MEMBER PROFILE

**GIGAFLIGHT CONNECTIVITY INC.**

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# GigaFlight quickly connects with customers

STORY BY CHRISTINE KNAUER

In Greendale, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee, GigaFlight Connectivity offers high-performance specialty electronic cables, connectors and cable assemblies for use in military, commercial and general aviation aircraft. But they're hardly the only ones.

There are 33 electronic cable manufacturers in Wisconsin, according to the Wiring Harness Manufacturer's Association based just across the Wisconsin-Illinois border outside of Chicago. Most are located near the state's largest city and supply the aerospace and aviation industries. In the four-state region – Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and Indiana – the tally jumps to 173.

So why is America's heartland home to a large number of aerospace wire and cable manufacturers? It could be a byproduct of the Midwest being so heavily concentrated in manufacturing or the need for proximity to support original equipment manufacturers in the area, according to Christine Siebert, WHMA marketing and communications professional. Whatever the reason, it has led to an abundance of local experts.

"We have a great talent pool here with all of these great companies in the same area – people who understand the industry and customers' needs," said Ben Hackett, who started GigaFlight Connectivity after leaving PIC Wire & Cable, also an AEA member located not far from Milwaukee.

With so much local competition, how does Hackett compete? Exceptionally responsive customer service, innovative product design and competitive pricing, according to the industry veteran who has nearly 28 years of experience working with electronic cables.

**WEBSITE:** gigaflightinc.com

**WHAT THEY DO:**
GigaFlight offers high-performance specialty electronic cables, connectors and cable assemblies for use in military, commercial and general aviation aircraft.

**FOUNDED:** 2017 by Ben Hackett

**AEA MEMBER SINCE:** 2019


*Kimberly Krueger, production manager, uses a network analyzer to validate that the RF cable assemblies meet performance specifications.*

Hackett served eight years in the U.S. Air Force as a radar and F-16 avionics systems technician. Since then, he has served on the ARINC standards committee and engineered and designed RF products used by the aerospace industry, including several industry first connectors.

His designs have helped solve a variety of customer issues, including enabling four cables to pass through a bulkhead in a confined space, creating a 75 ohm RF connector to accommodate HD video, and allowing a larger diameter cable to connect to a smaller contact and still have a built-in extraction tool.

Given his extensive experience, Hackett understands electronic cables as well as the aviation and defense industries, which places him in an enviable position to deliver on his competitive goals.

"In the 1990s, the quick turnarounds were incredible," Hackett said. "You could call a company and ask for a TCAS shipset, for example. You would get a print and a quote, and they would ship out the custom-designed cable the next day. Today, there's a growing void in the marketplace caused by our

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**GIGAFLIGHT CONNECTIVITY**

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competition's shift in product focus and increasing emphasis on large, complex programs with airframe manufacturers. We intend to fill it."

Most wire and cable companies seem to be focusing more and more on serving large OEMs such as Boeing and Airbus, leaving smaller operators with fewer resources and long wait times, according to Hackett.


*In March, GigaFlight received its AS9100 and ISO 9001 certifications.*

"Meanwhile, a guy has his headliner torn out of his airplane waiting for a cable," he explained. "Servicing the onesie-twosie orders takes a lot of time and a lot of people, but customers need it. A lot of mod centers could see this coming, so they started building their own inventory. Since that's not their primary focus, they don't know what to keep on their shelves. That's the void we're filling. We want to go back to the good ol' days. I've pulled together a team of highly recognized individuals in the industry to make it happen."

GigaFlight's primary customers are comprised of military, civil, defense system and airframe OEMs, maintenance repair organizations, kit manufactures,

prototype integration facilities and military prime contractors.

"Our cables are designed to perform in the harsh environments of aerospace and defense applications," Hackett explained. "We've modeled our products around those most commonly used in the industry today to promote interchangeability and reduce lead times."

GigaFlight's high-performance aerospace cables are available in three product lines – 50 ohm coaxial, 75 ohm coaxial and data bus. The company's RF coaxial connectors are designed to be paired with GigaFlight's coaxial cables and can be used as drop-in replacements for similar cables in the aerospace industry. The assembly team can create cable assemblies for use with a wide variety of systems on virtually every military, commercial and general aviation platform. The most popular assembly kits include HDMI, Ethernet, quadrax and RF.

For customers who need more technical support, GigaFlight offers full-service capability. Hackett's team can design custom kits, engineer solutions tailored to specific systems and needs, create assembly drawings in one to two days, and provide field service support for installing, terminating and testing coax assemblies.

Hackett is especially proud of his team's ability to meet customers' custom design needs and fast deadlines.

"We developed a CAN bus wire for a major system OEM in less than four weeks," Hackett said. "Then, they tested it and approved it for use with their system. Start to finish, our CAN bus was specified in the OEM's installation manual in less then six weeks."

Since opening in December 2017, GigaFlight's revenue has grown some 25% each quarter, according to Hackett. Considering the fierce competition among wire and cable manufacturers in the region, GigaFlight seems to be making all the right connections to succeed. ❑