

Unum's Alan McInnes reflects on AIME 2026

This is a special feature from the February 2026 [Pre-AIX/Middle East Report issue](#) of *PAX Tech*, [on page 34](#).

Alan McInnes, VP Business Development, Unum Aircraft Seating, provides insight from the expo floor at AIME 2026 in Dubai

[AIME 2026](#), co-located with [MRO Middle East](#), returned to the Dubai World Trade Centre from February 4 to 5. The largest event of its kind in the MENA region, AIME showcases the latest in cabin design, passenger comfort and inflight entertainment, while MRO Middle East brings together leaders in aircraft maintenance, repair and operations.

During the event, media partner *PAX Tech* spoke with attendee Alan McInnes, VP Business Development at Unum Aircraft Seating, to get live updates. He described a noticeably larger event and a clear shift in airline priorities.

According to McInnes, AIME was approximately 25 to 30 percent bigger than last year, with a strong focus on retrofit programs and long-term fleet strategy. However, he reported that the challenge in the Business Class cabin, which Unum primarily serves, is capacity.

“While there is an appetite [from airlines] to do more retrofit programs driven by fleet strategies, capacity in the marketplace is very, very limited,” he said. “Airlines put requirements out into the marketplace, and unless you put large numbers of seats on the table, a lot of vendors in the sector are not bidding.”

McInnes noted that the challenge is permeating beyond the Business cabin and stressed the importance of aligning airline expectations with the practical realities facing suppliers, particularly when it comes to delivery timelines.

Building a brand

Beyond capacity and supply constraints, McInnes observed a broader shift in how airlines are positioning Business Class products. Rather than offering a generic experience, carriers in the Middle East and beyond are increasingly building brand identity around a specific seat and cabin concept.

He pointed to innovations on display at AIME 2026 that showcased advances in cabin ambience, including mood lighting solutions for Business Class inspired by the luxury hotel sector. While these elements play an important role in differentiation, McInnes emphasized they cannot come at the expense of the fundamentals.

“You can have the most ambient environment in the world, but you have to focus on the comfort. There is a realization that simply adding more features to seats makes them more complex, more difficult to maintain and heavier. What [Unum] would like to see is airlines put comfort at the core and deliver that comfort message to their passengers,” he says.

While McInnes acknowledged that AIME/MRO ME 2026 leaned more heavily toward MRO than

interiors, he said the event provided valuable opportunities for informal discussions with airlines and lessors—setting the stage for more targeted aircraft interiors conversations to come this spring.