

gategroup set for dynamic 2025 with global reach, ESG progress and renewed optimism

This is a special feature from the [April 2025 WTCE issue](#) of *PAX International* on [page 32](#).



Christoph Schmitz, CEO, gategroup

As the airline catering industry continues to rebound, [gategroup](#) is poised for a transformative year ahead. In an interview with *PAX International*, CEO Christoph Schmitz shared insights into the company's strategic priorities, its commitment to sustainability and the factors that set it apart.

For gategroup, 2025 represents a year of renewed momentum.

"We are pursuing several initiatives to drive value creation and transformation within our organization" Schmitz explains, emphasizing a shift from recovery to proactive culinary and technological innovation. One key focus is product quality, as passengers continue to demand fresher, locally sourced meals that align with their evolving preferences. "We are pioneers in the industry in the use of data science applied to menu design, we redefine inflight dining with creative, high-quality culinary offerings that elevate the passenger experience," says Schmitz.

"The momentum is increasing," he says. "We are disrupting the way we do business, and we believe this will open new market opportunities, we are working on ensuring we offer our customers the best

possible services and a real competitive edge.”

Another critical priority is workforce optimization. The pandemic led to significant staff reductions, with gategroup’s workforce dropping from more than 50,000 employees to around 30,000. Although the company has largely recovered, regaining pre-pandemic efficiency levels remains a key objective.

“It’s really about managing the people, skilling up and getting operational efficiency back to where it used to be,” he notes.



gategroup is advancing sustainability and innovation with the introduction of gatehorizon, an expert working group driving gategroup’s industry leadership and the next-generation airline catering solutions

Big is beautiful

Schmitz says gategroup’s global scale is one of its greatest strengths, with operations spanning more than 200 facilities across all continents. This extensive network provides the caterer with a comprehensive view of market trends and airline needs.

“We have the largest number of customers and the largest number of locations,” Schmitz says. “We see what works and what does not. We know what a low-cost carrier is doing all the way to what a premium airline is doing.”

Schmitz also highlights gategroup’s commitment to efficiency and standardization. While many regions operate under different regulations, gategroup is pioneering its own internal best practices.

“There are no global standards—it’s all regional. What we are doing is creating our own standard,” he explains. “If an airline comes to us and wants our service, they can rely on our systems and processes. They get best-in-class service, and that is something some of the smaller competitors may₂

not be able to offer.”

ESG report

In March, gategroup published its annual ESG report, detailing its sustainability advancements.

“The pandemic set us back, but it also gave us time to set up all the systems and processes to really measure properly,” Schmitz says. “What you don’t measure, you don’t manage.”

Among the company’s achievements in 2024 are:

- Investment decisions: ESG considerations are now embedded in every major investment decision, ensuring a focus on long-term value creation.
- Supply chain transparency: Nearly 3,000 Tier 1 suppliers underwent sustainability assessments, leading to improved ESG compliance.
- Sustainable menu development: gategroup expanded its portfolio of locally sourced ingredients and introduced more vegetarian and vegan meal options.
- Circular systems: The company’s gatesolutions vertical and packaging brand deSter collaborated on sustainable innovations, focusing on circular design principles and eco-friendly materials.
- Investment in renewables: A renewable energy purchasing program and fleet upgrades have helped reduce gategroup’s environmental footprint.

“We are proud to have made so much progress and have the necessary tools in place to drive our ESG strategy in all we do,” Schmitz says. “The milestones we’ve achieved in 2024 reflect our ongoing commitment to sustainability and our drive to create long-term value for both our business and the communities we serve.”



Christoph Schmitz, gategroup, CEO (left) was a panelist at the ACA Leadership Symposium in February in Amsterdam, discussing differing legislations on food safety and allergens, customer changing tastes, AI and technology and more

Optimistic outlook

Schmitz, who has been with gategroup for a decade, is enthusiastic about the industry's future.

"It's been a tough three or four years, but I'm super excited because we are out of the crisis, the business is back and passengers are flying again," he says. "We have a lot of ideas, a lot of innovations that we are working on."

With financial recovery well underway, gategroup can now fully focus on pushing the boundaries of sustainability and innovation. In that spirit, gategroup is laying the groundwork for a new initiative called gatehorizon, an expert working group dedicated to maintaining gategroup's industry leadership through innovation and to create the next generation of airline catering solutions.

"There seems to be definitely a renewed sense of optimism," says Schmitz. "The conversations are turning to the future and what is actually happening—and this industry is going to change."