

# Marketing Masters ascends to aerospace stratosphere

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Jacques Gauron sets out a pile of Clip Nuts, on an aircraft floor panel sample, at Marketing Masters, Inc. in Issaquah. By Greg Farrar

## Manufacture supplies key components for Boeing, Airbus

The fasteners connecting pieces in each Boeing and Airbus jetliner—a component left unseen by passengers for the most part —originate at a small Issaquah manufacturer.

The manufacture, Marketing Masters, creates inserts and fasteners from Torlon® — a substance cheaper, lighter and more resistant to corrosion than the titanium used in earlier-generation aircraft fasteners.

The fasteners hold together pieces in the behemoth Airbus A380 — the largest passenger jetliner in service — and the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, a next generation plane assembled mostly from composite materials.

Issaquah Chamber of Commerce leaders spotlighted Marketing Masters as a business innovator in the Innovation in Issaquah contest late last month.

The chamber also honored Impact Studio Pro and Lakeside Center for Autism as innovators. The carbon-neutral community zHome also received a nod as the most innovative public-private partnership.

Issaquah resident Jacques Gauron, a Liberty High School graduate and brother Andre operate the global Marketing Masters business from a modest building in Central Issaquah. Burger King obscures the facility from the traffic along bustling state Route 900.

“We were early in the game, so to get in there on ground level before a lot of those things were changed, our product was there waiting for the new designs,” Gauron said.

The composite fasteners come in different colors, shapes and sizes. The design for a particular aircraft hinges on specs from the airlines and manufactures.

The company relies on 16 employees in Issaquah and a handful of sales representatives overseas to create and sell the fasteners. Marketing Masters’ signature product is called a Clip Nut.

Boeing and Airbus designers made the Clip Nut a standard component in aircraft about a dozen years ago.

The coin-sized fasteners remain out of sight, secured beneath the carpeting in jetliner cabins, but passengers can peer inside overhead luggage compartments and see the Issaquah-manufactured components.

The composite fastener is 50 percent lighter than aluminum and longer lasting than the metal alternative — no small consideration, because corrosion is the No. 1 threat to aircraft longevity. The weight is a key consideration, too, for airlines and manufactures eager to increase fuel economy.

“That adds up over 10,000 fasteners and it can add up quickly,” Gauron said.

The superjumbo A380, for instance, might contain between 50,000 to 60,000 fasteners.

Marketing Masters ships 15 million fasteners each year from the modest facility in Issaquah to the Boeing plants in Everett and Renton, and to the Airbus plants in Hamburg, Germany and Toulouse, France.

Other Marketing Masters clients include business jet maker Gulfstream Aerospace, Learjet manufacture Bombardier and aerospace company Embraer.

COMAC, the state-run aerospace manufacture in China, is a more recent customer, as the government intends to develop a narrow-body jetliner.

“We love to say, ‘Now they can read “Made in the USA” for a while,’” Gauron said.

The fasteners also hold together components in high-speed trains, recreational vehicles and satellites.

Marketing Masters has evolved since Gauron’s father, Richard, a former sales representative for aerospace products, founder the company in the 1970s.

In the early 1990s, Marketing Masters landed McDonnell Douglas as a client and, in the years since, business skyrocketed. Nowadays, the company is a fixture at the Paris Air Show — a global showcase for aerospace manufactures.

“We were really a little early on the whole composite buzzword, but being there early, we were really ready for when preparation met opportunity,” Gauron said. “It really paid off.”

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