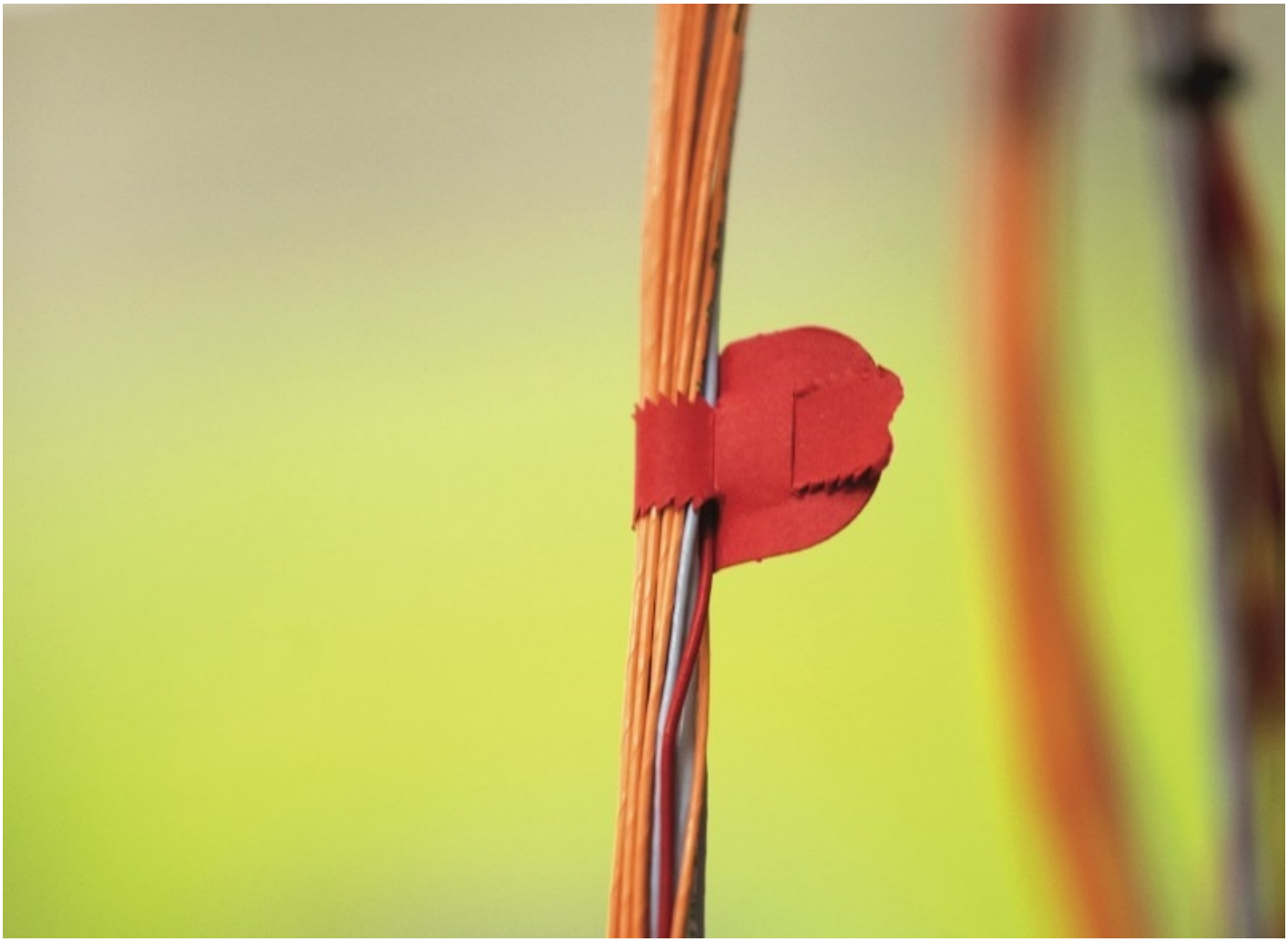
AIRBUS' INNOVATIVE CABLE TIE SOLUTION TRANSITIONS FROM THE SHOP FLOOR TO THE WORLD

News / Manufacturer



A patented, paper-based Airbus solution that improves the process for installing cables and wires throughout an aircraft is now going global, underscoring the company's continuing role as an innovation leader.

The idea began with Marc Bennion, a long-time Airbus employee working at the aircraft manufacturer's Broughton, UK facility – which is responsible for assembling wings for all Airbus commercial jetliners, including the new-generation A350 XWB.

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Bennion was fitting wiring to a wing when he realised that using pliers to snip off the plastic ties – which keep the cables organised – sometimes caused accidental damage. As even very minor damage results in the replacement of an entire cable, this was increasing costs and time spent, as well as causing frustration for Bennion and his colleagues.

As an alternative, Bennion proposed the idea of paper ties that could be torn off by hand instead. After experiments with several designs, a prototype was approved and subsequently patented by Airbus UK. “Marc’s name appears on the patent alongside Airbus,” said project leader Maud Didnee. “It proves that every idea matters and that innovation can be about simple ways of making a routine job easier.”

The next step was to industrialise the idea, which required a cross-functional, transnational approach. Didnee summarized the situation: “We had an idea from Broughton, UK; a plan to use the ties at Airbus’ Bremen, Germany facility; Airbus’ corporate innovation team providing crucial support from Toulouse, France; and the possibility of a supplier from anywhere.”

Airbus ultimately chose to partner with Gravic, a supplier from the south of France, and concluded a licensing agreement under which Airbus will receive 15 per cent of the sale price of the paper ties – which will be available on the open market. Added Maud: “The price for each tie is tiny, but sales should be high enough to repay development costs in a year.”

Among the applications already planned for Airbus’ cable tie solution is the company’s A350 XWB jetliner programme.

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