

AIX Virtual: A positive future for women in aviation

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This year's Aircraft Interiors Expo ([AIX](#)) Virtual event brings the aviation industry together and within that demographic is a discussion curated specifically to bring women to the forefront. The 'Women Behind Aviation,' session, moderated by PAX Tech Editor Jane Hobson brings together a cross-section of women in senior roles in the aviation sector to discuss their career paths; current and future initiatives to improve both diversity in the workforce and in leadership roles; plus, immediate challenges for the industry to address.

Available on-demand, speakers include Fadimatou Noutchemo Simo, Douala, [Young African Aviation Professional Association](#); Erin Lear Founder of [Jet Blondie](#) and Executive Sales Director, [Jet Token](#); Karyn McAlphin Design Director at [SEKISUI KYDEX](#); and, Jane Hoskisson Director Talent, Learning, Engagement and Diversity at [IATA](#).

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Clockwise from top: Fadimatou Noutchemo Simo, Douala, Young African Aviation Professional Association, Jane Hoskisson Director Talent, Learning, Engagement and Diversity at IATA, Erin Lear

Founder of Jet Blondie and Executive Sales Director, Jet Token, Karyn McAlphin Design Director at SEKISUI KYDEX and Moderator Jane Hobson of *PAX Tech*

Hoskisson opens the discussion with an update on the International Air Transport Association's 25 by 2025 initiative. It aims to increase female representation in the industry by 25 percent by the year 2025. About 75 airlines have joined the initiative.

It is important to "shine a light on great talent" as a way to encourage women to pursue a career in aviation because "you can't be what you can't see," Hoskisson says.

Founder of [BIRDe Academy](#), a predominantly female aviation academy, Lear says a practical way to create visible space for women in the industry is to market her own personal experience and the experiences of other women. Lear is the granddaughter of Bill Lear who founded the Learjet which Bombardier has since discontinued.

"I grew up basically watching the airplanes take off the tarmac. Hearing a Learjet take off the tarmac and thinking to myself, 'how amazing is that power?'" Lear says. "That is what inspired me to get into aviation."

She also touches on how the use of electric aircraft can help reduce the hefty price usually associated with becoming a pilot, making it a more attainable goal for people who are interested.

Introducing girls to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) at an early age is another way to spark interest in the aviation industry, McAlphin says. Teaching these academic disciplines at an early age creates a "tremendous opportunity" to educate girls about possible pathways into aviation that are traditionally walked by male counterparts, she says, adding that it highlights that there are additional spaces for women along with pilot and flight attendant.

"Opportunities available to women at airlines include fields that people don't typically think of," McAlphin says, listing a few examples such as engineer, finance and accounts, and corporate lawyer.

The discussion also examines how having more women behind aviation design, manufacturing and purchasing decisions have a ripple effect. Not only does it mean more women in other areas of aviation, but it also affects the experience of the end user.

Hoskisson points out that while business travel is expected to recover slowly, high-end leisure travel is shaping up.

"Something like 95 percent of decision-makers for high-end luxury travel tend to be women. That already tells you something interesting," she says. The industry stands to run into the problem where a high-quality experience is available, but it may not be right for the target market.

"I'm not very tall, I'm 160 centimeters. Most business class seats are really comfy but sometimes I feel like *Alice in Wonderland* when I sit on them because I can't touch the floor when we're taking off. Now that sounds ridiculous, but I'd love to get in a business class seat feel like it was fit for me," she explains.

If designers, manufacturers, and engineers had a "balance that reflects the demographic of the world," it would enhance the experience for more people.

The panel also discusses the important role of mentorship and collaboration. Noutchemo Simo touches on how sharing experiences and providing guidance helps build confidence in girls and women.

“I started encouraging people of all sectors in the aviation industry to do outreach, to share that mentorship. This, for me, has been very inspirational because every day now I find a lot of young girls in the polytechnical schools will reach out to me, wanting me to give them an orientation,” she says.

All panelists share the sentiment that there is an exciting future ahead for women in aviation as the pandemic comes to an end and beyond.

PAX International and PAX Tech are proud Media Partners

As Media Partners for AIX and WTCE Virtual, the September [WTCE edition](#) of PAX International and [AIX edition](#) of PAX Tech are available the event, and online.

For more information and to register to attend, [click here for AIX](#) and [click here for WTCE](#).

AIX and WTCE Virtual replace the live editions, which will not take place in 2021 due to the ongoing challenges and global restrictions on international travel. AIX and WTCE will return to Hamburg from June 14 to 16, 2022 at the Hamburg Messe.