

---

# Watching for what is next

By **Jane Hobson** on May, 6 2020 | Aviation Trends



In the final half of the State of the Industry discussion of last week's online event broadcast [FlightPlan](#), sponsored by [Inmarsat](#) and the [Airline Passenger Experience Association](#), aviation journalist John Walton and [PaxEx.Aero](#) Founder & Editor-in-Chief Seth Miller offered their perspectives on the substantial changes that may be around the corner for the industry. From Walton in Lyon, France, and Miller in New Hampshire, US, the pair discussed what the future may hold, from seating, inflight service and cabin classes.



From Lyon, France, aviation journalist John Walton (left) and PaxEx.Aero Founder & Editor-in-Chief Seth Miller offered their perspectives on the substantial changes that may be around the corner for the industry

## What is next?

With doubts about whether reversed middle seats, such as those revealed by [Aviointeriors the week before last](#), and two-meter social distancing, which results in a 15 percent load factor on a 737 or A320, is actually possible, Walton and Miller predicted the industry is still a ways out from returning to its former-glory – and they question whether it ever will.

As Miller pointed it, the industry is now seeing a number of airlines announce aircraft retirements for its older models, including [Lufthansa's](#) A340-600 and [British Airways](#) 747s. This may result in replacements with 777s and the A350, respectively, and by extension, the retirement of the airlines' First Class cabin, Miller added.

“One could argue that there is sufficient privacy and flatbeddedness in the new business class products that it's sufficient for what demand is going to be,” he said. “But there is something a little special about first class still that is going to be sad to lose.”

Moving further back in the aircraft, Miller said he thinks Premium Economy will be an interesting segment to watch. Business Class is the new First Class, and Premium Economy is the new Business Class. Miller questioned whether there will be more innovation and development to come in the next couple years, or if the slightly wider and more reclined seat is what the industry can expect for the next decade.

When it comes to amenities, Miller said there may be a renaissance where experience and interaction with the flight attendant becomes a critical part of passenger experience and satisfaction.

“I’m not sure the food offerings and some of those extra bits are going to come back quite as strong as they were before, unfortunately,” Miller added.

Some companies will inevitably disappear among the IFEC solutions providers. It will all depend on who can come up with a new solution and whether pricing of these solutions can be maintained at the commercial level when there are fewer suppliers and a potentially higher bandwidth cost as a result, which could create problems getting it to consumers at an affordable price.

“As the medical advancements come along, the testing and options come along that allow country’s to reopen their borders and allow for the travel to resume, I’m reasonably convinced that the airlines are going to keep trying to push as many people back into the planes as they can and try to make some money doing it,” Miller said in conclusion.

At the end of the day, the outlooks are positive for the industry, Walton added. “People are still going to want to travel, people are still going to need to go see grandma, people are still going to need to travel on business. I think we miss something when it comes to being there in person,” he said. “I honestly can’t wait to be back there, right down at the back of the plane in row 28B.”