
A chat with Federico Heitz, CEO of Kaelis

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"Sustainability" is the word of the moment in most industries, and the onboard passenger experience industry is no exception. Earlier this year, PAX posed a series of questions to [Kaelis'](#) CEO, Federico Heitz, on the topic, and he shared some insights into how his company takes the environment to heart.

PAX International: Can you speak specifically to how your company approaches sustainability from a client standpoint?

Federico Heitz: Kaelis is conscious of the importance of the subject, and we have definitely seen a growing trend of requests for sustainable options on behalf of the airlines. This is why we invest time and resources in developing eco-friendly products to keep ahead of the trend. Our sales team will usually understand what alternatives each client is willing to look at, and we then provide a range of choices.

PAX: Does working with eco-friendly and sustainable products and materials often come with a higher price tag?

Heitz: Yes, it does indeed, due to a number of factors. These materials are still in the development stage and at the same time in high demand internationally within different industrial sectors, due to the rapid increase of awareness within society.

For most of these materials the price is expected to eventually level out slightly, although in all likelihood it will not equal that of conventional materials. After all, different basic ingredients, as well as different manufacturing techniques, are being used. When and where the price will end up being is hard to say because a lot of sustainable options are made out of edible sources, which poses a whole other bunch of questions far beyond our industry. For example, cornstarch-based materials are a popular eco-friendly choice but will probably continue to be more expensive. On the other hand, we have recycled polyester (PET) made of water or Coke bottles which currently comes at a 30% premium, but once demand normalizes and technology ripens this difference should be eliminated.

PAX: Do you think it's a responsibility of airlines to research and provide onboard options that don't negatively impact the environment?

Heitz: At this stage, it is every person, company, state and organization's responsibility. Be the change you want to see in others. Individual consumers may or may not be actively looking for small

signs, but they will definitely appreciate them when they see them.

PAX: What are some of the projects you have worked on in recent past that exemplify this shift to eco-consciousness?

Heitz: There have been too many to name in the last two years. Pretty much every airline is making an effort to tackle this from one end or another. Usually, we are requested to provide conventional options and eco-friendly options, and clients start by studying how much they affect their pockets and their operations. This will be a gradual change, the introduction of some products or elements, then a whole service, then another class. It is not always easy for an airline to switch to a different service concept to accommodate different ideas, but Kaelis is here to help them through it.

PAX: In the future, do you think we will begin to see more and more onboard offerings that address sustainability?

Heitz: Definitely. This has to happen and is already underway. How fast this will come around will largely depend on local and international legislation regarding sustainability. There is a strong argument to say that the efforts will continue but eventually society will accept that certain disposable plastics are fully recyclable and, in its essence, recycling them is a high-value eco-conscious act. We will not be able to grow enough grain cultures and bamboo to make cups and bowls out of them, so recycling must and will find its proper ground, and it has to happen globally.