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It's not Business Class, It's Eos Class

Eos Airlines pampers its guests with an exceptional end-to-end travel experience and no crowds as part of its best-in-class operation.

■ By Dennis Crosby and Rob Siegel | *Ascend* Contributors

Among heavy competition for the highly coveted premium passenger in the New York-London market, one carrier has taken a unique approach to differentiating its product. Eos Airlines has created a more efficient, less stressful journey by simply eliminating the crowds normally seen at check-in and security areas as well as airport gates.

The key is in the numbers. The carrier's fleet of Boeing 757 aircraft is configured to only carry 48 guests in an all-premium-class configuration. This

"By serving fewer guests better, Eos has redefined the premium long-haul business category," said Dave Spurlock, founder of Eos Airlines, when presented with the 2007 Business Travel World Awards where Eos was named Long-Haul Business Airline of the Year. "We are very pleased to receive this industry award, which clearly recognizes the renewed spirit, innovation and service quality Eos has brought to the marketplace."

Another aspect that makes a remarkable difference to those travel-

tage," said Roberto Lebron, the airline's director of corporate communications.

The trip begins with a curbside "meet and greet" followed by check in. From there, each guest is escorted through security and guided to the airline's pre-flight lounge, where food, refreshments and complimentary wireless Internet service is readily available. This process is so efficient that Eos makes it possible for its guests to arrive within 45 minutes of their departure. Furthermore, the carrier's boarding time is typically less than 10 minutes.

Taking advantage of London Stansted Airport is another key differentiator for the eastbound trip. Generally, there are no other international arrivals when Eos' flights arrive at London Stansted. In merely 25 minutes from landing, guests can be onboard a train to the city. Of course, guests may take their time and elect to enjoy a shower at the SAS Radisson Hotel, all compliments of Eos (on qualifying fares). Furthering its guests' experience at London Stansted, Eos recently completed the first phase of a new lounge facility that boasts capacity for 75 guests. The second phase is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year.

While its offerings are unique and appealing, exactly how does Eos attract customers in a market that is dominated with such heavy competition?

"We've had tremendous success with guest referral and word-of-mouth advertising," Lebron said. "Our net pro-

"Our best-in-class employees, flat-bed suites and everything else that is necessary for an extraordinary experience is what 'Eos Class' provides ... minus the crowd,"

— Jack Williams, Eos CEO

equates to a very generous 21 square feet of personal space for each guest with a one-to-eight flight attendant/guest ratio.

"The notion of taking away the crowds was a simple idea that has led to a dramatically better guest experience," said Jim Prebil, senior vice president and chief information officer for Eos. "We are able to take responsibility for each and every guest. We've accomplished this while being the fourth-largest airline in terms of frequency between New York and London."

The benefits of this "uncrowded" experience, according to Eos Chief Executive Officer Jack Williams, captures the true essence of what "Eos Class" is all about.

"Our best-in-class employees, flat-bed suites and everything else that is necessary for an extraordinary experience is what 'Eos Class' provides ... minus the crowd," Williams said. "The removal of the crowd is what makes all the other best-in-class services that much more authentic and pleasurable to our guests."

Being one of the airline's main attractions, the limited number of guests it serves for a given flight has also contributed to its winning top industry awards and its ranking of "best on-time performer" in the New York-London market.

ing on Eos is the terminology the carrier uses. It refers to passengers as "guests," and its spacious seats are called "suites." It may seem insignificant, but to customers, the unique terminology says a lot about what can be expected aboard Eos flights.

"One has to travel with Eos to truly appreciate our category-of-one advan-



All photos courtesy of Eos

Eos offers elite, contemporary lounge facilities for guests who have layovers or arrive early at the airport. Its new lounge at London Stansted Airport will accommodate 75 guests.



moter score tracks at 84 percent (higher than Harley Davidson in terms of companies). It is a fairly regular occurrence for a guest to cross out the highest rating of 10 and replace with a 15 on the comment cards, and then go tell all of their colleagues and friends about their Eos experience."

Eos carries more business travelers by far (about an 80/20 mix in terms of business to leisure) but still targets the premium leisure traveler. The carrier's mix of customers ranges from seven of the top 10 investment banks to celebrities in the field of music and film, athletes, and even members of the British Royal Family. The average guest, based on Eos' research, is a predominantly highly educated, affluent male who holds a senior-level executive title. Eos has positioned sales teams in both the London and New York markets to target and deliver additional corporate travelers.

"Currently, we are seeing a 50/50 split between U.S. and U.K. customers," Lebron said. "We do market our product as business class to attract the managed corporate traveler, but in reality, we're much closer to a first-class product. And while most of our guests travel on Eos for business purposes, we are continuing to target the discretionary leisure traveler."

The price of entry into the trans-Atlantic market has required Eos to offer its Club 48 frequent flyer program, powered by the *Sabre® Traveler Loyalty System*, which offers an impressive list of redemption possibilities, ranging from unrestricted black-out dates on Eos (as well as any major airline) to merchandise from brands such as Tumi and Harrods. However, Eos feels its service, quality and experience is more important than any loyalty program it could offer.

"Note that Four Seasons doesn't have a loyalty program," Lebron said. "Brand loyalty is much more being driven through an outstanding service experience than to points. It's the reason 98 percent of Eos guests are highly likely to return to Eos."

Technology has also played a key role in Eos' success, according to Prebil. For example, the carrier relies heavily on the ability to market and reach distribution segments better than anyone else.

"Travel management corporations are a large source of distribution," he said. "*Sabre®* global distribution system connectivity and *Electronic Ticketing* [an option within *SabreSonic® Ticket*] has been key to enabling Eos' distribution strategy and has helped contribute to the rapid growth of our load factor.

"We also made a conscious decision to utilize the *Traveler Loyalty* system for our Club 48 frequent flyer program so more time can be spent on servicing our guests versus developing technology. We're also in the midst of implementing the *Sabre® CrewTrac®* system to assist with our operational efficiency so we continue to maintain our No. 1 on-time performance ranking in the New York-London market. And as we continue our

evaluation of new routes and schedule optimization, Eos is tapping into the expertise of the *Sabre Airline Solutions®* consulting team." **F**

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Eos offers each guest a spacious 21 square feet of personal space on its fleet of Boeing 757 aircraft that are configured to carry only 48 passengers.



As part of its all-premium-class service, Eos staffs its aircraft with one flight attendant per every eight passengers, providing a more personal, gratifying experience for its guests.