

Viasat hosts Women in Aviation panel



(Left to Right) Michelle Munoz-Talcott, Senior Director, Marketing, Aviation & Energy at Viasat; Mariya Stoyanova, Crystal Cabin Awards jury and formerly JetBlue; Julieta McCurry, VP of In-Flight Entertainment and Connectivity Strategy, Delta Airlines; Helga Huld Bjarnadóttir, Director Product and Service Management, Icelandair

[Viasat](#) hosted the Women in Aviation panel and lunch last week in Hamburg. Invitees were delegates in the city attending the [Aircraft Interiors Expo](#) (AIX) and the [World Travel Catering & Onboard Services Expo](#) (WTCE). Guests included airlines, suppliers and members of the media.

The panel was moderated by Michelle Munoz-Talcott, Senior Director, Marketing, Aviation & Energy at Viasat. Panelists included Mariya Stoyanova, Crystal Cabin Awards jury and formerly [JetBlue](#); Julieta McCurry, VP of Inflight Entertainment and Connectivity Strategy, [Delta Air Lines](#); and Helga Huld Bjarnadóttir, Director Product and Service Management, [Icelandair](#).

The three panelists offered advice and insight for women in leadership positions within the aviation industry.



Viasat's 2024 Women in Aviation panel

When asked what advice they would give to someone starting out in the aviation industry, McCurry said, "Follow opportunity – you need to say yes to more things than no, and to trust your gut. If you see something you really like, be it a project or a role, raise your hand. If you don't ask, the answer will always be no."

Stoyanova shared that persistence is key to effective leadership within the aviation industry. "We often hear, "No that can't be done". But in my vocabulary, no means 'find another way to do it'," she explained. "No should not stop you, ever. We need to break through a lot of walls and build things quicker."

When asked how the industry could better support women, Bjarnadóttir was quick to cite maternity leave as something more companies need to provide or extend for their employees.

"Parental leave is very different between countries, but it's vital for people of all genders who want to start families to have the opportunity to leave and come back, with the necessary support – without it having an effect on their career development. Companies also need to have thorough plans on training, mentorship, development programs, and more for women," she said.

Bjarnadóttir also spoke to the benefits that having more female employees will have on the future of aviation, noting that bringing more women onboard provides companies with diversified perspectives.

"It's not just about females, but all genders," she said. "To have this diversity benefits us in all

aspects of decision making and innovation.”

Before wrapping up the discussion, the panelists were asked about the impact of technology on airlines’ brands, to which Stoyanova pointed out that every moment in the passenger journey presents an airline with an opportunity to build its brand.

“Technology is helping to engage customers, but also to reduce friction,” she said. “It’s that combination of the human aspect and technology. I’m looking forward to us infusing technology more and more in the travel journey, while also increasing hospitality and the human touch.”