



AEROSPACE INDUSTRY TAKES SMALL STEPS TOWARDS BIG DATA

News / Airlines



The aerospace industry is struggling to make the most of the chances offered by Big Data to reduce production costs, optimise flight routes, and improve monitoring and maintenance of aircraft equipment, executives said.

Sensors placed on aircraft equipment and systems could provide a wealth of data that could help to speed up production and ensure better performance of parts, but planemakers and suppliers, struggling to cope with a backlog of orders, are not yet making the most of it.

European planemaker Airbus will discuss its digitalisation strategy when it invites media for its annual Innovation Days event at its factory in Hamburg on Monday and Tuesday.

"We are in an industry that produces a vast amount of data and yet we use... only a tiny portion of that data, that has to change," Airbus Group CEO Tom Enders said.

Big Data is typically defined as large volumes of data that can be analysed to reveal patterns.

Having a fully digitalised chain of data in place could allow all those working on an engine, for

example, to have the most amount of information possible on any changes made between the design, production and operation by airlines.

That could vastly improve the production and maintenance of engines.

"The new raw material is not titanium or nickel but data," said Cedric Goubet, head of civil programmes at engine maker Snecma, part of Safran.

Snecma is also working on algorithms that will analyse data to help airlines optimise routes and save fuel, while digitalisation could help suppliers to better coordinate production sites as far flung as India, Vietnam, China and Turkey.

Equipment maker Daher uses its Daher Control Room, originally developed for its nuclear activities, to manage its global network of suppliers in real time, which it says gives it greater visibility.

Alan Pellegrini, head of the U.S. division of Thales, said the next step will be to assess information coming from the aircraft in real-time, rather than waiting for the information to be downloaded when planes are on the ground, to better improve the performance of systems on the aircraft, he said.

Managing Director Frederic Micheland of supplier Latecoere, which provides cables and doors for planes, said much still needed to be done.

"We have a long way to go and a lot of industrial issues to deal with first," he said.

28 MAY 2016

SOURCE: REUTERS

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