

# Panasonic's Astrova takes MEASA

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Panasonic's Astrova IFE solution in Business Class

Astrova continues to take [Panasonic Avionics](#) to new heights as more airlines around the globe select the innovative system. Last year, the company developed partnerships with both [Saudia](#) and [Egyptair](#), expanding its presence in the Middle East and Africa.

As the tech giant looks ahead to what is next for its growth in the MEASA region at this year's Aircraft Interiors Middle East ([AIME](#)) event, *PAX Tech* spoke to Hernan Abbes, Vice President of Global Sales, Panasonic Avionics, about evolving IFE solutions, industry trends and feedback from Astrova users.

## **Astrova impact in Middle East and North Africa**

Abbes says the response from Saudia and Egyptair has far exceeded expectations.

"Astrova has a higher rate of selection than any of our previous IFE solutions. We're very excited about our new system, and the response from the airline industry has been extremely positive," Abbes says.

He notes that what separates Astrova from Panasonic's previous IFE solutions is the design. The system features OLED 4K screens that are HDR 10+ with an infinite contrast ratio. The audio experience is elevated with high-fidelity multi-channel spatial audio technology. Astrova provides full cabin Bluetooth enabling passengers to connect personal wireless headphones to the system.

The solution's in-seat power feature is also a draw for many airlines, explains Abbes. The system offers 67 watts fast-charging capabilities for mobile devices and laptops via USB-C; airlines can choose to offer up to 100 watts of fast charging.

Panasonic Avionics first announced Astrova had been selected by Egyptair in November 2023, marking the IFE solutions' first agreement in Africa. The focus for the airline was on the line-fit program with its A350 fleet, "providing a system that could adapt to evolving consumer technology while safeguarding their investment in IFEC," explains Abbes.

Astrova's modular design is also an asset to Egyptair's business objectives. With airlines looking to reduce TCO (total cost of ownership), Abbes says the ability to keep up with consumer technology trends without switching to a new system is important to airlines in the MEASA region.

"It allows airlines to continuously update their cabin equipment with the latest technology," he says. "In the past, airlines would have to select their cabin equipment one-to-two years in advance of the first aircraft delivery, resulting in outdated systems being installed in new aircraft. With Astrova, airlines can continuously upgrade their systems as new technology becomes available, ensuring their passengers can always enjoy the latest consumer technology and experience they are accustomed to on the ground."

The modular design lends itself to retrofitting simply and cost-effectively, reducing an airline's operational expenditure. The IFE components can be upgraded independently of the other cabin elements, resulting in fewer service disruptions for the airline. According to Abbes, this is what makes the technology so appealing.

The agreement with Saudia, signed last June, primarily focuses on retrofitting the airline's A330 and 777 fleets. Abbes says Saudia's enthusiasm was driven by the system's ability to reduce TCO while elevating the viewing experience for passengers.

"At Panasonic Avionics, we believe that this approach to IFE allows airlines to continuously keep their systems up to date, even between full cabin retrofits. It also supports airline sustainability efforts by reducing the need to recycle materials and maximizing the lifespan of the system. Additionally, the significantly lighter weight of Astrova compared to previous IFE systems helps airlines reduce fuel consumption."

### **Expanding opportunities for IFEC**

As AIME heads to Dubai for its 14th edition, the industry's focus shifts to the MEASA region, whose growing presence in the global aviation industry indicates that opportunities for tech innovators are expanding.

"Demand in these regions, and the aviation industry overall, have rebounded to pre-COVID levels, prompting many airlines to enhance their onboard offerings, including IFEC," says Abbes. "We see significant potential for Astrova both in these regions and globally amidst this resurgence."

Panasonic Avionics saw a higher global adoption rate—especially in the MEASA region—for Astrova, compared to the company's previous IFE solutions.

Abbes adds that the combination of Astrova, IFC and technical services available from Panasonic puts the company in a position to effectively meet the needs of airline partners in the MEASA region.

### **Elevating passenger engagement**

"From our viewpoint, airlines are seeking to establish IFEC as their third digital channel," Abbes says. "They desire increased control over the day-to-day management of content and digital services to optimize engagement with their passengers. This objective can be achieved by choosing the right IFE system, coupled with global, high-speed connectivity, digital solutions and global aftercare support."

The company's vision centers around "Engagement, Beyond Entertainment" and Abbes notes that an<sub>2</sub>

airline's app offers an engagement opportunity based on passengers' usage frequencies and durations, ahead of web and mobile channels.

"We are therefore seeing forward-thinking airlines recognize this potential to enhance digital passenger engagement by building brand loyalty, improving [Net Promoter Scores], enhancing operational efficiency, and generating revenue," he explains.

Panasonic Avionics helps airlines establish that digital third channel via Astrova to integrate the passenger digital experience from booking to the destination. They can use the App Manager to develop and deploy the third-party application to the seatback.

The company has also taken a new approach to its IFE operating system, allowing airlines to elevate the passenger experiences it delivers.

"Our OS encompasses a collection of shared system services and utilities that facilitate quicker delivery, streamlined maintenance, and accelerated innovation-to-market velocity. By leveraging our OS, which is equipped with well-defined, reusable capabilities and services, airlines can rapidly build, test and deploy new applications using industry-standard technologies," Abbas says.