



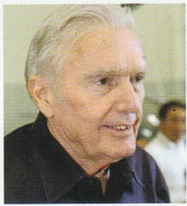
Rolls-Royce

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Revving up for the new Robinson R66





When Frank Robinson holds a press conference, the media don't have to be asked twice to attend.

These are standing room only events and there is good reason for that: Robinson is a pioneer in the industry, famous for shooting straight from the hip, even when delivering hard messages.

This strategy of straight talking has served Frank Robinson well and has seen the business he created out of his home in 1973 grow to over 1,300 employees today, producing more units than any other helicopter manufacturer in the world. In 2008, Robinson Helicopter Company (RHC) delivered 893 helicopters into the market, a milestone that surpassed the previous year's record high of 823. In the past three decades, RHC has produced more than 8,000 helicopters.

'It's all about keeping things simple,' Robinson shares when discussing his secrets for success. 'If you keep things simple, efficient and straightforward, and do what you say you are going to do, there is no reason why you can't be a success.'

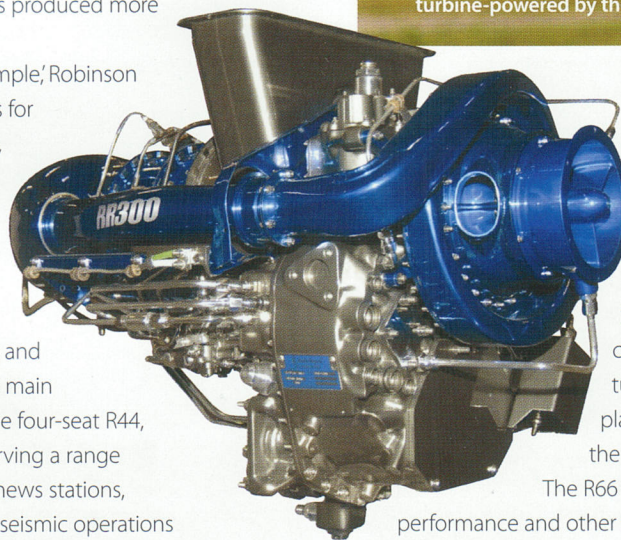
RHC is known internationally for its high-performance, low-cost and reliable civilian helicopters. Its two main products, the two-seat R22 and the four-seat R44, dot the skies around the globe serving a range of operators including traffic and news stations, flight training schools, oil and gas seismic operations and personal transport.

Popularity

In fact, the R22, which entered into service in 1979, is one of the most popular entry-level helicopters on the market with 3,600 of the rotorcraft delivered to date, flying in more than 60 countries. Originally designed for personal transportation, its popularity led RHC to create the evolutionary R44 that entered into service in 1993. With increased passenger and baggage capacity, the R44 has earned the title of one of the best selling helicopters with over 4,000 helicopters delivered to date in more than 55 countries. Both the R22



The R66 is the first Robinson helicopter to be turbine-powered by the new RR300.



and the R44 have found their niche by offering an attractive mix of versatility and low acquisition and operating costs.

While RHC's products have been, until now, powered by piston engines, in 2006 Robinson decided to change course, selecting the Rolls-Royce RR300 turbine engine to power his newest platform, the R66. Robinson saw this as the next logical step in his product line.

The R66 is a five-seat helicopter, with performance and other features, such as RHC's first-ever dedicated baggage compartment, that will appeal to the corporate user and any one that values the gas turbine engine attributes of quiet, smooth power that operates on readily available jet fuel.

The RR300 turboshaft engine was officially launched by Rolls-Royce as the powerplant for the R66 in March 2007. The new engine boasts lower acquisition and operating costs than current turbines in its class; low-weight, compact design; improved specific fuel consumption; an embedded engine monitoring system, and an optional, through-life, peace-of-mind maintenance programme. It was FAA certified in early 2008 and the first production engine was delivered to RHC in February 2008.



The Robinson Helicopter Company is located in Torrance, California.

The R66 has been carrying out successful test flights since last year. Robinson, himself a pilot who flies at least once a week, was able to check the progress of his latest helicopter by conducting one of the test flights himself. 'It handles just like an R44,' Robinson says, 'but with the RR300, you have more usable power.'

While Robinson has kept the industry guessing on both the price and the entry into service date of the R66, it is clearly key to the future of RHC. When the R66 was announced in 2007, operators scrambled to put orders in, orders that Robinson has steadfastly refused to accept until the aircraft is further into its flight testing programme. When it enters the market, RHC is hoping the R66 will take its place as the latest 'best-seller' in its family of helicopters.

Industrious

On a sunny, spring day, Robinson threw open the doors of his sprawling facility in Torrance, California, welcoming an international mix of customers, suppliers, neighbours and members of the media to take a closer look at an R66 in action.

Walking onto the shop floor, visitors saw row upon row of aircraft in various stages of build.

'If you look around my factory, you will see a workforce that is industrious,' says Robinson. 'I hire the majority of my people right off the street. If they are mechanically inclined, we can teach them what they need to know. We have very strong on-the-job training

programmes that keep people from developing bad habits.'


Something else that distinguishes RHC from much of the aerospace industry is its resistance to outsourcing. Keeping things in-house, Robinson believes, is critical when it comes to controlling costs and scheduling. Indeed, the only two major helicopter components that RHC does not produce itself are the engines and the plexiglass used in the cockpit. This is why Robinson needs every inch of his 480,000 square foot facility, where everything from hydro-formers to robotic cutters line the floors, all dedicated to producing the high volumes of Robinson helicopters that hit the market every year.

Eager

As the Open House kicks into high gear, a steady stream of guests arrive in a hangar adjacent to RHC's manufacturing floor. In the centre sits an R66 accompanied by a blue RR300 engine that is on display next to the helicopter. Just outside the entrance of the hangar is a flight-ready R66.

An RHC test pilot walks out of the hangar to the waiting R66 and the crowd shifts quickly towards him, eager to see the R66 in flight. As the rotors pick up speed, the helicopter rises a few feet off the ground. The pilot pivots the helicopter slowly from side to side to give the audience a chance to view it from all angles and then lifts off, speeding into the distance. The crowd claps as they watch the helicopter circle around the skies over Torrance, and many comment on the distinctive low whine and quiet noise signature of the RR300.

For anyone who has followed the development of the R66, it is a momentous occasion. Despite the various challenges faced by the industry at the moment, enthusiasm for the versatile R66 does not seem to be waning.

Robinson walks among his guests like a rock star, smiling and shaking hands with everyone and pausing frequently for pictures. For a man of 79 years, he does not show signs of slowing down anytime soon. And for a company that has thrived under his leadership for decades, that is a good thing. 

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