

Flight of

FANCY

By Michael
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AN UNEXPECTED DETOUR TO ORLANDO HAS QUADRANT SIMULATION SYSTEMS POISED TO TAKE OFF IN THE U.S.

»» Mick McBroom had his itinerary neatly outlined. Investigating potential sites for a new U.S. flight-simulator operation, McBroom was in Dallas, with his next stop planned for Miami three days later. Sent by United Kingdom-based Quadrant Systems Ltd. to establish a U.S. presence, he was seeking a center of industry activity.



Unexpectedly, though, McBroom ran into colleagues whom he had worked with in the UK who convinced him to take a detour before heading to South Florida. They were based in Orlando, primarily doing business with Lockheed Martin. When McBroom joined them on their trip home and subsequently toured the area, he was in for an even bigger surprise.

"I was blown away by the amount of military and simulator businesses housed in this area," says McBroom, recalling the experience in 2004. "I basically went down to Miami already making up in my mind that this was the place to be. I returned to the owners in the group and said that if we're going to run a business in the United States, it needs to be in Orlando."

In September 2004, Quadrant Simulation Systems Inc. opened for business in Orlando as a specialist in the repair, refurbishment, maintenance and updating of simulation systems, with McBroom serving as vice president of operations.

What McBroom found was an emerging leader in simulation, laser and information technology industries. And nothing has occurred since then to deter that progress.

With more than 140 modeling, simulation and training companies and nearly 17,000 workers, metro Orlando's simulation industry has become the largest industry cluster in the country. The cluster is anchored by powerhouses such as Lockheed Martin, SAIC, Northrop Grumman and Evans & Sutherland, but is also complemented by scores of smaller innovators. Numerous training system procurement commands for the U.S. military are located in the region, as well. Collectively, they dole out \$9 billion to contractors.

In addition, the local industry is supported by several leading research, support and educational facilities, including the National Center for Simulation, University of Central Florida's (UCF) Institute for Simulation and Training, and Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. Notably, UCF is one of three universities nationwide to offer a

doctorate degree in Modeling, Simulation and Training, while Embry Riddle is widely regarded as one of the top aviation and aerospace schools in the country. Not coincidentally, the media has taken notice. Most recently, *eWeek* recognized Orlando as one of the top 10 emerging technology hubs in the U.S.

Quadrant, according to McBroom, isn't necessarily looking to make headlines. Instead, it seeks to find a niche by aligning with major manufacturers of original flight simulation equipment.

"We're trying to make ourselves into a really good support company to make these guys carry on with their growth and get their jobs done on time and in budget," he explains.

So far, so good.

Just three years ago, the company staff total was six, counting McBroom and five associates spread across the county. Today, there are 29 people on board, and active recruiting for more personnel is ongoing. The growth has spurred a physical move, too. On McBroom's spontaneous visit to Orlando, Central Florida Research Park

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caught his eye. However, it was only recently that he was able to relocate there, moving from the periphery into 9,000 square feet on Challenger Parkway in the heart of the complex.

"We finally made it," McBroom exalts.

There, Quadrant continually monitors the international aviation industry to track systems that are becoming mandatory across the world, enabling the company to quickly meet new requirements for commercial customers, while also participating in major military projects. Quadrant has developed a suite of proprietary technology products that are aimed at keeping flight simulators up-to-date and in line with aircraft configurations and current regulations.

Quadrant's PC IOS (Instructors



Operating Station), for example, is regarded as one of the most powerful and effective, providing comprehensive facilities and ease of use. Quadrant has considerable experience replacing existing IOSs, McBroom cites, including the complex interface required with the simulator host computers. Quadrant's most recent simulation product is an Electronic Qualification Test Guide system, which can be installed on many types of flight simulators. The system allows the operator/maintainer to concisely present the typically voluminous Qualification Test Guide results to local aviation authorities.

Technicalities aside, the focus is on diversification and growth, with an accent on making life easier for both manufacturers and product users.

"We are geared to provide whatever level of support is needed," McBroom vows.

And he couldn't think of a better place to make it happen, even if he was first caught off-guard.

"The scenario with Orlando," he concludes, "is that if anyone wants to start a business, this is where I would come." ❌