

# Guest Column: Future forward

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The COVID crisis isn't over and although the immediate future will continue to be tough, now is the time to rethink the future travel experience, accelerate business transformation and embed purpose and sustainability into your operation.

As airlines recover, restructure and reevaluate, they must seize this moment to unlearn the old habits and embrace new behaviors and new ways of working, rewriting the rules of business that are fit for the future our aviation industry needs.

## **Demonstrate authentic leadership**

This starts with leadership. Expectations on business leaders skyrocket during a crisis. All eyes are on CEOs to provide direction, answers, reassurance and solutions. Yet no amount of experience or expertise could have prepared them for COVID-19; the context of the world is changing at a rapid pace and the path ahead is largely unknown.

One of the most effective qualities a leader can display when navigating uncertain times, is authenticity. Such leaders are more likely to take responsibility, show compassion and tell the truth.

They show up as a human rather than just their job title. And in the future, they will not only need to define a vision focused on profitability, growth and market share, but also include a broader vision that incorporates the wellbeing of people and our planet.

### **Pivot towards purpose & walk the walk**

It is more important than ever for businesses to truly commit to a purpose and ensure they use it to guide their thinking, planning and decision-making. The pandemic has accelerated consumers' desire to seek out organizations that support social and environmental progress, organizations that walk the walk and not just talk the talk. People want to engage with companies that are contributing to a positive impact on society and the planet.

### **Redefine value and create meaningful experiences through digitization**

The world never been more aware of the health of our planet and society. Regardless of the industry, companies are now all required to ensure that the health of their employees and customers is first. And the key short-term requirement is to show genuine, human concern for all stakeholders with whom they interact.

In the longer-term, people expect companies to act responsibly as guardians of society and nature. They expect them to foster long-term prosperity for the developing world and marginalized groups, live their purpose truthfully and enable sustainable consumption.

A [McKinsey post-pandemic consumer survey](#) reveals that in some industries, two thirds of consumers already state the sustainability has become a more important priority to combat climate change. Sustainability, however, is not just about the environment. It is about economical, societal *and* environmental impact. Looking at inflight service, sustainability means minimizing waste and costs, and maximizing efficiencies.

Do passengers realize that the amount of [cabin waste generated in 2017 was 5.7 million tons](#)? Or that it cost the sector approximately US\$900 million and more than 20 percent of it was untouched food and drink?

Reducing food waste is the leading opportunity for sustainable consumption and innovation. It is an emerging global issue with up to 1.3 billion tons lost each year. This has been identified in the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG) with a specific target to cut global food waste per capita in half by 2030.

### **The waste problem**

That is why in June 2019, several industry experts, including IN Air Travel Experience, founded the [International Aviation Waste Management Association](#) (IAWMA). The Association aims to help tackle the impactful problem of cabin waste and develop strategic supply and collection chains. After completing global research of airlines, airports and flight kitchens, the findings highlight the need for an aggregative and multi-stakeholder approach to aid the aviation industry in its recycling efforts.



# IAWMA

## International Aviation Waste Management Association

The International Aviation Waste Management Association aims to tackle the problem of cabin waste and develop strategic supply and collection chains

The research, funded by the [US Federal Aviation Administration](#) (FAA), uncovered a fragmented sector and systemic gaps in policy, regulations, and material recovery practices worldwide. The findings also revealed that regulatory changes and program development could support the industry's transition to a [circular economy](#).

Andrew Wilson, Executive Director at IAWMA, explains: "The principal challenge is the need for broader industry-wide collaboration. We recognize that airlines, airports and catering kitchens have been doing their best given the current nationally focused and insular regulatory environment. We know from our research, the industry possesses an immense demonstrated capacity of well-intentioned people with the knowledge and skills needed to dismantle these barriers. With a more flexible and forward-thinking regulatory environment, one we see as based on scientific innovation in addition to pest and pathogen protection, the industry will unlock more circularity and rise to the challenge of reducing waste substantially."

Airlines and their service providers must work together with regulators to ensure that aviation makes a positive contribution to this UN SDG target, which starts with digitizing the experience and scrutinizing and simplifying the service to reduce wastage. Moving to an on-demand consumption model permits loading onboard only those pre-ordered items, minimizing waste and introducing a circular ecosystem. Collaborating and connecting to create a new world, rather than rebuilding old norms. Now is the time to rethink the future travel experience and accelerate business transformation.