

DISCOVERING THE SOLUTIONS



▶ **Charcroft Electronics' ambition makes it different. Its time-served approach is underpinned by knowledge and expertise that ensures it is a valuable partner in its customer's supply chain. Furthermore, it recognises that to achieve that level of success, it is not simply an ability to provide customers with a reliable resource but a willingness to tackle challenges and a capability to find the solutions that makes a supply chain partner indispensable. Charcroft is proud in the knowledge that its clients see it as such.**

"We're head and shoulders above everyone else in the quality of the components that we supply," enthuses Company Director Debbie Rowland, exemplifying the company's offer is not one of low cost/high volume but precise components built by "specialists" for "specialist" requirements. "None of our franchises are cheap and cheerful, it's all high quality. Our unique selling point is the knowledge we possess alongside the service we can provide."

ESTABLISHED OVER 40 YEARS AGO, CHARCROFT IS A PRIVATELY OWNED ELECTRONIC COMPONENT DISTRIBUTOR WHICH HAS SUCCESSFULLY DEVELOPED AN ENVIABLE REPUTATION IN THE AEROSPACE SECTOR.

This Powys-based Welsh business, which enjoys turnover in excess of £8.5m (around £1m of which is generated from manufacturing) has been recognised for its expertise as recently as 2013 when it was named Manufacturer of the Year at the Powys Business Awards.

Charcroft has established links with a broad spectrum of sectors including Audio, Industrial, Instrumentation, Medical, Military, Oil and Gas, Rail, Space and Transportation.

One sector the company has particularly excelled in is Aerospace. Its in-depth, comprehensive and knowledgeable understanding of the industry has established it as one of the sector's key distributors. Part of its success is its

close relationship with both manufacturers and suppliers to fulfil the requirements of its customers working with leaders in the field such as Sensata/Airpax, Exxelia, Vishay Precision, Kemet and TT Electronics.

It's a challenging sector to be involved with, says Rowland, but the company thrives on finding the solutions. "Trying to reduce the environmental impact is a key challenge because every company we work with is trying to push the boundaries and make a difference. This encompasses the RoHS Compliance regulation that governs electronic components now. Charcroft manages these regulations for our customers. Within aerospace, safety is also an obvious concern, so reliability is paramount."



That's achieved by the company's expertise in finding solutions that don't just tackle issues today but continue to deliver the solutions required long into the future. "We have to specify which products have longevity and consider lifetime of the product versus lifetime of the end programme. There's no point having a component that's going to last five years when the product it's going into is going to last 30 years. We have to find ways to meet those needs."

To achieve this Charcroft considers a broad spectrum of products across the marketplace, identifying the specifications to meet the requirement with a view to only sourcing the highest quality component. "We only use the original component manufacturers' parts rather than sourcing from grey markets," says Rowland. "This also ensures our customers have absolutely no risk from counterfeit components."

Of course, it helps that Charcroft remains independent. "Our component, supplier and industry knowledge is why we're in a good position to support the stringent control in the aerospace market, especially in response to a recent European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) bulletin reflecting the seriousness of counterfeit goods flooding the marketplace. We make sure everything we supply meets all the specifications of customer requirements. We do this alongside supporting our customers with the best possible products no matter which sector they might be in."

For example, one customer - GE Aviation - employs an initiative known as DSQR (Designated Supplier Quality Representative) which demands that every single detail of the part and its paperwork is correct.

Furthermore, the challenge today, particularly when trying to distinguish yourself from competitors, is not just finding the solutions, but finding them quickly. Rowland examples one OEM which had originally designed-in a power supply which was manufactured offshore. When supplies began to fail and replacements were weeks away, Charcroft



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suggested an alternative module from its UK inventory thus mitigating against delays attributed to sourcing.

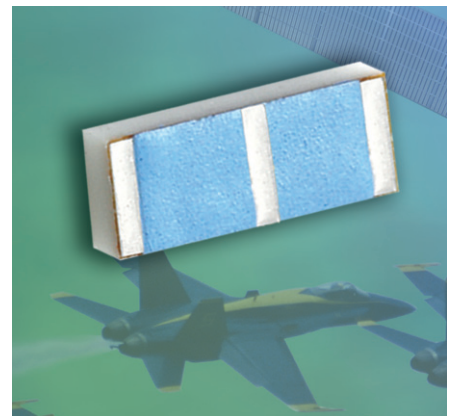
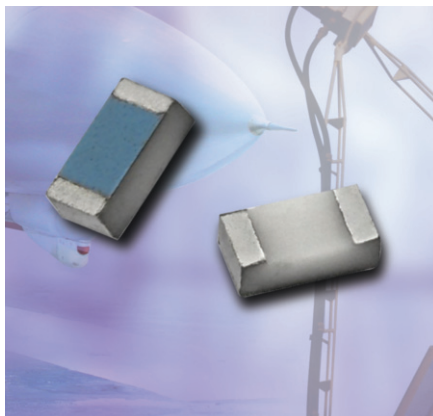
Fast delivery is also vital, says Rowland. "When a contract electronics manufacturer was trying to secure a new antenna contract for deployment in the Antarctic, it was the fast delivery of UK-manufactured high-Q ceramic capacitors which was pivotal in securing the contract."

