





AT THE TENDER AGE OF FIVE, PATRIC WELLS WAS MOVING MILK AND POP BOTTLES FROM HIS FATHER'S STRATFORD, ONTARIO, RETAIL FOOD STORE TO A NEARBY STORAGE BUILDING FOR 5 CENTS AN HOUR. THAT'S QUITE A YOUNG AGE TO JOIN THE BUSINESS WORLD, BUT IT PROVIDED THE FOUNDATION FOR HIS SUCCESS TODAY. "I GUESS IT GIVES A KID A GOOD WORK ETHIC, BECAUSE I STILL WORK HARD EVERY DAY," WELLS SAYS.

Wells doesn't have to prove his continuing work ethic; knowing that he operates four businesses simultaneously is enough. Combined, they offer a full range of services to customers seeking to buy or lease a helicopter and mold it to fit their precise needs.

East West Helicopter Inc. (EWH) based in Harrison, Ohio, has supported the helicopter industry for more than four decades, providing maintenance and parts sales, helicopter sales and leasing. Panterra Heli Support Ltd. (PHSL) based in Beamsville, Ontario, provides MRO, heavy maintenance, avionics integration, engineering, custom paint and other customizations, completions, one-off configurations, and field support for existing leases. NS Air Leasing and Borderline Air expand upon the sales and leasing aspect of the group, especially the Airbus product line.

What other leasing companies often cannot provide inhouse, the group can provide. This is a "one-stop shop" philosophy, which provides for exceptional customer service, tight quality control on the entire process, plus flexibility and innovation.

And the group is not tied to a dollar minimum on leases like larger companies. "It keeps me hopping," Wells says of his expansion into four businesses. "It makes me think back to that 5-cents-an-hour job."



# COPTERS

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#### FROM FIXED-TO

ROTOR-

wing love

Wells started out flying fixed-wing aircraft at age 17 after watching his father fly planes while he was growing up. But when Wells was introduced to a Bell 47, he immediately fell in love with rotorcraft.

#### "IT WAS THE MOBILITY AND VISIBILITY," HE EXPLAINS. "I JUST LOVED IT."

He earned his commercial helicopter pilot's license by age 18, but found his prospects limited by a poor economy and a pilot surplus. So he added aircraft maintenance engineer to his resume. As his exceptional knack for solving electrical problems became evident, he found himself working as a pilot /engineer in the field throughout Quebec.

It was a great experience, but Wells found himself away from his family too frequently, so he took a maintenance crew chief job with Eurocopter Group (now Airbus Helicopters Canada). Quickly expanding his duties to training, warranty, technical support, and then selling, he gained considerable knowledge.









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## Venturing OUT

In 1996, with a vast knowledge of all aspects of the helicopter industry under his belt, Wells and a partner created their own company called Panterra Heli Support (PHSL). "I felt a need to fill a gap for maintenance on AStars," he says. Within a year he converted an old barn into a hangar to support completion work, major inspections, avionics, and installation; and expanded into sales and became a top buyer of salvages.

A few years later Wells met Barry Pruss, owner of East West Helicopter (EWH). The two became friends and began buying and selling helicopters together, with the end result being that Wells bought East West in 2001 when Pruss decided to retire.

The year 2005 saw PHSL expand into a state-of-the-art 28,000-square-foot hangar where the company remains today. "It's a fabulous facility," he says, "where everything is in-house except overhaul and fabric sewing."

### The TEAM



Pat Wells
Owner, East West Helicopter /
Panterra Heli Support





"MY BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY IS TO PRODUCE HIGH-QUALITY WORK AT A FAIR PRICE AND ALWAYS KEEP OUR WORD," WELLS EXPLAINS. "IT'S GETTING MORE AND MORE RARE, BUT I'M THE KIND OF GUY WHO CAN DO A HANDSHAKE DEAL. YOUR REPUTATION AND WORD ARE IMPORTANT IN THIS BUSINESS." THE HIGH FREQUENCY OF REPEAT CUSTOMERS PROVES HE MEANS WHAT HE SAYS.

