

IdeaNova builds agile partnerships to shape future of IFE



Jane Hobson, Managing Editor, *PAX Tech* (fourth from left) with the IdeaNova team in Naperville, Illinois

From Naperville, Illinois, [IdeaNova Technologies](#) continues to cement its reputation as one of the most agile and forward-looking players in IFE. The company's partnerships with [Astronics](#) and [United Airlines](#) bring its flexible platforms and constant updates into the cabin to enhance the passenger experience across both commercial and business aviation.

Founded with a vision of adapting cutting-edge digital rights management (DRM) and streaming technology to the unique challenges of aviation, IdeaNova has steadily built an ecosystem of products designed to anticipate—and keep pace with—the evolving ways passengers consume content onboard.

This summer, IdeaNova hosted *PAX Tech* Managing Editor Jane Hobson at its headquarters for a meeting with Astronics' Jeff Unger, Vice President of Engineering and Craig Norwood, Product Development Manager, United Airlines.

"Agility is at the heart of what we do," said Juraj Siska, CEO of IdeaNova, during the meeting. "As a smaller company, we are able to move quickly and work closely with our customers to deliver solutions that are both practical and innovative. Our goal is to educate the IFE industry about what is possible, and to introduce products that are outside the box but make a real difference for passengers."

Streaming integration with Astronics

Astronics has partnered with IdeaNova for more than six years, integrating IdeaNova’s technology into its IFE platforms. Unger explained that the collaboration addresses specific challenges in both business and commercial aviation.

“We have worked with IdeaNova for years to integrate their secure streaming, DRM and playback functionality into our solutions,” Unger said. “For our VIP and VVIP business aviation customers, expectations are incredibly high. IdeaNova helps us deliver a state-of-the-art entertainment experience that meets those demands.”

Business aviation requires a different level of customization than commercial airlines. With Astronics’ niche clientele, personalization and flawless execution are essential. IdeaNova has adapted its technology for these use cases, from lightweight license server updates that improve performance on older aircraft systems, to strict testing protocols that ensure reliability far beyond typical airline needs.

Siska agreed. “For business aviation passengers, the inflight experience must be nothing short of exceptional. We take great care to make sure our technology performs flawlessly, whether that means boosting server capacity or ensuring compatibility with legacy systems.”

One example is IdeaNova’s ongoing work with license server upgrades. By redesigning its DRM servers from the ground up, IdeaNova has achieved performance gains of up to 10 times while reducing resource dependency. This ensures the technology runs efficiently on aircraft with older infrastructure—a common challenge in aviation.

Astronics also benefits from IdeaNova’s evolving Player functionality. Features such as scene seek preview, multi-tap skip control (fast-forward and rewind) and refined ad integration allow passengers to navigate content intuitively. Advertising integration is designed to be seamless, avoiding interruptions to the passenger experience while still offering airlines new revenue opportunities.

“Our collaboration with IdeaNova ensures that the experience is not just secure and reliable, but also engaging,” Unger added. “Passengers can fast-forward or rewind easily, and advertising feels natural rather than disruptive.”

