
PAX quizzes Galileo Watermark's new Managing Director

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Johannes Kloess, Managing Director of Galileo Watermark

PAX International: Since we last spoke for our September 2018 IFSA Boston issue, you have switched roles from Operations Director to Managing Director of [Galileo Watermark](#). How has your day-to-day workflow changed?

Johannes Kloess: The days are still as long, as they always were, but they're certainly more diverse. Previously I was focused on ensuring we could be the most reliable supplier we could be from a sourcing, quality and delivery perspective. Now I am working closely with all the departments at GW to maintain and improve our high standards. I am still heavily involved with several Operations projects, which include expanding our supplier base and working with some of our suppliers on improving the sustainability of our products. Over the next few months, I will be handing over these projects to our new Operations Director, Mildred Lau, who is based in our Hong Kong office and therefore ideally placed to manage that part of the business.

PAX: With this change, are you traveling more or less?

Kloess: I would say I'm travelling about the same as before, with the destinations changing slightly. Previously, I spent a few months a year in our Hong Kong office and visiting our suppliers in China. Now, I travel to trade shows and to see suppliers, brands and customers, as well as colleagues, which has meant more travel in Europe mainly. It's impossible in this industry not to travel, not just to meet our partners and suppliers but also to understand the market. In speaking to passengers and crew,

experiencing product and service offerings from different carriers we can see clearly what is and isn't required in the industry. Without understanding perceptions, drivers and cultures, it's easy to lose touch.

PAX: Do you have more face-to-face or less time with clients?

Kloess: The handover of my former responsibilities is still ongoing but will be completed before too long. This will enable me to free up time to focus my efforts on the other departments; helping these to deliver the ambitious plans we have set ourselves for the next few years, as well as to start spending more time with our customers. We have a great team at GW, and it's important that the management team have the autonomy to lead their divisions. I see my role more as making sure we are all working together and in the right direction rather than getting too involved in the day-to-day business of each department.

PAX: From your position as Managing Director, where do you see Galileo Watermark heading over the course of 2019 and beyond?

Kloess: Since the merger, our focus has been on bringing together the two companies, integrating systems and cultures while delivering a reliable service to our customers. Such integrations can be very disruptive, but we have managed to keep things moving quite smoothly, amongst a great amount of change. The focus of the business is now switching to growing the business in all areas. We are launching several new projects in Q1 of 2019 which we are extremely excited about, as well as later in the year and in 2020. These recent successes clearly show that we are on the right track. Being one of the a select few suppliers being able to supply products in amenities, textiles and meal service, we have improved our capabilities in all areas and look forward to showcasing this to the industry at WTCE.

PAX: How have Galileo Watermark's conversations with airlines changed over the years?

Kloess: The conversations certainly vary by airline, which is part of why this industry is so exciting and unique. The main consistent underlying aim is to deliver a memorable and lasting experience to each passenger. Each airline does of course have a budget by which this must be achieved. However, for the right experience our customers are willing to pay more for a higher tangible or intangible return. We always aim to offer our customers a variety of options, at different price points and using a selection of materials. We are certainly seeing more and more carriers ask for proposals to include offerings with sustainability in mind.

PAX: Can you give us any insight into where your company does the majority of its manufacturing?

Kloess: The majority of our manufacturing takes place in China with some suppliers in Europe and other parts of Asia. Our materials, however, come from all over the world. We look very carefully at material provenance, sustainability and the audit trail to ensure reliability in what we source and that each element within a product has the least impact on the environment as possible. This hasn't significantly changed in the last few years, though we are constantly looking to expand our supplier base and, where possible, offer our customers options where manufacture can happen in-country or closer to the delivery location with a view to reducing lead times and emissions during transport. For certain products, European manufacturers are now able to compete on price compared to suppliers in Asia, a trend we will monitor closely over the next few years.

PAX: When the name "Galileo Watermark" is uttered amongst industry insiders, what characteristics do you hope are associated with it?

Kloess: Since the merge between Galileo and Watermark, we have been keen to emphasize that we 2

are not just a products-based business. We of course have the capability to manufacture a lot of products but where we add value is as a design partner, in particular. We want to see how we can improve the passenger experience whilst achieving efficiencies for our airline partners; for their logistics teams, for crew, for procurement and for their sustainability team.

PAX: Onboard waste is something that we spoke about last year, and it is a continuing theme in our WTCE Hamburg issue. Are there any other initiatives that Galileo Watermark has embarked on since we spoke that have tried to make a difference, environmentally?

Kloess: Sustainability for us is not a choice, but an obligation. The tendency for us as a society has been to put cost and convenience first, and in the process neglect the environment. This has been the subject of intense public and media scrutiny for a number of years, especially over the last 12 months and there is a real drive to make a change.

We have launched a number of sustainable solutions over the last 10 years and it is something for us that is inherent in everything we develop. In the airline industry, however, depending on the product category, it isn't binary. There are certain regulations and restrictions regarding contamination that makes material interception, and end of life treatment, impossible or very difficult. We are working with a number of airline partners to see how we may be able to circumvent these restrictions by changing internal/external processes or the type of raw material, with as little cost impact as possible. Beyond process changes we are looking at how the product design or quality can lead to sustainability improvement. This includes extending the product life cycle or developing a product which the passenger will reuse after stepping off the plane, whether at their destination or when they get back home. In addition, we are doing our bit to reduce the amount of virgin plastic used by using post-consumer recycled plastic in our cosmetic packaging and we are working on other projects which we hope to announce later this year.

PAX: What do visitors to your WTCE booth have to look forward to seeing and experiencing this year?

Kloess: We will be showcasing new products and designs across all product categories, as well as our new brand partnerships. The sustainable initiatives and innovations we mentioned above will be featured, plus the products from our most recent launches. We look forward to what will no doubt be a great show.