – whether it’s a cleaner, a mechanic or a manager – executive management doors are always open.



“In today’s age, there is no excuse for not responding to somebody that needs help. That’s the principle that makes the company so strong.”

“If a particular person needs an answer, they will get it on the spot regardless of where the source of the answer is coming from, whether it is within the company or if the person is traveling,” Muhiddin explains.

Making this solid commitment to all staff, no matter what job they perform, helps to make everyone feel a part of the wider company, he believes.

“In today’s age, there is no excuse for not responding to somebody that needs help. That’s the principle that makes the company so strong. No one can say ‘I did this’ and take all the credit for it. Credit is shared with everybody,” he says.

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SUPPLY CHAIN CHALLENGES

It's no secret that sourcing the right materials in many industries, including aviation, is difficult due to weaknesses in global supply chains. The ongoing war in Ukraine and sanctions that have been imposed have put pressure on other aviation businesses that had Russian customers or partnerships. But AMAC Aerospace had little exposure to this risk, Muhiddin says.

Aircrafts are extremely complex machines and require hundreds upon hundreds of specific pieces of equipment to work, with even a relatively short delay on any of these items causing considerable challenges.



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“When somebody pays 100 million dollars, they expect the top quality that you promised before charging 100 million. That’s their right.”

Some of the more detailed parts take many months to fabricate, and shifting suppliers is often not possible without further delays. The challenge for AMAC Aerospace is to find a solution to this problem and to find ways to keep its customers happy if they don’t have the ability to get a quick fix.

“Number one, you delay it. Number two, if you cannot delay it because the customer does not accept the waiting time, you have to diversify and find something different to do it, which might be more expensive,” he says.

“When somebody pays 100 million dollars, they expect the top quality that you promised before charging 100 million. That’s their right,” he says. “And nobody can deprive them of that right. We make sure that that target is met for them. This is the ultimate challenge. Keep your customer happy.”

A Different Perspective

When it comes to success, Muhiddin measures it differently than just bottom-line profits. For Muhiddin, success can be seen when the business is running well, employees are happy, communication with staff is easy and transparency is there.

On a personal level, Muhiddin’s satisfaction comes from the company’s success.

“If the company is not working, how can you personally be successful or consider yourself successful, regardless of whether you are making money or not?” he asks.

“Ultimately the company is what it is because of our workforce.”