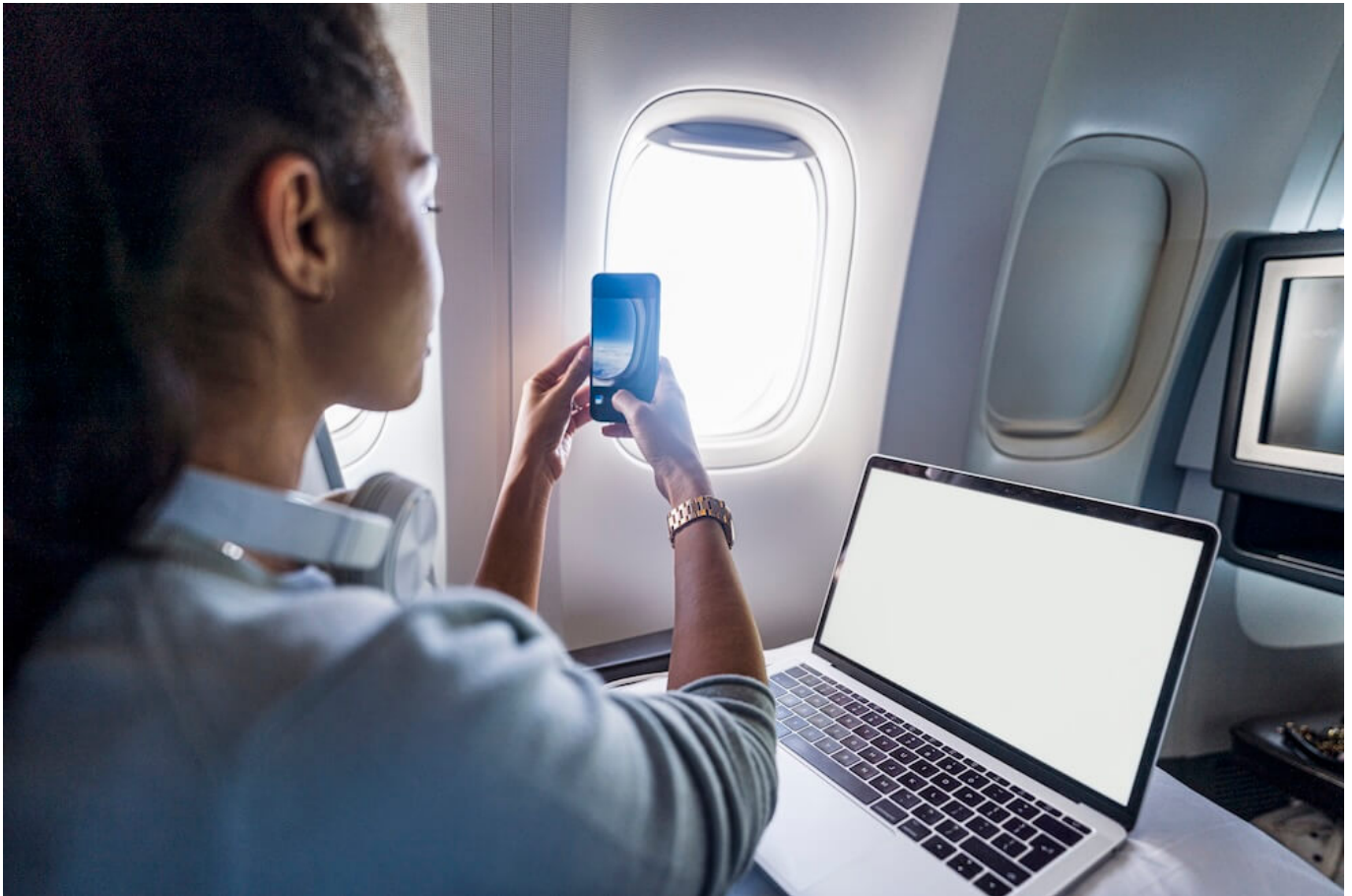


A screenshot of IdeaNova’s Web Inplay Player

United Airlines: A decade of collaboration

United Airlines has been working with IdeaNova for more than a decade, using the company's Inplay Player as the backbone of its personal electronic device entertainment offering. The partnership reflects United's commitment to making entertainment consistent across its fleet, regardless of the connectivity vendor.

"United partners with Viasat, Thales, Panasonic and Intelsat," explained Norwood. "Before we introduced IdeaNova's solution, passengers could not continue watching a movie or show if they switched aircraft operated by different vendors. IdeaNova's Player unified that experience. Today, passengers do not need to know—or care—what system they are on. They simply enjoy seamless entertainment across our fleet."



Using IdeaNova's technology, United's passengers can pick up where they left off, whether on a seatback screen or personal device

This consistency has been a major benefit for United. The airline has rolled out features such as pre-roll advertising, binge-watching capabilities and cross-platform resumption of play. Passengers can pick up where they left off, whether on a seatback screen or personal device.

"From the beginning, IdeaNova was extremely nimble," Norwood said. "When we first started working together in 2014/2015, their team worked closely with us to integrate their Player directly into our app. That meant passengers did not need to download anything extra, just one app. It has been one of the key reasons United's inflight entertainment remains best in class."

Siska noted that this kind of integration is central to IdeaNova's philosophy. "Each vendor has its own DRM requirements, but United needed a single solution," he explained. "By consolidating multiple systems into one Player, we reduced complexity and app size while improving the passenger experience."

Looking ahead, United and IdeaNova continue to expand the partnership. Binge-watching, for example, is a key focus area, Siska pointed out. IdeaNova is leveraging AI to identify precise time codes for rolling credits, allowing the next episode to load automatically. Other innovations include accessibility features, personalization and recommendations based on passenger preferences.

Norwood emphasized the value: “IdeaNova has always helped us get over the bumps and stay ahead of passenger expectations. Their technology is one of the best in the industry when it comes to delivering entertainment across different satellite vendors. They understand the future of IFE.”

Innovation for evolving passenger habits

Passengers’ inflight habits are changing rapidly and IdeaNova is evolving just as quickly. From podcasts and audio-only experiences to YouTube casting through its Inplay Flow platform, the company is helping airlines mirror the digital behaviors passengers have on the ground.

Inplay Flow allows content casting from personal devices to seatback screens, with controls for crew to manage use per screen. IdeaNova’s Inplay Portal integrates edge caching and multicast technology, optimizing bandwidth by distributing content efficiently. These features not only enhance passenger choice but also reduce costs for airlines.

“The future of inflight entertainment is about making it as seamless and frictionless as possible,” Siska said. “Passengers want the same experience they have at home, but we must balance that with the limitations of inflight connectivity and available onboard hardware. Our products are designed to bridge that gap.”

Emerging technologies are also shaping IdeaNova’s roadmap. The company is exploring Media over QUIC (MoQ), a streaming protocol that prioritizes continuous playback over strict reliability. In practice, this means passengers might miss a few seconds during a network disruption, but the stream continues without freezing—a better option for live sports or IPTV.

A trusted partner for the future

IdeaNova’s ability to adapt, customize and innovate makes it an invaluable partner in delivering inflight entertainment. The company’s products reflect a commitment to continuous improvement.

“Our mission is to give passengers the most engaging and reliable inflight entertainment possible,” Siska said. “We will continue to push boundaries, whether through AI-driven personalization, seamless casting or emerging technologies that redefine streaming in the sky.”

For Astronics, United Airlines and other partners, this commitment translates into a competitive edge and, most importantly, a better experience for passengers.



IdeaNova's *PAX Tech* articles on display at its company headquarters