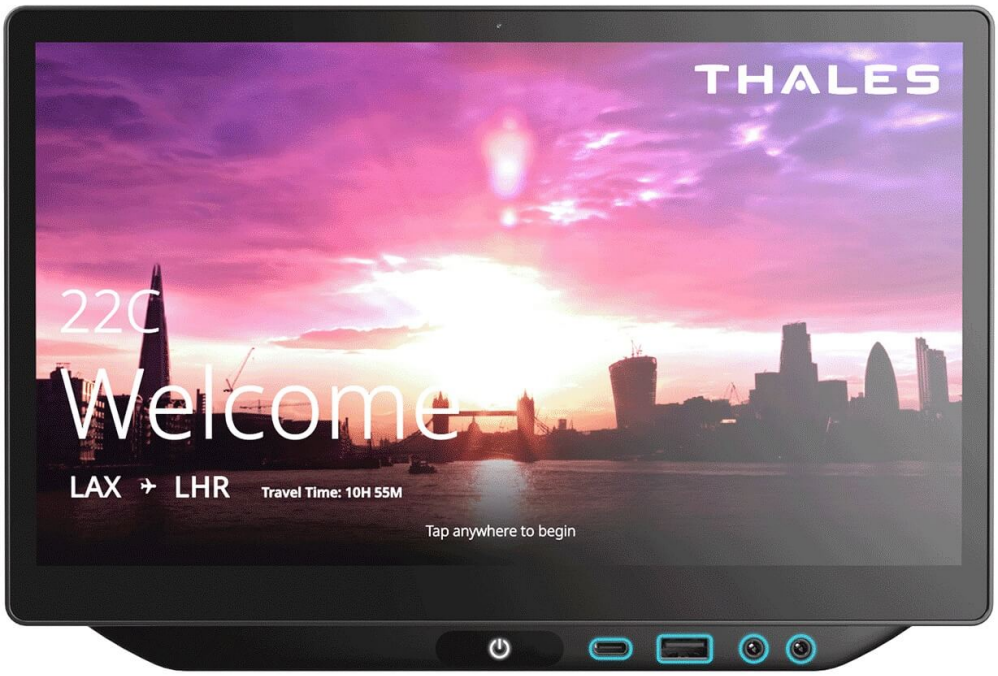
The future is IFEC with Thales

This is a special feature from *PAX Tech*'s April 2024 Seating & IFEC issue, on page 23.



The Optiq 4K QLED screen on the Thales' AVANT Up IFE system

As digital technology advances the inflight passenger experience is consistently being compared to how a person enjoys their favourite shows, social media platforms and more from the comfort of home. To keep up with the evolving demand, airlines and innovators are faced with the challenge of creating an at-home IFE experience onboard, closing the gap between the ground and the air.Th

Celie Navatel, VP Solution Manager, Thales

PAX Tech asked Celie Navatel, VP Solution Manager, Thales, about the AVANT Up system, and how Thales is staying ahead of the curve.

Connection and power

Thales' AVANT Up IFE system features two Bluetooth connections and built-in Wi-Fi, indicating the increasingly close relationship between inflight entertainment and connectivity. The IFEC system provides services to passengers that will become the standard, Navatel says.

"Connectivity is a major enabler to maximizing the benefit of any IFE system, which is why AVANT Up features the industry's most wireless connection options with two Bluetooth connections and built-in Wi-Fi in every screen," Navatel tells *PAX Tech.* She continues, "Beyond the hardware, connectivity is an important enabler to maximize revenue or loyalty generated from Thales' suite of digital services."

Similarly, the wireless connections on the AVANT Up system enable passengers to use multiple devices inflight. Given the rise in demand for Personal Entertainment Devices (PEDs) among passengers, Thales is giving travellers a chance to expand their IFE experience with two Bluetooth connections and built-in Wi-Fi on each screen, along with 140 watts of charging to keep the device ready for use.

"In a recent online poll, we saw [more than] 85 percent of participants carry more than one Bluetooth-enabled device with them while they travel," Navatel explains. "PEDs are an important expansion to the inflight entertainment experience, so building a system that can interact with phones, earbuds, headphones, etc. is something that has to be considered when designing an IFE system that will be flying for many years to come."

Thales also understands many passengers prefer to bring their own content for inflight entertainment, which is why they developed PED casting capabilities. Navatel shared that this technology will start flying next year, enabling passengers to enjoy the content on their PED via the seatback entertainment system's 4K QLED HDR screens.

Screens like you've never seen

The AVANT Up IFE System features the latest 4K QLED HDR displays, the industry's first line of intelligent 4K HDR displays. These screens were developed in partnership with HARMAN, a Samsung Company, to provide a cinematic experience with a crisp display of more than one billion colours.

"Our new Optiq 4K QLED HDR screens have been very well received in the market and have been chosen by several leading airlines, two of which will start flying with our Optiq screens later this year," Navatel says.

