

# True sustainability in air travel

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For industry suppliers, sustainability is one of the most important ongoing conversations. Part of what makes the issue so pressing is agreeing on a definition. What does it mean to be truly sustainable?

Being upfront about sustainability practices can build trust between airlines and passengers. For Alison Wells, Managing Director at [Plane Talking Products](#) (PTP), “true sustainability is when you’re asking questions across the entire supply chain and making informed choices at every opportunity.”

To Wells, “purposeful products with good reuse or afterlife are always going to be better than something that is used once and discarded.” A great first question she suggests starting with is: “Do we really need this product in this way?”



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Talking Products



**Bill Carrejo**  
Director of Sustainability, Linstol



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Chief Marketing Officer, WESSCO  
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**Sarah Klatt-Walsh**  
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**Simon Yaffe**  
Director Client Relationship, Buzz

Forefronting sustainability has the potential to improve the passenger experience in a few different ways. For one, “it drives the innovation of materials, products and service, leading to more unique and interesting passenger experiences,” Sarah Klatt-Walsh, Sustainability Lead at [FORMIA](#), tells *PAX International*.

Passengers on flights today expect sustainability, that is a given. “We see a dynamic shift in passengers pushing to see our partners making change and I believe they are willing to pay for that change,” Bill Carrejo, Director of Sustainability at [Linstol](#) says. “I also think airlines have an opportunity to set their brands apart by featuring and highlighting what they and their partners are doing that will have a positive impact on our world, making just one change can have a huge impact.”

### What “good sustainability” looks like

For Wells, who notes varying levels of legislation and international regulations, “it can be difficult to know “what ‘good’ looks like in sustainable inflight products.” At PTP, she says, “we help our customers by advising them on the advantages and disadvantages of the options open to them.”

Carrejo says that “challenging our complete supply chain” is essential to enacting meaningful change. In answer to this, Linstol is finding ways to “reduce the use of disposable plastic bags, utilize post-manufactured waste to manufacture our bagasse cups and working with strategic partners like MNH to create zero landfill programs for headsets in specific markets.” These efforts add up to a significant reduction in Linstol’s environmental footprint and support many of its customers’ overall objectives.

At Linstol, a true balance of financial, social and environment responsibilities is what encompasses true sustainability. Improving product life cycles is a part of this. For example, “Why does an earbud need a plastic bag?” Carrejo asks. “Could we not utilize a change in packaging to have a better impact?” With so much plastic that already exists in the world, he notes that some might go as far as to consider it a renewable resource. Improving recycling programs and knowledge of their impact can go a long way.

Linstol is pushing to achieve a “plastic positive” position, which means taking more plastic out of the environment than the company puts into it. “With the amount of plastic items we produce today, this is a massive target. I think our industry needs to make sure we are actually delivering on our promises and not just selling a marketing program,” Carrejo says.



Created by Buzz in collaboration with RECLINER, these sleepsuits designed for American Airlines are consciously made from recycled plastic bottles and blended with cotton, making them luxuriously soft and highly breathable

Simon Yaffe, Director of Client Relationship at [Buzz](#), says that “real sustainability is about finding ways to create value without waste.” One of the key design principles at Buzz that enacts this is “Design for Keeps,” he says.

This principle results in products that passengers can enjoy well beyond arriving at a destination point — a factor that helps make a product more meaningful to passengers. “By providing customers with a luxury and valued product, it will be cherished, reused and repurposed for many years to come,” Yaffe says.

“Passengers want to see that the airline understands its eco footprint and is actively engaged in taking steps to minimize impact on the planet,” Yaffe continues. As a way to keep passengers informed of sustainability efforts, Yaffe suggests sharing stories of the sustainable initiatives airlines are taking.

Wells echoes this: “There is simply an expectation from passengers that we are doing all we can to be as sustainable as possible when it comes to product and service. She recommends demonstrating this”<sup>3</sup>

by telling “the ‘story’ of the products which is not only usually very interesting but also offers the reassurance that passengers are looking for.”

## Principles in action

By partnering with highly sought-after brands that share its focus on sustainability, [WESSCO International](#) aims to provide customers with collections that not only look great but are also eco-friendly, socially responsible and on-trend with passengers.

