
Highlights from Aircraft Interiors Expo Americas 2013

By **Lauren Brunetti** on October, 8 2013 | Inflight Entertainment



The fifth edition of the [Aircraft Interiors Expo Americas](#), which was held once again in Seattle, welcomed thousands of visitors from October 1-3. This year, the event kicked off with a very informative Inaugural Seating & IFE Integration Symposium - a one day event which brought together experts from airlines, airframers, OEMs, suppliers and design organisations with key responsibility for the two major areas of cabin investment - the seat and the inflight entertainment and connectivity systems.

"We are going full circle back to where we were 30 years ago - bring your own, self-service IFE - then you brought a good book and if you were really cutting-edge, maybe you had a Walkman - now it's smart phones and tablets." This was one of many stimulating remarks made by Gary Weissel, Vice President co-Managing Officer Aviation & Aerospace Practice at ICF SH&E, who presented 'Consumer Trends: The Impact of Smart Mobile Technology' at the opening session of the Aircraft Interiors Expo Americas Seating & IFE Integration Symposium which took place on Tuesday October 1 at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle.

Following a recent survey by Hudson Crossing, Weissel told delegates that by the end of 2018, it is expected that 91% of US travellers will own a smartphone and 89% will own a tablet. Among travellers who don't own a smartphone, one in five plans to buy one this year and for those who don't own tablets, one in four plans to buy one in 2013.

One of the key messages from Mr Weissel centred on consumer expectations and how smart devices are now influencing passengers' behaviour whether connected or not. There is a rising demand for customers to be constantly connected with more reliable and faster speeds. The big question for IFE suppliers looking forward in the next five to ten years is what airlines can provide that passengers can't bring on their own and this will be one of the key questions going forward.

The thorny issue of connectivity in the air was confirmed with a recent study conducted by DePaul University which revealed that passengers were unable to use their electronic devices for more than 100 million hours in 2013 because of current regulatory rules. Mr Weissel stated that this figure was double what it was just three years ago and clearly demonstrates that all stakeholders in the industry must now react to the consumer demands for on-board technology and connectivity.

Weissel concluded his presentation by outlining some benefits of smart technology IFE delivery which included additional ancillary revenue opportunities; weight and fuel savings; more flexibility in making interior changes; less constrained seat product design and higher customer facing reliability.

The following speaker was Jim Cangiano, Vice President Sales & Marketing at Recaro Aircraft Seating Americas, who discussed 'Evolving Seat-centric Technology,' which included why life-cycle considerations are so important for seats and IFE, particularly the impact of the technology changes within IFE on seat development timelines. He said that there are, in some cases, two years for the first

line fit of a new seat, which equates to about two or three cycles of an IFE timeline. Mr Cangiano confirmed that there is a noticeable delay in the two technologies and that the challenge was to communicate and share ideas early with all the stakeholders, especially the IFE suppliers.

As a seat supplier, Mr Cangiano said it was important to engage in collaboration in order to take on the challenge of differing timelines and that early development work was key to ultimately deliver to airline customers the best and most efficient solutions possible; learning about what the other partnership is doing is essential to business success. He concluded by confirming that partnerships are really crucial in moving forward in future.

The last session before lunch was entitled a 'Business Case for Closer Integration' which featured a panel discussion to consider some of the current critical issues, involving a number of key industry experts answering questions from the floor. One of these addressed the developments the panel envisaged to make it easier to fix seats in the future. Rod Pulbrook, Manager Customer Experience, Line Maintenance Operations at Qantas Airways, said that in the past, it had always been about how a seat looks and feels, but recently 'maintainability' had become increasingly important to operators. Maintenance was finally influencing the decision-makers when it came to product selection. Mr Pulbrook said that we are finally at the table of discussion, and the more involved we are allowed to be, the more benefits the product will have in this regard.

Jason Adams, Aircraft Interiors/IFE Supply Chain General Manager at Delta Air Lines, added that as part of any seat design process at Delta, its maintenance teams are involved at the front-end, looking at ways to create Line Replacement Units that can be removed on the line and replaced (rather than having to remove the whole seat) and to also create 'ware parts' that can be easily and cost-effectively manufactured. It didn't always mean that they were successful every time but it was a consideration, especially with a business-class seat programme. Later on in the discussions, Mr Adams said that getting engaged as early as possible with the seat vendor, so that you communicate how your product can be integrated in an appropriate way, was important as it helped to mitigate these problems.

"The range of topical IFE and seat integration issues clearly demonstrated the subject-matter expertise of all our speakers and presenters at this year's ground-breaking Symposium. In my opening remarks I stressed that delegates should be interactive and to engage fully and judging by the question and answer sessions, it was clear that delegate involvement contributed much to the success of this unique and timely platform to fully debate these trends and issues," said Katie Murphy, Exhibition Director for Aircraft Interiors Expo Americas.

Reed Exhibitions has announced that Aircraft Interiors Expo Americas will take place in Seattle from 14-16 October 2014 in the Washington State Convention Center.

Katie Murphy, Event Director, also confirmed that the Passenger Experience Conference, which has run for the past two years in Hamburg, will make its debut next year in Seattle. "Following the success of the first Seating & IFE Integration Symposium, which attracted over 266 attendees (pre audited figures) on Tuesday 1 October, the feedback confirmed that there is an explicit demand for a platform to discuss and debate key areas within the interiors sector. The Aircraft Interiors Expo Americas 2014 Passenger Experience Conference will provide delegates with a more strategic overview of issues affecting the industry and will then break out to three sessions drilling down into more specific topics." Katie went on to say, "Clearly we don't want to lose the momentum we have built up from the Symposium held on Tuesday, so one of the sessions will focus on IFE. When it comes to onboard technology, a lot can change in one year!"

Source: www.aircraftinteriorsexpo-us.com/