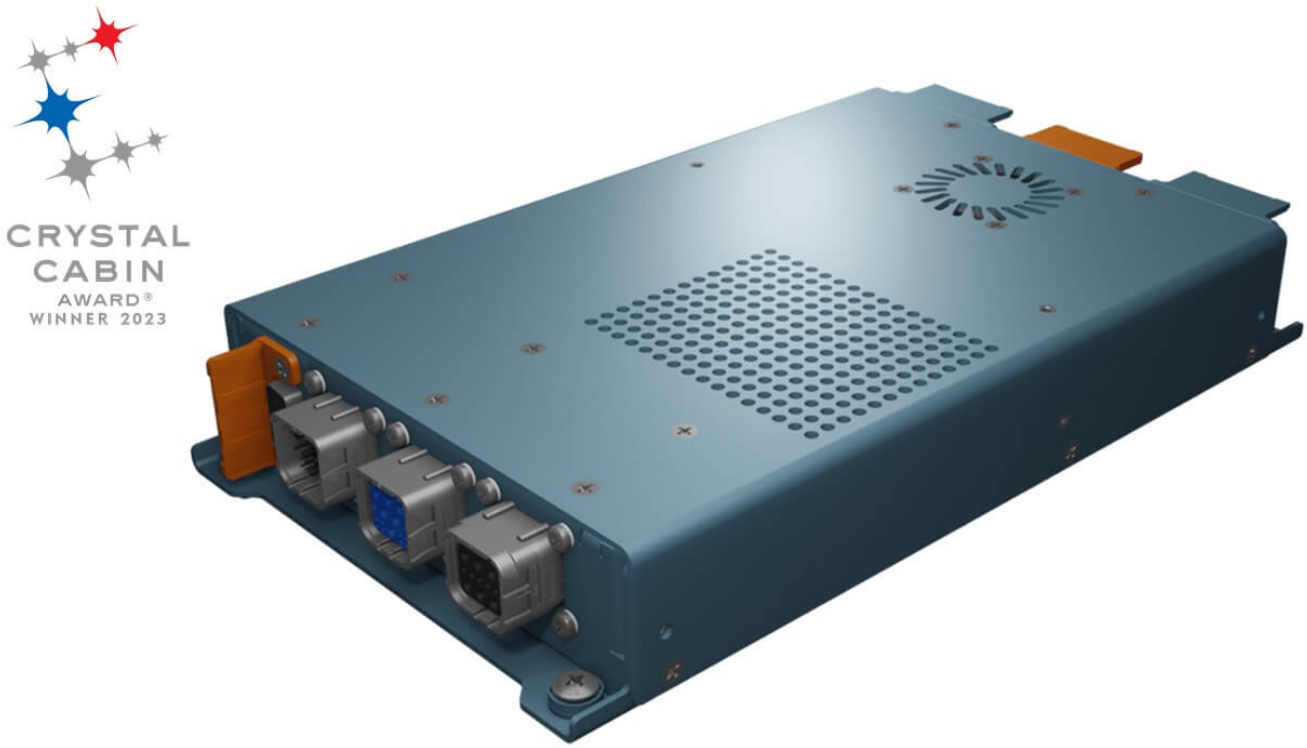
She continues, "When deciding on what technology to use for an IFE system it is much different than deciding on technology to buy for your home, you have to consider the environment and how the product will be used, and what is best for the aviation market."

Navatel explains, "A key difference between the QLED in the Optiq screen is that, unlike with OLED technology, the ambient contrast ratio ensures passengers can still enjoy their content when a light is turned on or a window is opened. The image quality is not compromised by factors beyond the passenger's control and the quality of the image does not degrade over time."

"Combining the leading technology with being first to market means that many seat pairings for our Optiq displays have already been completed and airlines can benefit from reduced lead times," she

continues. “This is an important standard set by Thales, it’s about going beyond bringing the latest IFE technology onboard, by working with a network of partners to get these innovations to the aircraft as quickly as possible.”

Combatting low battery anxiety



Thales’ Pulse Power Management

With so much pressure to remain connected 24/7, many passengers experience what Navatel calls “low battery anxiety” during a flight unless they have somewhere to charge multiple devices. Thales’ award-winning Pulse Smart Power Management enables fast USB charging, amid rising demand for access to these ports onboard.

“Beyond the trend to USB, we see an increased demand for fair power allocation. Pulse uses a patented power management technology to dynamically allocate power to eliminate today’s ‘first come, first serve’ power allocation to guarantee all devices get power, regardless of who plugs in first,” Navatel observes.

Thales’ power solution is reducing the stress for passengers, ensuring they do not land without a charged personal device.

Pulse is the only power solution that can power up to four seatback IFE screens as well as charge personal devices, making it an industry best, Navatel says. It earned Thales a 2022 Crystal Cabin Award for intelligently changing the way power
is distributed on the aircraft.

Navatel concludes, “Thales prides itself on best-in-class hardware technology which enables new and innovative digital services to create cutting-edge solutions for our customers. We continue to bring on partners who are industry leaders in their own domain to expand the IFE offering and remain at the forefront of innovation.”