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Owners and operators return to Wichita for signature Customer Conference event

For the first time in three years, customers recently gathered again in the Air Capital of the World for the Textron Aviation Customer Conference.



The conference has long been an opportunity for owners and operators of Cessna, Beechcraft and Hawker products to learn more about their aircraft, ask technical questions, and offer valuable feedback to the Textron Aviation teams.

The 2022 opening session included a conversation with Ron Draper, president and CEO, about business updates, market trends and current industry challenges.



Celebrating an exciting market

Draper first addressed the significant market changes since the group last gathered in person in 2019.

“The used market took off first. Used airplanes started disappearing and market available inventory shrank. That continued to accelerate throughout last year and into this year,” said Draper. “The market continues to expand with lots of new entrants and concept customers. At the same time, lots of existing customers and businesses are adding a second or third airplane to meet the needs of their business.”

The market continues to expand with lots of new entrants and concept customers.

— Ron Draper, president & CEO, Textron Aviation

Draper pointed to the recent launch of the M2 Gen2 and 8,000th Cessna Citation delivery as examples of both new concept customers and expanding flight departments.

“So, it’s been a very exciting market. It’s really lifted the whole industry,” he said.

Addressing supply chain constraints

Draper admitted that as flight activity has risen, so have supply chain constraints.

“From a capacity standpoint, the aerospace supply chain is healthier than what you see in the news... The infrastructure is there, whether it’s tooling or autoclaves. The challenge is really about hiring skilled labor. Everybody needs to hire 10 to 15 percent more people, and we’re all struggling to replace the people who retired during the pandemic,” he said.

“When we work through capacity chokepoints with suppliers, it usually comes down to they need people. They’re struggling to get them on board and trained.”

Draper shared that with flying up 20 percent, it’s pulled on everyone’s supply chains and recruiting efforts. He said the company has a dedicated team addressing this not just for the company, but also for suppliers.

“We have people on-site with some of our most troubled suppliers to ensure they have the right schedules, orders and systems. And in some cases, we’re sending people to help them actually build parts.”



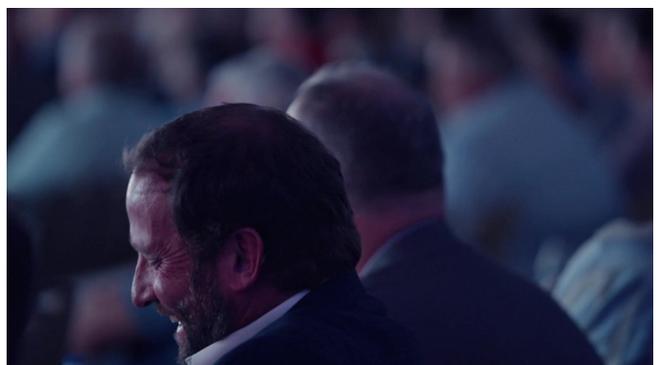
Creating a great culture to win

In addition, the company has been focused on its culture and being a great place to work.

“I believe if you have a great culture, with great people, you’re going to win,” said Draper. “A company with a great culture is going to beat a company with a great strategy every time. We believe that. If you have a great culture and employees that are motivated and like their job, they’re going to take care of customers.”

In addition to the discussion with Ron, customers heard from business leaders, technical experts, and suppliers themselves. Attendees also enjoyed a close-up view of the company’s newest products, including the recently certified Cessna SkyCourier.

Take a look behind the scenes at the event.





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