

Interview with Panasonic: Moving Business Class forward



Ken Sain, CEO, PAC, and Edward Dryden, CEO, Collins Aerospace at the May 28 press briefing in Hamburg

[Panasonic Avionics Corporation](#) (PAC) and [Collins Aerospace](#) unveiled a collaboration in Business Class seating at AIX 2024, with Panasonic's Andy Masson telling *PAX Tech* the response so far has been, "Overwhelming and extremely positive."

The Business Class suite, called MAYA, was revealed at a press briefing on May 28 by Ken Sain, CEO, PAC, and Edward Dryden, CEO, Collins Aerospace.

MAYA integrates Collins Aerospace's and Panasonic Avionics' respective design and technology to create a Business Class cabin experience that focuses on passenger immersion, accessibility and sustainability.



Inside the MAYA Business Class suite at AIX 2024

Inside the MAYA suite is an Astrova Curve 45-inch ultra-wide, ultra-high-definition OLED display with a headphone-less audio system for an immersive IFE experience. Passengers can also sync their PEDs via the ADAPT™ controller for curated control of the seating environment. MAYA is designed to support mobility, sensory, cognitive and language accommodations for passengers.

The suite's ergonomic architecture features ARISE™ comfort technology to automatically optimize cushion pressure, regulate environmental temperature and reduce peak vibration disturbances during flight.

PAX Tech sat down with Andy Masson, Vice President Product Management, Portfolio Management, Strategy and Marketing at Panasonic Avionics Corporation, who says the partnership with Collins Aerospace has been in the works for approximately a year.

“Previously, we built a system, they built a seat and we've come together at the end. We wanted to come together at the beginning,” Masson explains of the collaboration's origin.

Masson notes that there are several new technologies Panasonic Avionics wanted to integrate and bring to AIX this year to get customer feedback.

“I think we've been a little bit overwhelmed by just how positively the market's reacted to the innovation,” Masson reveals. “When you bring new innovations to the market, that can scare some people. But we've not seen that at all with MAYA. What we've seen is just an overwhelming support for this product.”

According to Masson, both Panasonic and Collins Aerospace received feedback from potential airline customers at AIX 2024 and will be reviewing the market data to further develop MAYA for takeoff.

All about Astrova

The seamlessly integrated 45-inch Astrova Curve OLED display in the MAYA Business Class suite is three times larger than typical screens and will be the first Ultra-Widescreen CinemaScope (21-inch by 9-inch) display in the sky, offering a 50 percent more immersive viewing experience than a movie theatre.

Astrova Curve is part of Panasonic's Astrova IFE line, which continues to be its best-selling IFE system to date. Masson explains that integrating Astrova into the MAYA Business Class suite supports the message of Astrova's versatility.

"Integrating MAYA's IFE with the rest of the Astrova line really adds to our story that we started two years ago around Astrova modularity, sustainability and technology," Masson says, adding that the technology de-risked other areas for buyers that were traditionally high-risk.

He cites seat integration and certification testing in particular, with the modularity of the system allowing airlines to keep the product up-to-date and relevant for longer periods.

The future of Business Class

At the press briefing in Hamburg, Ken Sain, CEO, Panasonic, noted that while Business Class might represent less than 20 percent of passengers, it accounts for more than three-quarters of the airline's profit, asking the question, "What is next for Business Class, beyond lie-flat seats and privacy doors?"

As Masson says, unveiling MAYA at AIX is all part of demonstrating Panasonic's vision for the future.

"We are thinking about where the market is going, particularly with new generations like Generation Z or millennials. We wanted them to see that we're thinking about how we integrate technology to bring the aircraft cabin back to the forefront of technology once again. We're trying to pull us all forward and it's really good to see great partners like Collins come along that journey with us," he concludes.