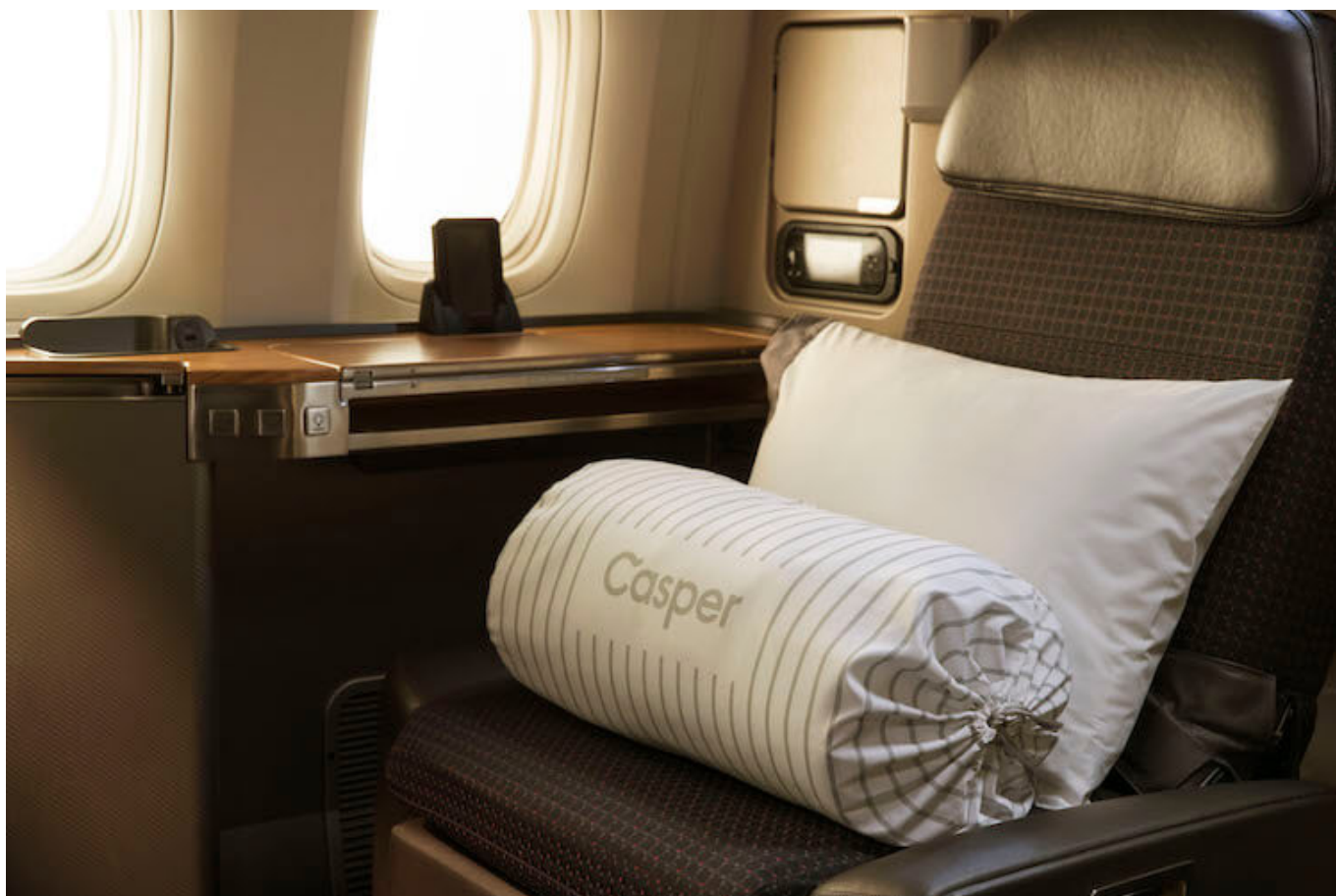


Guest Column: Pillow Talk with APEX GCEO Dr. Joe Leader

This is a special feature from *PAX International's* [March 2024 Amenities & Comfort](#) issue, on [page 26](#).



The American Airlines pillow, created with Casper, features breathable fabric to assure a supported, temperate and moisture-free experience

Envision the serenity as your head gently descends onto the perfect pillow—your neck finds its sanctuary, your head nestles into that sublime niche for tranquil sleep. In the exalted echelons of Business Class, the pillow fracas has dominated the contest over seats. Premium seat enhancements trudge through a glacial pace of implementation; however, pillows can be changed almost overnight.

The airline industry has roused to the strategic significance of pillows. A decade ago, [Delta Air Lines](#) kindled the inflight bedding conflict, introducing the [Westin Heavenly](#) bed, topped with the plush, allergen-free Westin Heavenly pillow, setting a new standard in cabin comfort.

Four years later, [American Airlines](#) ventured into the co-branded arena with Casper bedding. [Casper](#), the virtuoso of sleep, engineered a pillow that not only offers support but also molds to the

constrained space of airplane seating. Whether down alternative or memory foam, Casper provided options. These pillows, encased in breathable fabric, assure a temperate, moisture-free voyage, some even featuring a gel grid for enhanced cooling.



United Airlines tapped Saks Fifth Avenue for bedding in its Polaris Business Class

[United Airlines](#) escalated the competition within its Polaris Business Class by integrating [Saks Fifth Avenue](#) bedding, comprising both a conventional pillow and a coveted cooling gel pillow.

This innovation has garnered such affection that passengers frequently adopt these pillows for personal use. United CEO Scott Kirby, aware of my partiality towards the airline's gel pillow, graciously offered to ensure I received one, a testament to the personal touch airlines are embracing.

[Emirates](#) today showcases an incredible duo of down and feather, alongside memory foam pillows in its First Class suites, yet there lies an opportunity to further elevate the offering through strategic branding partnerships. A collaboration with luxury bedding brands like [Savoir Beds](#) or [Hastens](#) could synergize Emirates' luxury ethos with these esteemed names, creating an unparalleled inflight sleep experience.

In a similar respect, [ITA Airways](#), in its quest to rejuvenate its Business Class offerings, could make a significant impact with a [Sferra](#) pillow partnership, blending Italian craftsmanship with supreme inflight luxury.



Qatar Airways encourages passengers to take pillows home, each with a unique travel-themed message

[Qatar Airways](#) has transcended the traditional approach, offering a diverse array of pillows, each with a unique travel-themed message, encouraging passengers to take a piece of their journey home. This ingenious strategy embeds the Qatar Airways brand directly into the hearts and minds of their passengers.



Xiamen Airways introduced a novel concept alongside its traditional Business Class pillow; a wrap-around gel travel pillow

[Xiamen Airways](#), in its pursuit of innovation, introduced a novel concept alongside its traditional Business Class pillow on my final flight of last year—offering a wrap-around gel travel pillow designed for neck support, adaptable for future travels and solidifying a memorable brand association with passengers.

The escalation of the global pillow skirmish is not merely a battle for comfort; it is about forging memorable experiences. As airlines vie for supremacy in the skies, the ultimate winners are the travellers, blessed with the luxury of choice, ensuring their travel is not just about the destination, but about the journey itself.

In the name of a better experience, I call upon every airline to engage in this pillow fight! In the pursuit of passenger loyalty, the humble pillow emerges as a potent arsenal—an economical yet profoundly impactful tool to win over the hearts and minds of your passengers, ensuring the brand becomes an integral part of their travel narrative and dreams.