

Video Clips: Daniel Coleman, Joe Leader on what to expect at FTE APEX Virtual Expo

APEX/IFSA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Joe Leader and FTE CEO Daniel Coleman tell *PAX International* Editor-in-Chief Rick Lundstrom all about the upcoming virtual show, plus what can be expected at the February Singapore live hybrid show and what other industry events may look like moving forward

The COVID-19 virus respects no borders and abides by no social rules, but it cannot infect people over the Internet. Two major events have combined efforts for the aviation industry to hold a December event covering the end-to-end air traveler experience. It can be accessed for no cost around the clock and revisited for a month.

The Future Travel Experience ([FTE](#)), as part of the Airline Passenger Experience Association ([APEX](#)) family, announced the [FTE APEX Virtual Expo](#). The virtual trade show will be complete with speakers, exhibits and a theme of “Transforming air transport post-COVID-19.” Dr. Joe Leader, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of APEX and the International Flight Services Association ([IFSA](#)), alongside FTE Founder and CEO Daniel Coleman were making plans for the December 8 and 9 live event when they spoke to *PAX International* this week.

“Nothing else that we have really seen mimics what we are actually setting out to do,” says Coleman.

Organizers plan to move out of the well-known webinar formats that have been prevalent throughout the spring and summer to create an event with content tailored to three regions: Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East and Africa and the Americas. FTE and APEX are working with a Dubai-based company called [vFairs](#) which specializes in online events and conferences. During the two-day live event, participants will be able to talk with exhibitors through real time messaging and video calls. They can schedule time at a company’s virtual stand to view products and services. And, the virtual expo is accessible any time, ideal for all time zones.

The virtual exhibition will include online halls dedicated to airport and inflight products, services and solutions and what organizers call a dedicated Startup Zone. FTE and APEX are expecting up to 8,000 online attendees.



Daniel Coleman, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Future Travel Experience (left), Joe Leader, Chief Executive officer, IFSA/APEX

With a new experience planned, Coleman says one of the primary goals of organizers was to make participation as easy as possible. Through working with vFairs, he says that FTE built its own exhibit for the expo – complete with downloads and videos – in approximately 10 minutes. The exhibit booths are important, but they are predominantly portals for deeper engagement through the text, phone and video capabilities, or online demonstrations where many exhibitors will demo to many interested parties at the same time during the live days.

“People are short-staffed now and there is a lack of resources. It is something new and we did not want it to be daunting, so the key was to make it easy for everybody,” he says.

What was also important was to provide a forum that has been missing from the scene since the COVID-19 virus devastated commercial aviation. Leader said the December event promises to be much more than a video conference. The Expo will be accessible for 30 days after the live-event, effectively carrying the industry into the beginning of 2021. Leader says that though the industry has typically relied heavily on regular major events for announcements and networking, organizers from APEX/IFSA and FTE have quickly recognized a new reality.

FTE Virtual Expo Visitor preview

“It is really exciting because, historically, associations have been viewed as perhaps slow to change,” Leader says. “APEX and IFSA and our incredible FTE team members really are embracing this change wholeheartedly.”

This shift has also led to the planning of a [February 3 to 4, 2021](#) live hybrid event organized by APEX/FTE in Singapore at the Marina Bay Sands that will welcome both physical and virtual delegates with online access to the same conference sessions and product demonstrations.

While the two groups are planning for events both online and in person, the COVID-19 virus was still taking the airline industry in unexpected directions. As outbreaks continue globally, based on the most recent information available from the [World Health Organization](#) at the time of publishing this article, there is possibility of more quarantines and restrictions – particularly in Europe, where [Reuters](#) reported on July 30 that Britain imposed a 14-day quarantine period on people arriving from Spain. Meanwhile, the European Union this month crafted a [US\\$860 billion recovery fund](#) for member countries.

Leader and APEX/IFSA team members lobbied in Washington to include a US\$3 billion support package for related airline industries like suppliers and catering through the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#). Both Leader and Coleman tell *PAX International* that they agree that a decentralized approach to handling outbreaks results in causing confusion and uncertainty for the traveling public. For airlines in Europe, Leader adds it is now time for EU members to recognize the importance to their home-country airlines.

“If countries and geographies do not provide the support for their airlines to make sure they weather this crisis — a crisis no large-scale cash intensive business could weather without government support — then they will find themselves looking to foreign airlines to provide their service.”