Drones In Space: How They Can Explore, Communicate, & Monitor The Final Frontier

Delivering Outcomes

Drones are not only useful on Earth, but in space as well. In this blog post, we will explore the uses and applications of drones for exploration, communication, and surveillance in outer space, as well as the potential benefits and challenges of this technology that exists today.

What are drones in space?

Drones are unmanned aerial vehicles that can fly autonomously or remotely controlled. They have many applications on Earth, such as delivery, surveillance, agriculture, entertainment, and more. Additionally, they can also find applications in outer space for exploration, communication, and surveillance.

Drones in space are not the same as drones on Earth. They must overcome distinct challenges, including the absence of air, extreme temperatures, radiation, and gravity. As a result, they require different technologies, like jets of gas or water vapour, solar panels, or nuclear power sources. Additionally, they must communicate with satellites or ground stations to receive commands and transmit data.

How are drones in space used?

Many drones in space have been launched or are planned to be launched shortly. Here are some of the examples of drones sent to space:

Ingenuity: This small helicopter drone flew on Mars for the first time in April 2021. It was a historic achievement, as it demonstrated that it is possible to fly a drone in the thin atmosphere of Mars. Ingenuity used a small propeller to lift itself off the ground and a camera to navigate. It also used a radio to communicate with the Perseverance rover and relayed the signals to Earth via satellites.

Dragonfly: This quadcopter drone will explore the surface and atmosphere of Titan, Saturn's largest moon, in 2034. Titan has thick nitrogen-rich air and a complex organic chemistry. Dragonfly will use a nuclear power source to generate electricity and heat and a radioisotope thermoelectric generator (RTG) to communicate with Earth via satellites.

CubeSats: These small satellites can be launched in groups or clusters to perform various tasks in the orbit. They can help in scientific experiments, communication, navigation, or surveillance. Some examples of CubeSats are LightSail 2, which used a solar sail to propel itself, and Planet Labs' Dove satellites, which provide high-resolution images of Earth.

What are the benefits of using drones in space?

Drones in space have many potential benefits for science and humanity. They can help us learn more about the planets and moons in our solar system, their geology, climate, and potential for life. They can also help us test new technologies and prepare for future human exploration. They can also provide valuable services like mapping, monitoring, or relaying information.

For example, Ingenuity helped the Perseverance rover to scout potential locations for collecting samples. Dragonfly will help us understand the origin and evolution of life on Earth and elsewhere. CubeSats can help us improve our communication networks, navigation systems, or weather forecasting.

What are the challenges for drones in space?

Drones in space also face many challenges and limitations. They must withstand harsh environments, such as extreme temperatures, radiation, dust storms, or meteorites. They must operate autonomously or with minimal human intervention, as the communication delays can be significant. They must be reliable and resilient, as repair or replacement is difficult if something goes wrong in outer space.

For example, Ingenuity had to deal with temperatures ranging from -90°C to 40°C on Mars. Dragonfly will have to cope with low gravity and high winds on Titan. CubeSats have to avoid collisions with other satellites or space debris.

Conclusion

Drones in space are an exciting and promising technology that can help us explore, communicate, and monitor the final frontier. They have many applications and benefits for science and humanity. However, they also face many challenges and limitations that require innovative solutions and careful planning.

Melbourne | Sydney | Brisbane

Marketing@visglobal.com.au
+61 475 230 884

www.visglobal.com.au