For example, WESSCO’s partnership with [LATAM Airlines](#) and [Feito Brasil](#) celebrates the work of exceptional Latin American artists and provides passengers with an eco-friendly, stylish, and functional bag that can be used long after the flight. Feito Brasil, a certified B Corp, offers passengers all-natural, vegan cosmetics that are good for the environment and their skin.

In partnership with [All Nippon Airways](#), WESSCO developed a unique and sustainable amenity kit for Premium Economy passengers. The kit features a Tyvek tote bag, a stylish, eco-friendly and practical item that provides ample space to store all inflight essentials.

WESSCO also partnered with [Icelandair](#) to create the “Dýralíf ” (Wildlife) amenity kit collection, featuring designs that celebrate Iceland’s unique natural inhabitants and includes luxury skin care contents from Hannes Dottir. The reusable bags are made from sustainable materials such as recycled canvas, vegan leather, and felt made from recycled plastic bottles. WESSCO is dedicated to delivering a travel experience that is both luxurious and eco-friendly. Petros Sakkis, Chief Marketing Officer at WESSCO International tells *PAX International*, “We strongly believe that sustainability and style must go hand in hand. We’re continuously seeking out new ways to manufacture our products using sustainable and upcycled materials and partnering with the world’s best brands to deliver products that passengers love.”

FORMIA’s kits for [JetBlue](#)’s Core Experience have a strong focus on endless re-usability while for [China Airlines](#) Business Class and Premium Economy, together with performance apparel brand [The North Face](#), kits were designed to maximize the passenger’s ability to incorporate the bags into their everyday lives as an extension of a healthy, active lifestyle. These are just two examples of partnerships that put FORMIA’s sustainability principles into action.

A growing number of airlines are also taking advantage of FORMIA’s initiative to change the virgin polyester in socks and eye masks to recycled polyester — an initiative launched in 2021 to further drive the use of recycled polyester across the industry.

For its part, Linstol currently partners with several different companies that are working to make a global impact on sustainability. “Flexport.org and the Pachama Foundation are our carbon offset programs,” Carrejo says. “We have also been partnering with Plastic Bank™ to help remove tons of plastic from the ocean-bound waste stream and have started to use those collected plastics (called “Social Plastic”) in some of our headsets and other products.”

The company’s newest partnership with “Got Bag” shows how bringing recycled products to our airline partners is possible.



The Linstol Super Cup provides airlines with a truly recyclable paper cup that can be processed in the normal paper pulping process

“We have also been working with Smart Planet technologies on our Linstol Super Cup,” Carrejo says. “Today we can provide an airline with a truly recyclable paper cup that can be processed in the normal paper pulping process.”

Buzz champions the inclusion of sustainable materials in luxury products, as seen in the RECLINER sleepsuits designed for [American Airlines](#). The stylish and sustainable sleepsuits are crafted from recycled plastic bottles blended with breathable cotton. Created by Buzz in collaboration with RECLINER, the sleepsuits are consciously made from recycled plastic bottles and blended with cotton, making them luxuriously soft and highly breathable.

PTP is meeting the demand for a high-quality, earth-friendly inflight experience in multiple ways. “We’ve been meeting with waste management companies so we can better understand what can and can’t actually be recycled or commercially composted,” Wells says. PTP is also expanding its manufacturing base with the aim of offering more local production.

“We want to work with our customers and others in the supply chain to look at reuse of our products and/or options for disposal — and most of all we want to continue to strive for improved circularity,”

Wells says.



Passengers can connect via a QR code with the artisan in Mexico who created their bags on Delta Air Lines Premium Cabin kits — a partnership facilitated by FORMIA with Mexico-based B-corp apparel brand Someone, Somewhere

As an early member of the [Aviation Sustainability Forum](#), PTP affirms that it wants to play its part in collaborating with the overall inflight supply chain to drive better outcomes for the products it supplies.

## Focusing in

A theme throughout the conversations leading up to WTCE this year has been the importance of collaboration for the industry as a whole. Be it through a push for transparency in manufacturing practices, localized efforts, sharing stories with passengers or a combination of all of the above — the major take-away is that figuring out how to achieve true sustainability must remain a living discussion.

“The global responsibility falls on everyone — supplier or buyer — it has to be a part of the culture of every organization,” Carrejo says. “With our industry’s environmental impact, we owe it to our world, our passengers and our employees to be as good a steward of the environment as we can be.”