

Thales unveils FlytEdge at AIX in Hamburg



Marie Remboulis, Communications Executive, Thales; TK Kallenbach, CEO of Thales InFlyt Experience; Kurt Weidemeyer, VP of Product Delivery Digital at Thales InFlyt Experience, (L to R)

Hamburg, Germany - [Thales](#) has unveiled its latest innovation, FlytEdge, today at the [Aircraft Interiors Expo](#) (AIX) in Hamburg. FlytEdge is the first-of-its-kind IFE platform, designed to help airlines deliver an experience that is individually tailored to each passenger.

The system uses a connected cloud architecture to increase airlines' flexibility to rapidly bring passengers any web-based service.

PAX Tech spoke with TK Kallenbach, CEO of Thales InFlyt Experience and Kurt Weidemeyer, VP of Product Delivery Digital at Thales InFlyt Experience, about the process of developing the platform and what it means for the future of inflight entertainment.

"This is the first cloud-based IFE system that's ever been enabled," Kallenbach tells *PAX Tech*. "And it's intended to be on a connected aircraft. It's really supposed to be a node on the network for the airlines."

Deliver the extraordinary with FlytEDGE

The first cloud based IFE



Thales' unveiled FlytEdge in Hamburg

He emphasizes that FlytEdge is not an update of a previous version; it is a whole new concept that puts the cloud to its intended use.

“Our connectivity system today is a fairly basic portal,” he continues, “If you wanted to log into your Netflix account and download a movie, you can do that. It is high speed, higher than 100 megabytes per second. That's the normal way. With FlytEdge, you can interface with a different type of portal.”

Kallenbach says it is a more dynamic portal with an engaging user interface that also uses edge caching.

“You have media, you have games that you can play,” he says. “If somebody downloads a game and you want to play , it's on the server. You can play the game from the server. You get those kind of things that we're experimenting with.”

Edge caching plays a part in how the FlytEdge system aids airlines in delivering a more seamless IFE experience to passengers. The platform features Thales’ Onboard Data Center (ODC) with 96TB of storage to enable onboard edge caching, reducing connectivity consumption and ensuring available bandwidth for other inflight services.

According to Kallenbach, the project has been a long time coming and has already flown on a test carrier, allowing the company to analyze feedback from the airline and passengers as part of the development process.

“We started this probably four years ago,” Kallenbach says. “Maybe even five years ago with the hardware concept and trying to figure out which was the best way to go.”

In terms of how the system can benefit airlines, Weidemeyer points out cost savings and quality of passenger experience.

“The big benefits, of course, are that the airline can save cost from satellite connectivity,” explains Kurt Weidemeyer, VP of Product Delivery Digital at Thales InFlyt Experience. “The passengers will get much more bandwidth that they can use for other purposes. It won't be congested with the same movie ten times for ten different people.”

Weidemeyer adds that Thales InFlyt Experience is looking at using the platform for purposes outside of content in the future. It can be utilized for any type of data getting to the aircraft from the airline.

Thales' FlytEDGE solution features cinematic 4K QLED HDR seatback displays and two Bluetooth® connections that enable passengers to engage with personal electronic devices (PEDs). The system broadcasts the user interface onboard for all devices.

In terms of connectivity and inflight entertainment, Kallenbach says Thales marries knowledge of the two to deliver a more intuitive system to airlines.

“We have both entertainment and connectivity. It has allowed us to fuse these two technologies together,” he says. “It would be very hard for a company that didn't do connectivity to do this—and it would be very hard for a company that didn't do inflight entertainment to do this, because they do go together. And so there's a lot of things that we've learned in our connectivity business that applied to this system.”

Thales is exhibiting at AIX at booths 4E40, 4E41 and Kallenbach has two words for attendees: Buckle up.

“This is going to be something completely different,” he concludes. “This industry has always had a tendency, I would say, to over embellish, and it tends to be an incremental improvement. This one's not. This is a completely different animal. This one will change the way passengers interact with entertainment, with the airlines, with the loyalty systems, with media. Having been in this business now for about 15 years, I can tell you there's nothing else like it on the system level, and it will really change the way that airlines think about their business model.”