
Jeremy's World: Eco-friendly service items and practices

By **Jeremy Clark** on November, 2 2018 | Jeremy's World



Hallo again! We have skipped a month, because even I take holidays from time to time. The good thing about that is it allowed me time to ponder. The current Mrs. C and I were fortunate enough to spend six weeks in America's Northeast and Southwest, which afforded us an opportunity to appreciate the diversity of this beautiful country. It was also an eye-opener to the attitudes that surround the rather touchy subject (in the U.S., at least) of global warming and what we are all doing about it.

We get more than our fair share of eco-criticism in the travel game, much of it seems out of proportion to the industry's actual contributions to the problem. Today's aircraft's use of lightweight material and high-tech manufacturing make them many times more fuel-efficient than the 707, and that trend looks set to continue exponentially. But in our corner of the business – namely passenger service – there is a lot more we can do.

I recently judged the International Flight Services Association's Compass Awards and also visited London to participate in a round of judging for the upcoming Mercurys (December 10 in Abu Dhabi – don't miss it). One common thread throughout the presentations be it for food and beverage products, service concepts or onboard amenities and comfort, was the acknowledgement of the importance of environmental awareness. The use of recycled materials, or packaging and materials that are recyclable, was an emphasis of many entries. More than just a small attempt to address this hot-button subject, many companies prefer their customers, as well as their customers' customers, know exactly what they are doing to minimize their environmental impact and reduce their carbon footprint.

Looking at the international scene and across many sectors, the US still has a ways to go to catch up. Some companies are active, but as British Airways, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and McDonald's European locations fast track the removal of plastics, a recent trip to Starbucks in the US demonstrated quite the opposite, with unnecessary plastic cup tops, straws and stirrers still in general use (in addition to their penchant for mediocre coffee*).

While much of this increased awareness can be attributed to Sir David Attenborough's exposé on plastic in the oceans, much is also driven by government initiatives, which in turn are driven by popular public opinion. But sometimes governments do listen – when DC runs out of water or hair tonic, they may finally do so in America – and since the authorities who place demands on recycling are the same ones preventing us from managing aircraft offloads better, we may as an industry be able to sway them on this topic.

The unease that surrounds offloaded product, particularly in the US and the EU, is that very little can be properly segregated and recycled; instead, it must be burnt or sent to the landfill. Given the technology we now have for managing refuse and recycling organics, plastics, metals and glass, it must surely be time for innovating companies in our industry to see their products enter the reuse or

recycle processes at end-of-life.

There's a strong case to be made that unopened products should be permitted to be reused or redistributed. Packaging should be processed and recycled, and this nonsense of emptying liters and liters of excellent wines down the drain has to stop. Passengers can take small steps by asking for a paper cup, refusing plastic straws and complaining about excessive packaging when they see it. Let's do what we can - and if an eco-warrior having a go at air travel collars you, remind them of the days of the 707, and just how far we've come.

**The views expressed are in no way endorsed by PAX International and any of its affiliated companies - but they are most definitely mine!*