

APEX/IFSA and FTE Global EXPO preview with Dr. Joe Leader



The IFSA show floor will once again host the biggest names in the onboard services industry, from caterers to amenity kit and comfort experts

When it comes to airline industry events, few can compare to the excitement and size of [APEX/IFSA](#), the annual, dual-branded inflight tech, entertainment, amenities and cuisine showcase spectacular. Since combining their powers, the organizations have created a one-stop-shop for companies in the onboard sphere, and each year they have taken their show across North America, to the delight of insiders looking to network, wheel and deal, and of course, enjoy the hospitality of the host city.

This year, as the conference and tradeshow come to Long Beach, California, from September 19 to 21, another exciting endeavour is on tap: for the first time ever, a co-location with [Future Travel Experience \(FTE\) Global](#), often referred to as “the CES of aviation.” With this announcement, delegates to APEX/IFSA will be exposed to even more cutting-edge information and insightful data that will help them better shape their businesses as the airline industry continues to evolve at a breakneck pace.



Dr. Joe Leader, Group CEO of APEX, IFSA and FTE

For Dr. Joe Leader, Group CEO of APEX, IFSA and FTE, this partnership has been a long time coming, one that has mirrored his own journey as an expert in the sector.

“Nearly two decades ago, I switched from high-tech to aviation after becoming an airline’s most frequent flyer,” says Leader. “That gave me a very unique perspective, as I believed that the aviation world needed to evolve as quickly as high-tech companies.”

After becoming APEX’s first CEO, and following an agreement with IFSA to create a cohesive partnership unlike any other in the onboard landscape, there was only one more piece that needed to fall into place. That happened when, in 2022, APEX/IFSA successfully completed the purchase of FTE, a move that had been stalled by the pandemic. This year marks the first that the trio has shared the same home, under the name Global 2023 — and it will undoubtedly be an event to remember.

Leader relied on his experience to deliver what the three organizations expected from a director: agility and ingenuity. “I learned quickly that [APEX/IFSA] wanted items that I could help deliver in short order: a more prominent profile, higher-level airline executive engagement, expanded reach, and organizational change,” he says. “While I love aviation, I genuinely thrive on advancement and

change.”

Sixty-five airlines have confirmed their attendance, from large flyers like [Qatar](#), [Air France](#) and [British Airways](#), to smaller, lower-cost companies like [WestJet](#), [Zipair Tokyo](#) and [Allegiant Air](#), making it a must-attend event for companies in all corners of the industry. More than 3,000 attendees will walk the halls, making deals and shaking hands with the who’s-who of inflight activities — a record-setting gathering for the organizers.



APEX/IFSA EXPO offers lots of opportunity for networking

“For the first time ever, we have a full three days of thought leadership available to attendees,” explains Leader. “IFSA has a Thought Leadership pavilion on the show floor; FTE Global has continuous thought leadership events over the entire show. In addition, for FTE Global premium pass holders, the APEX/IFSA Thought Leadership day on Thursday is available to all. This means that we will now have four concurrent tracks on Thursday perfect for every different APEX, IFSA, and FTE Global attendee.”

The Thought Leadership pavilion holds much potential for those looking to gain insight into how some of the biggest names in air travel continue to push the boundaries of the passenger experience.

As Leader explains, “In the IFSA Thought Leadership pavilion on the show floor, I am most enthused about how we’re collaborating with global trailblazers like [IATA](#), [IFSA](#), [ACA](#), [ACI](#), and [A4E](#) in unveiling 'REvolutionize' as a combination of REinvent and REcycle. This pioneering initiative will feature powerful insights from IATA, [Icelandair](#) and [Alaska Airlines](#). For APEX/IFSA Thought Leadership on Thursday, I cannot wait for the entire day with all three shows gathered together with leading executives focused entirely on the vision of Air Transport 2030 across four different tracks of interest.”

There are a few noteworthy presentations that Leader is keen to witness — and participate in.

“At FTE Global, I am most excited about doing the one-on-one with Qatar Airways GCEO Akbar Al Bake,” he shares. “He’s incredibly engaging and knowledgeable, covering an expansive amount of passenger experience depth.”

So, what else can attendees expect from this new, co-located experience? In short, everything — and more.

“Co-locating the events brings together every aspect of aviation from the entire passenger journey,” says Leader. “We have digital transformation, airport customer journey, lounges, biometrics, inflight service, soft products and airline passenger all under the giant expanse of the [Long Beach Convention Center](#).”

Another exciting development is the amalgamation of all three co-located events into one app: [SwapCard](#). This update will make it convenient for those on the floor to set meetings, navigate through the conference hall and share contact information with potential partners. Even better: it’s directly integrated into LinkedIn for easier post-show networking.

In 2024, Leader says industry movers can expect an extra day added to the event, a change that will help attendees to better take in all the expo has to offer. The timing will remain the same: holding it in September this year is a strategic move, Leader adds, since it lands between FTE Global’s September dates and APEX/IFSA’s usual October timeframe. “It’s at the perfect spacing point between our events in Dublin and Singapore,” he says.

The professionals on this year’s expo floor should be prepared to be amazed, according to Leader, and badge holders can rest assured the cost of entry will be well worth it.

“Everyone is there and yet no one gets lost,” he says. “It’s the perfect size and scope to deliver the advancement needed for our industry as we design the future for 2030.”