



Merlin Named to Fast Company's Annual List of the World's Most Innovative Companies of 2026

March 24, 2026

Merlin joins the ranks of Google, Nvidia, Adidas, Walmart, and more

BOSTON, March 24, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- [Merlin, Inc.](#) (NASDAQ: MRLN), is proud to have been named to *Fast Company's* prestigious list of the World's Most Innovative Companies of 2026. This year's list shines a spotlight on businesses that are shaping industry and culture through their innovations. Alongside the World's 50 Most Innovative Companies, *Fast Company* recognizes 720 honorees across 59 sectors and regions.

The company's innovation is the Merlin Pilot, an AI-powered autonomous flight system designed from first principles to fly any aircraft, military or civilian, from takeoff to touchdown, with or without a human crew on board. The Merlin Pilot is built to scale across the full spectrum of aviation, in that the same system flying a C-130J can be adapted to fly a cargo turboprop, a tanker, or a commercial freighter, and every flight generates data that makes the platform smarter and harder to replicate. To date, Merlin has logged hundreds of hours of autonomous flight across multiple aircraft types.

"Being recognized by *Fast Company* just days after our NASDAQ listing underscores the momentum behind what we're building: an AI-powered operating system for autonomous flight," said Matt George, CEO and founder of Merlin. "Aviation's first 100 years were built around pilots. We're laying the foundation for the next 100 – built on autonomy – with the operating system of record for the sky, designed to power the next generation of both military and civil aviation."

The recognition comes at a moment of significant momentum for the company. Prior to going public, Merlin:

- Completed the [Preliminary Design Review \(PDR\) for its C-130J autonomy program](#) with the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) under a [\\$105 million Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity \(IDIQ\) contract](#).
- Advanced civil certification pathways with the FAA and New Zealand's Civil Aviation Authority, most recently achieving its [Stage of Involvement \(SOI 2\) milestone](#).
- [Signed an agreement with the United States Air Force](#) to advance autonomous capabilities for contested environments.
- Announced partnership agreements with [Northrop Grumman](#) and [GE Aerospace](#).

The World's Most Innovative Companies is *Fast Company's* hallmark franchise and one of its most anticipated editorial efforts of the year. To determine honorees, *Fast Company's* editors and writers review companies driving progress around the world and across industries, evaluating thousands of submissions through a competitive application process. The result is a globe-spanning guide to innovation today, from early-stage startups to some of the most valuable companies in the world.

"Our list of the Most Innovative Companies is about spotlighting organizations that don't just adapt to change—they drive it," said Brendan Vaughan, editor-in-chief of *Fast Company*. "The companies we honor this year are redefining what leadership looks like in 2026, pairing bold ideas with measurable impact and turning breakthrough innovation into real-world value. They are setting the pace for their industries and offering a blueprint for what sustained innovation can achieve."

The full list of *Fast Company's* Most Innovative Companies honorees can now be found at [fastcompany.com](#). It will also be available on newsstands beginning March 31, 2026.

Fast Company will host the [Most Innovative Companies Summit and Gala](#) for honorees on May 19 in New York City. The summit features a day of inspiring content, followed by a creative black-tie gala including networking, a seated dinner, and an honoree presentation.

About Merlin

Merlin is an aerospace and defense technology company building the operating system of record for autonomous flight. Through a first-principles approach, the company is redefining what's possible across aviation, aerospace, and defense with the goal of delivering full-stack autonomy for any aircraft, military or civilian, from takeoff to touchdown. The Merlin Pilot system powers a growing range of aircraft and mission profiles, proven through hundreds of autonomous flights from test facilities across the globe. With \$100M+ total in awarded contracts from military customers, Merlin is advancing American leadership in autonomous aviation

Merlin Cessna Caravan



Merlin Cessna Caravan at Quonset Hangar

by helping to solve national security challenges through safe, reliable autonomy. To learn more, visit www.merlinlabs.com or follow us on X [@merlinaero](https://twitter.com/merlinaero).

About Fast Company

Fast Company is the only media brand fully dedicated to the vital intersection of business, innovation, and design, engaging the most influential leaders, companies, and thinkers on the future of business. Headquartered in New York City, *Fast Company* is published by Mansueto Ventures LLC, along with fellow business publication *Inc.* For more information, please visit fastcompany.com.

Forward Looking Statements

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. All statements other than statements of historical fact should be considered forward-looking statements, including without limitation statements related to the development or launch of new products or programs. These forward-looking statements are based largely on our current expectations and projections about future events and trends. These forward-looking statements are neither promises nor guarantees, but involve known and unknown risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from any future results, performance or achievements expressed or implied by the forward-looking statements, including without limitation the risks, uncertainties, and assumptions as described in our filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Except as required by applicable law, we undertake no obligation to update any of these forward-looking statements for any reason after the date of this press release.

Media Contact

Kristen Georgette
617-842-6064
merlin@pluckpr.com

A photo accompanying this announcement is available at <https://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/e3ef6fc2-9529-4aec-be81-7f037469e757>