

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND TOUCHLESS TECHNOLOGY - AVIATION IN POST COVID-19 ERA

News / Events / Festivals



Dubai Airshow 2021 will serve as a platform to showcase the role of cutting edge technologies in bolstering the recovery of the aviation, aerospace and defence industries following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors. The impact of the pandemic has accelerated the use of new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, cybersecurity, touchless solutions, 5G, robotics, and automation. These solutions serve as a means to drive new opportunities within the industry and enhance safety, operations, productivity and profitability.

A recent report shows that 69% of aerospace and defence executives say they have prioritised anticipating and responding to supply-chain events in order to protect the customer experience. COVID-19 has emphasised the need for more resilient, flexible and adaptable supply chains for the industry. Executives overwhelmingly agree emerging technologies like AI, internet of things, automation and wearables have accelerated the pace of automation over the past three years.

60% of industry executives are also making investments for long-term remote work a priority for the next six months . This indicates the increasing importance of digital transformation within the aerospace, aviation and defence sectors. AI is also being used to deliver personalised travel experiences to passengers in order to generate the maximum customer satisfaction. A new market study predicted a CAGR of 46.4% for AI in the aviation market by 2023.

As part of Dubai Airshow 2021, aerospace companies from across the world will launch and exhibit their latest technologies and innovations to promote the sector's growth in the region and the world. The event will also include conference programmes dedicated to the topics of AI, 5G, and cybersecurity.

New ideas, innovation and higher customer expectations have created a prime opportunity for start-ups within the aviation, defence and aerospace sectors. Co-located with Dubai Airshow will be a new launch event called VISTA – a start-up hub giving innovators within the aerospace and defence fields a rare chance to access venture capitalists and investors who are increasingly looking for disruptive new entrants that can out-hustle the big players. In a regional first, VISTA will feature a number of sub-events in partnership with Gothams, a leading accelerator that is helping to build the next generation of aerospace and defence start-ups.

Commenting on its partnership with VISTA at Dubai Airshow 2021, Elodie Robin-Guillerm from Gothams said: "We believe in the importance of providing the right resources, technology and connections to help empower companies to successfully own their vision and accelerate into the aerospace and defence industries. The start-up ecosystem is thriving not just with ideas, but also with innovative startups and investors looking to help businesses scale up and expand. Dubai Airshow 2021 will be an important, in-person, platform for understanding the role of innovation, cutting-edge solutions and services for the future growth of the aerospace sectors. It will be the only live event of its kind this year and we look forward to collaborating with the wider industry to help showcase the power of technology for its future."

The aviation and aerospace sectors have continuously found ways to create new methods and ways of operating through progressive and modern technology. For example, as part of the rapid digitalisation that the aviation sector in the UAE is undergoing, Etihad Airways and the air transport communications specialist, SITA, conducted a trial on the use of facial recognition technology to identify and authenticate crew members. This initiative aims to substitute check-in kiosks, which require crew to use their staff identity cards as a form of authentication.

A recent announcement between Amadeus and Norwegian airport operator Avinor paves the way for a touchless travel journey for passengers. Avinor, which operates 44 airports, is trialling touchless technology that allows passengers to check in, drop bags, proceed through security and board their flight.

Additionally, Emirates has partnered with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to become one of the first airlines to test IATA Travel Pass - a mobile application that enables passengers to create a 'digital passport' to verify their required pre-travel COVID-19 test or vaccination and manage all travel documentations digitally and seamlessly throughout their airport journey.

The impact of technologies such as cybersecurity, robotics, AI and 5G will be high on the agenda at Dubai Airshow, which is set to take place at Dubai World Central (DWC), Dubai Airshow Site, from 14-18 November 2021.

Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai and UAE Minister of Defence, the event will bring together experts and representatives from commercial and business aviation, defence and military, aircraft interiors, and air traffic management, among others.

16 FEBRUARY 2021

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