



Cabin crew and inflight sales coaches proved why they are travel retail top sellers during day one of Thomson Airways' OMG! Conference & Awards event, organized by Alpha LSG in association with Appleyard Communications - to which TRBusiness has been given exclusive access when they took to the catwalk at the end of a fun-filled day of motivational speeches and interactive training workshops.

The exercise - to create an eye-catching, extravagant costume that visually represents a product's USPs - was supported by brand ambassadors from some of the airline's bestselling merchandise, including Haribo, J20, Hugo Boss, Bottega and Pandora.

Designed to demonstrate team work, crew product knowledge and sales flair and creativity, the teams had one hour to craft their outfit and pitch their reasoning behind it, before sashaying down a real catwalk in a professionally staged fashion show, sponsored by Nicolas Feuillatte Champagne.



The winning fashionistas were announced as Marine

Miracle by Transformulas who showed off an elegant mermaid style dress against an ocean backdrop; Haribo came a close second, with a colourful interpretation of their popular confectionery Starmix.

The morning sessions of the two day event, running 2 - 3 December at the stunning Tortworth Court in the Cotswolds, included a humorous motivational talk by ex-Royal Air Force Tornado pilot Mandy Hickson on setting goals and identifying a strategy for the future, and a thought-provoking CRM session from Ally

Model crew at Thomson Airways' OMG! Conference catwalk

Dawkins, Director at 360 Training, which invited delegates to consider their mindset when selling, and the positive and negative effects that various behaviours, facial expressions and body language can have.

The mood from the outset was one of great enthusiasm and a willingness to participate, with crew members candidly sharing their own experiences of how they adapt their sales approach to meet the needs of differing passenger profiles, from DINKYS to over 60s, families and young singles.

One crew member, flying for more than 20 years, pronounced the morning session as the best training event she had ever attended, while others called it 'awesome' and 'incredibly inspiring.'

For an industry that has received its fair share of detractors and negative publicity, there was no evidence of a depression at OMG! To the contrary, Alpha LSG General Manager Inflight Retail, Chloe Lerner, says they have enjoyed an "amazing summer" across all three airlines the company services – Thomson, Monarch and Thomas Cook – translating to a growth in spend per passenger along with growth in categories such as snacking and boutique products – the latter accounting for an almost a 30% YOY increase on Thomson flights.

"Since we started working with Thomson in November 2013 we've seen some really amazing growth. It is challenging, we have to find new things all the time, new areas that people want to buy into and look for the next innovation. I understand that we (the inflight retail sector) get negativity on being behind the times but I don't think Alpha LSG, with our airlines, are behind the times. I think we're forward thinking in terms of the products we sell, the ways in which we train our crew.

"I personally think there's always going to be a need for people to buy onboard, and we see it. Our passenger spends are growing, our transaction sizes are growing and people expect to be able to buy something and have it, a tangible product, as part of their holiday experience. It's their holiday money, they want to treat themselves.

"We did some studies and 93% of passengers opened the magazine in the first 15 minutes of sitting in their seats, so the thirst is there. The expectation is there. So in my opinion there is definitely still a demand for shopping onboard."