It helps that everything is now paperless. "Every bit of 'paperwork' we have with manufacturers is electronic so it's very easy if a customer rings up about a product they bought five

years ago, we can pull up the manufacturer's certificate there and then."

Staying ahead of the competition also includes ongoing improvement. "We do joint marketing including roadshows with suppliers for a lot of the products that suit their market. Joint customer visits to engineers are also an integral part of our business. In addition, we carry out regular manufacturers training here at Charcroft, and through online seminars we add to our knowledge to support the customer."

Charcroft's communication with its suppliers is key to its success. The company has a long and productive relationship with VPG Foil





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Resistors and its Vishay Foil Resistors (VFR) brand, specifically in Harsh Environment areas such as Aerospace. “Their unparalleled Bulk Metal® Foil technology parts have been crucial to our success over the years,” adds Rowland.

Charcroft is one of several VFR Express Hubs worldwide which offer customers the opportunity to locally source high-precision resistors with any specified resistance value out to six digits in a matter of days. These hubs trim and mould high-precision resistors just as in VFR’s central locations but are located close enough to end-customers to enable the personal relationships and local inspection required these days.

The demands of the aerospace industry differ from commercial requirements in one major area — ongoing reliability. In some cases there is only one chance to complete the mission, and the system cannot be brought back into the shop for repairs. Some systems must transit deep-space for 10 years or more before being activated. VFR, with their long term consistency and reliability, are a major franchise for Charcroft.

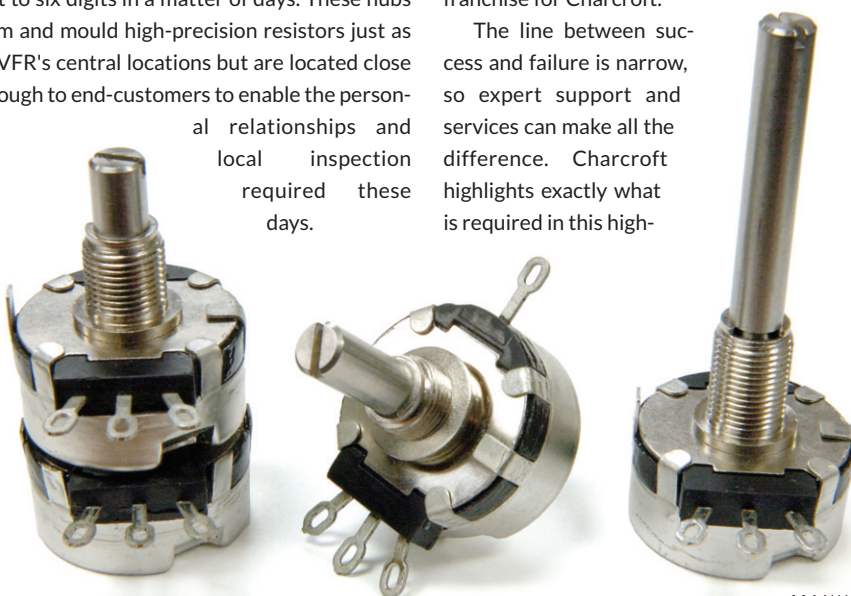
The line between success and failure is narrow, so expert support and services can make all the difference. Charcroft highlights exactly what is required in this high-

ly competitive industry: specialist component distribution for harsh & high-end applications; helping EMS & OEMs to solve technical and commercial challenges; a balanced linecard of global and specialist manufacturers; partnering with EMS to find solutions for end-customers; mitigating the risks of component obsolescence; archiving of all quality and delivery documentation.

But, ultimately, the company’s long-running success is down to teamwork. “We are a small independent company of 45 employees - it’s all about teamwork; we all work towards the same end. Service is taken very seriously and every job is given equal importance.”

Looking ahead, Rowland hopes the Aerospace Wales Forum, of which Charcroft is a member, will continue to help develop the supply chain in the region. “I know that there is work being done to promote and bring aerospace business into Wales. Hopefully we see the fall out and benefits from that in the future.”

Complementing its high calibre product range with customer service that adds value and remains attentive to individual needs, Charcroft isn’t just delivering on its promise time and time again for clients, it’s demonstrating successful implementation of its ambitious approach every day.



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