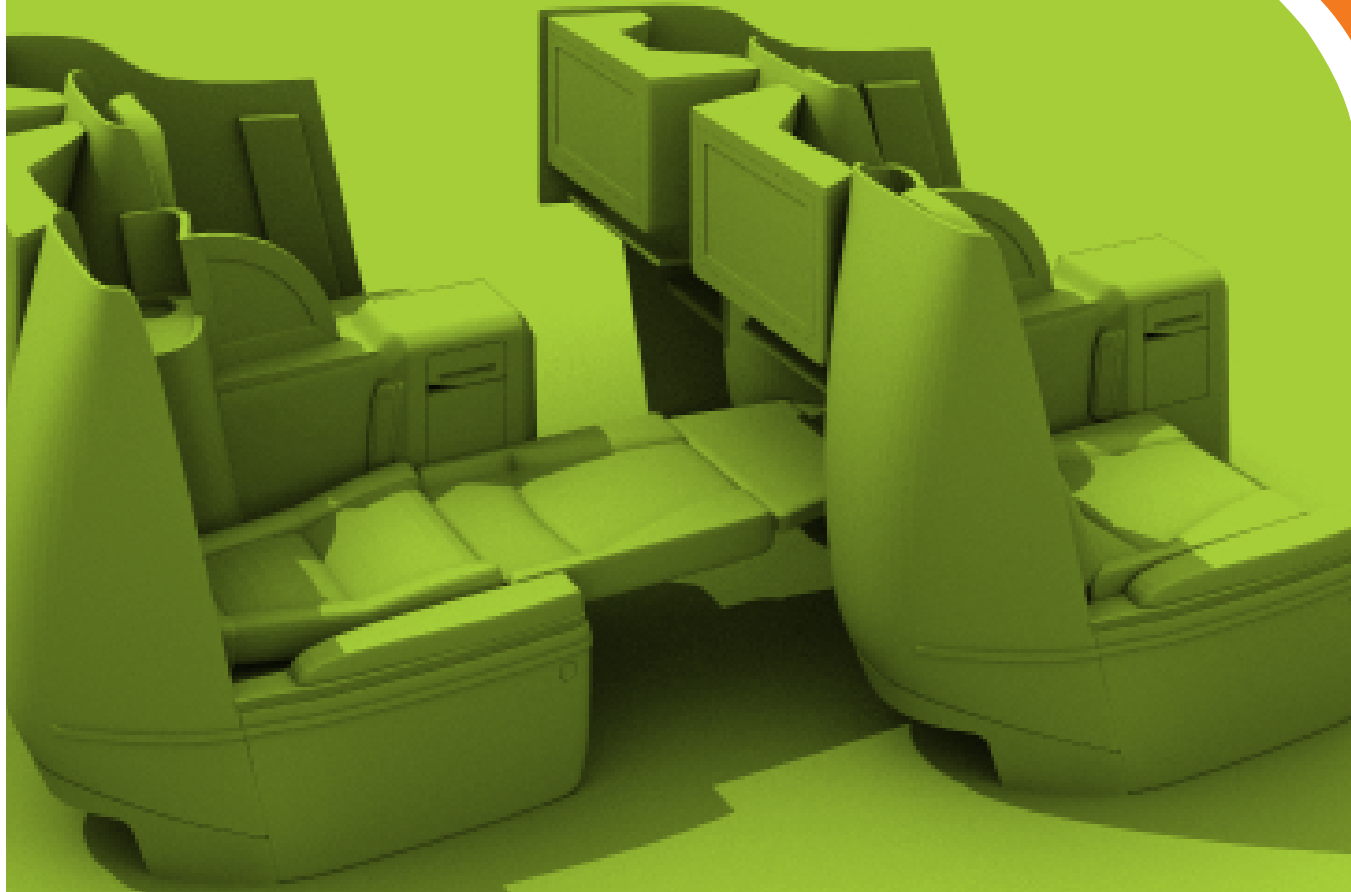




MOTOR



The High Life



Continental's business-class cabins get a smart seat upgrade.

To stay competitive in the increasingly comfy world of business-class travel, the brass at Continental Airlines knew they had to ditch their stodgy old recliners and install seats that transform into flat beds. But to stay solvent, the bean counters warned, the airline needed to maintain the number of passengers crammed into its cabins. And beds take up more space than chairs. Right? ❑ Not according

to B/E Aerospace, the design firm Continental hired to develop its new loungers. B/E's creative team dreamed up a seat called the Diamond, a 25-inch-wide high-altitude throne that converts into a 6-foot, 6-inch bed with a wraparound shell for privacy. And they promised to fit just as many of these longer seats in the same space. ❑ Though it would seem an impossible equation, the solution was elegant in its simplicity. "The real

innovation," says Glen Johnson, B/E's design director, "came in the configuration." Instead of lining up the seats in straight rows, his team staggered them. So when a passenger kicks back into the lie-flat position, the foot of the bed slides into the space between the two seats in front of it. But don't worry: The shell ensures you won't have someone's feet in your face. —DAVE DEMERJIAN