

The Chart Page

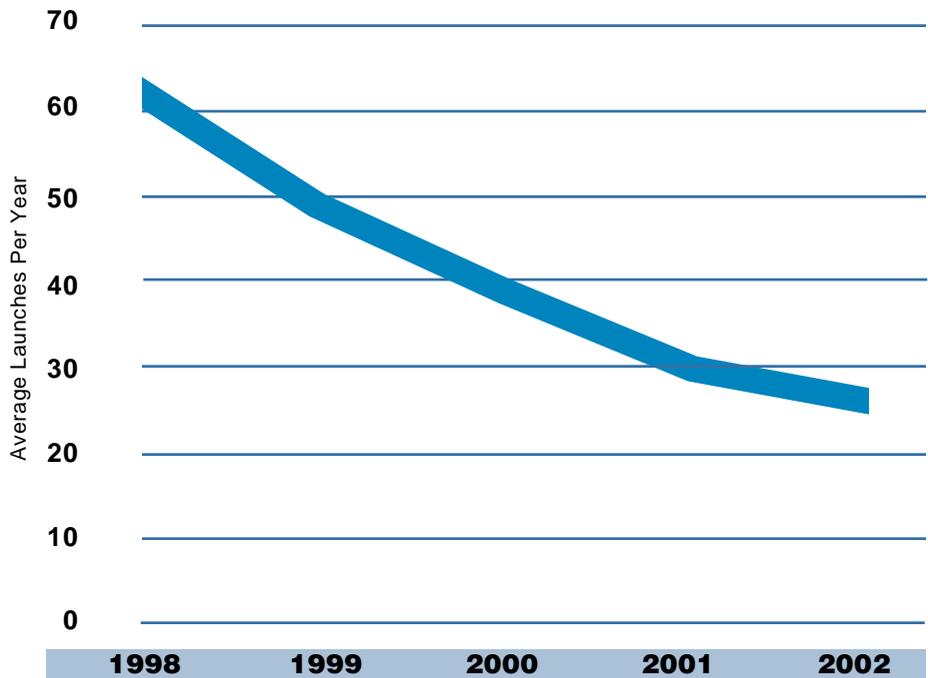
By Tamar A. Mehuron, Associate Editor

Challenges Facing the US Launch Industry

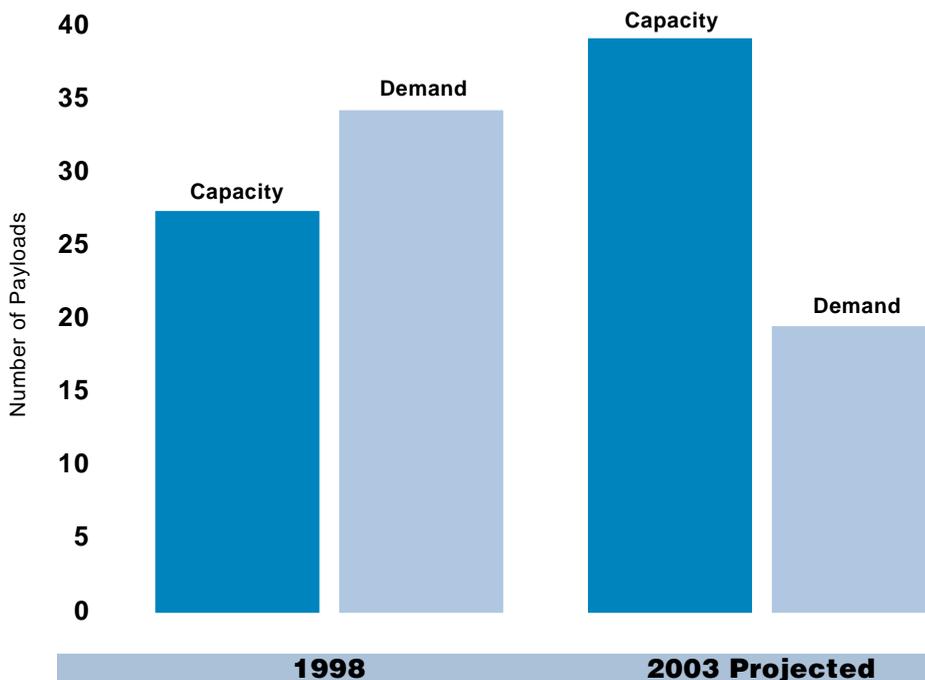
Just five years ago, there weren't enough rockets to launch all the satellites being built. The telecom boom was at its peak, and the future for both satellite fabrication and the commercial launch business looked downright rosy. The Air Force was pushing a cheaper but more reliable generation of expendable launch vehicles, while NASA was leading the effort to build a new generation of reusable launch vehicles to replace the space shuttle.

Today, the telecom boom is over, and there are twice as many rockets as there are satellites needing a lift to orbit. However, the entire fleet of US government satellites will need replacement within a decade. The hard part for the launch industry will be weathering the in-between period.

Decline in Launches



Trading Places: Launch Capacity and Demand



Sources: Commission on the Future of the US Aerospace Industry; Lockheed Martin.