Customers come to EWH and PHSL from a variety of industries including growing niche markets such as tourism, air medical, forest firefighting and specialized construction. Wells says, "We are a very efficient, cost conscious organization and we thrive on saving our customers money." Using the vast experience within EWH and PHSL personnel, they can quickly determine what they can refurbish and what's scrap.





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#### **EMPLOYEES**

#### The TEAM

love the atmosphere

WELLS MAKES SURE HE TREATS HIS
WORKERS WELL. "I TREAT THEM
WITH INTEGRITY AND RESPECT, AND I
RECOGNIZE THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS
AND EXPERIENCE," WELLS EXPLAINS. HIS
PHILOSOPHY HAS ATTRACTED HIGHLY
EXPERIENCED MANAGERS AND LED TO
EXTREMELY LOW TURNOVER RATES.

Rotorcraft Pro talked to four of his top managers and calculated that they add a combined 149 years of helicopter industry experience to Wells's 37 years.

"It's a really experienced, seasoned group," confirms Adrienne Robinson, EWH vice president of sales and business development. She came to EWH this year with 29 years of experience in the aviation business. "The group has a really good reputation and that's critical," she says of EWH and PHSL. Robinson enjoys the flexibility and variety of working for a smaller company, too. "You get to see the deal from start to finish, and touch every piece of it," she relates.

East West VP Lynn Donovan has been with the company 35 years and agrees that the variety in her work keeps her happy. "You learn a lot of things with expansion in business," Donovan says. "Customers who call after hours don't get voicemails; calls are forwarded to mobile phones." Donovan has worked for both Pruss and Wells; she sees the same qualities in both leaders. "They're honest in their dealings with people," she observes. "They're straight shooters."

Dan Both, Panterra VP and director of maintenance, has 30 years of aircraft maintenance experience and has been with PHSL for over two decades now. "We're small enough that we can adapt to different situations," Both says. "Some aircraft are 20 to 30 years old, and by the time they leave here, people thought they were new."

Mike Merritt, who boasts 45 years of experience in aircraft maintenance and quality assurance, left nearby Airbus Helicopters Canada to become PHSL quality assurance manager a few years ago. He loves the flexibility PHSL offers. "We have a dedication to the product and constant liaison with the customer," Merritt says. "On the quality assurance side of things, safety management systems (SMS) is the buzzword these days." He's currently working on an SMS for Panterra.



Adrienne Robinson
VP of Sales & Business Development,
East West Helicopter



Audrey Powell
Office Manager Panterra Heli Support



Lynn Donovan
Vice President, East West Helicopter





Mike Merritt

Quality Assurance Manager, Panterra Heli Support



Confident in its abilities and the future of the helicopter industry, East West Helicopter is positioning itself to be a key player, looking to add a considerable number of leasable and saleable aircraft to its fleet over the next few years. EWH is not a broker and prefers to sell from its own inventory.

Wells predicts that as the economy grows, there will be greater demand for affordable options for aircraft ownership. He intends to make sure that East West Helicopter and the group of companies is positioned as a front-runner in the industry. Wells is confident in the abilities and proven track record of the group, which drives them to continue to supply an exceptional product built upon their reputation.



Jason Huber

A & P Technician East West Helicopter



Matt Weicker
Production Manager Panterra Heli Support







# Thankful FOR THE PUSH

With increasing regulations and costs, Wells is not sure a young entrepreneur could start up a new business with low capital like he did two decades ago.

LOOKING BACK AT HIS EARLY
YEARS, HE'S NOW GRATEFUL
THAT HE DECIDED TO TAKE
THE LEAP OF FAITH AND GO
OUT ON HIS OWN. "THIS IS
A GREAT INDUSTRY WITH
GREAT PEOPLE AND I AM
PROUD TO BE PART OF IT."









