

APOGEE

PEAK OF FLIGHT

NEWSLETTER

Recreating Estes' Discontinued Motors

By Tim Van Milligan

In a popular thread on the newsgroup rec.models.rockets, many modelers recently hypothesized about the possibility of creating a new manufacturing company to recreate the old motors that Estes has discontinued. This article is strictly my opinion, and you may or may not agree with the arguments that I make.

Basically, I don't think that a new company has much of a chance to make it successfully. The odds are against it.

First, I disagree with many of the assumptions made in the various messages. There are at least 20 "poison pill" assumptions made that in my opinion could mame the potential of the new company in very short order. Most of these were tried by other notable companies such as AVI, MRC, FSI and others. But I'll concentrate on a couple of the ones that struck me first.

To begin with, the big assumption was that there ware thousands of modelers that wanted these motors. For the sake of argument, lets call it the B14 motor.

I contend that if there were thousands of modelers that want the motor, it would be the "Estes" B14 motor. Not any old B14 will be sufficient for modelers to cough up the money for the product.

In the first place, why do people want the B14 motor? Aren't there other motors that would do an adequate job of lofting the model the same as the B14? Yes. So maybe the model has something special to it that makes people want it so badly. Is it for competition type models? No. So what is it?

I think this isn't an ordinary model, but an ancient "Estes" kit that has some historical significance to the rocketeer. There is certainly nothing wrong with this. Maybe they want to re-live their youthful experiences. Maybe they want that nostalgic feeling of the old space race. But because of this, only an "Estes" motor will be sufficient.

The management of the new company will soon learn that

he is fighting a bigger foe than just Estes Industries. He is fighting the nostalgic feelings that people had for Estes Industries of their youth.

Speaking from personal experience, it is hard to convince modelers to purchase a new motor. At first, there will be much hype for the motors. But after the thrill of "newness" wears off, the new company will probably face the same obstacles that the rest of the motor manufacturers are challenged by. How do you get customers to forget about Estes, and put their loyalty in a new company? This is what is preventing other rocket companies from making significant inroads into the hobby.

Think about it

Everyones' ears perk up when the word "Estes" is mentioned. Why do so many people care about what new products that Estes creates every year? Aren't there nearly a 100 other rocketry companies producing kits? There is certainly variety. Why don't people get the same sense of urgency when Aerotech decides to discontinue a motor?

What do you think would happen if someone started a rumor that the management of Estes was considering a name change for the company. Instead of calling it Estes Industries, they were going to call it "Rocket Industries."

I would be confident that there would be utter outrage within the core group of rocketeers. Wouldn't that be conclusive proof that the name "Estes" means more to the modelers than does the product?

The other assumption people often make is that their only competition would be Estes Industries. The truth is, that there are other companies that make motors besides Estes. To name a few: Aerotech, Apogee Components, Quest Aerospace, Ellis Mountain, and Hypertech. And more seem to be popping up all the time. There are a lot of alternatives to Estes' motors.

Basically, all these companies are also going after that core group of rocketeers. What is the probability that these other companies are going to go out of business tomorrow to



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make room for this new company?

These companies already have a pretty good head-start on the new hypothetical company. Plus they certainly have a lot more experience in selling rocketry products.

The new company is going to have to work hard to set them self apart from all the other guys. It is likely that lots of marketing and money isn't going to do it. If that were true, then Quest would have been an easy winner.

Internet marketing is seen by many people as being dirt cheap. Why is it then that dot-com companies spend huge sums of money going after new customers? The results of a research study by the Intermarket Group show that Autobyte.com spends \$20.40 to acquire a new customer; Amazon.com spends \$27.60; Beyond.com \$29.30; Priceline.com \$32.30; and bn.com outlays \$42.00 in the effort. That is a lot of cash to get buyers, and the rocketry market is even smaller.

I don't write this article to prevent someone from starting a new rocket company. I think it is good for us all to dream a dream. But there are some realities that must be first over-

come. Personally, I like to think that Apogee Components has the solution to the question about replacing the motors that Estes is discontinuing. We have a wide selection of motors, and a lot of fun add-on products like technical literature, kits and design software. And we think we have a lot of great ideas for future products. If you can be patient, I think you'll be pleased with the results.

About the Author:

Tim Van Milligan is the owner of Apogee Components (<http://www.apogeerockets.com>) and the curator of the rocketry education web site: <http://www.apogeerockets.com/education>. He is also the author of the books: "Model Rocket Design and Construction," "69 Simple Science Fair Projects with Model Rockets: Aeronautics" and publisher of the FREE e-zine newsletter about model rockets. You can subscribe to the e-zine at the Apogee Components web site, or sending an email to: ezine@apogeerockets.com with "SUBSCRIBE" as the subject line of the message.

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6 Degrees Of Freedom



splash



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What does this mean to you?

6 Degrees of Freedom software means it can find the position of the rocket in the X (vertical), Y (downrange), and Z (cross-wind) coordinates, as well as Pitch, Yaw, and Roll. Splash is the first affordable rocketry simulation program that can perform this complex scenereo. This means it can give you an accurate indication of where your high altitude flights will land.

You tell Splash what conditions might vary during the flight, such as wind speed vs altitude; or the failure likelihood of the parachute failing. You can vary 18 different variables during the flight, and Splash will give you a plot of the likely landing zone. If you're flying sub-orbital flights, then you'll need this data to get permission from the FAA to launch your rocket. Right now, Splash is the only software that can do this.

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