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# SALEHA WILLIAMS: 'THE INDUSTRY IS CHANGING AND IABM NEEDS TO AS WELL'

By David Davies | 01 April 2025



The recently appointed CEO of the International Trade Association of Broadcast & Media Technology (IABM), Saleha Williams, has combined creative, commercial and technological interests in media throughout her career. As David Davies discovers, this means she is ideally placed to deliver "transformational change" at IABM.

When Saleha Williams says that she "wanted to be in media and technology from an early age," you aren't left in any doubt. Having become immersed in computer technology at school in the 1980s, she took a Saturday job as a runner for a local paper, facilitating the movement of ads between the art and printer departments. At 18 she went to work for News International during the period that it acquired Sky TV, before moving to work on BT's advanced technology services at what subsequently became its innovation labs at Adastral Park in Suffolk.

"I've always loved technology, and the whole essence of filmmaking and programme-making has always been something I've been very passionate about," confirms Williams, who notes that as her career has progressed it's become ever-clearer that "my sweet spot is very much the business commercial side combined with media creativity and the technological advancements surrounding that. I've continually looked at those three aspects in terms of how to be more effective and efficient in the way things are produced financially, as well as technology advances, and all within the craft of programme-making."



Saleha Williams, CEO, IABM

Given the profound changes presently reshaping so much of broadcast and media, it seems an entirely logical move for Williams – who has also worked with Cameron Pace in Hollywood, film studios in Bollywood, broadcasters across the globe including CNN and the BBC, and also tech giants like Google, Cognizant and Cisco – to have recently joined IABM as its new CEO. From the start of her conversations about the role, it's been apparent that these changes – and their implications for vendors and the wider industry – have been at the forefront of the organisation's hive mind.

"It was very clear that board members wanted major transformation. They recognised that the industry is changing and IABM needs to as well," says Williams, who has previously been a conference speaker and producer for the Association on many occasions. Somewhere along the way, however, she feels that "although the mission of the IABM had remained apparent, its value to members had become a little unclear. Then there is the whole issue of how best to serve members in these times that are changing so dramatically."

### Innovation, Engagement and Insights

'Agility' is a word that crops up several times in reference to both the business imperatives of IABM members, and the operations of the organisation itself. "We need to be agile as an organisation in terms of how we can deliver value, and that means looking at our own operational model," says Williams, who admits she has "had to make some tough choices early on" as part of the transformation drive.

Some of the key issues currently being scrutinised include "how to get the best return on our processes and technology tools, as well as how we innovate our member engagement to deliver what it is that members need going forward. So yes, there have been operational changes, and I am also looking at how we redevelop our marketing and internal technology systems and platforms, so they can be more efficient."

Of course, it's a complex blend of concerns that will also be facing many of the companies the IABM represents. Reflecting on some of the conversations she has had with members during her initial months in the role, Williams says it is evident they are wanting "support, guidance, insights" and the ability to network as they navigate potentially huge transformation on the business side. Helping them to locate a productive way forward is especially beneficial in "what is a very information-heavy environment anyway" – not to mention one in which the geopolitical and economic context is shifting constantly.



The annual IABM Awards recognise excellence and achievement across 12 categories

### AI & Pro AV Agility

Inevitably, AI is one of the issues most preoccupying IABM members. The organisation is readying a series of online training programmes produced by members and experts within the industry. "The course focuses on practical applications in media and entertainment, showcasing how AI can revolutionise content editing, streamline compliance, and enhance creative projects," says Williams. "Additionally, participants will learn how AI can simplify workflows, drive innovation, and unlock new opportunities in their roles or businesses. It also addresses the ethical implications of AI, covering topics including data privacy and responsible usage. Designed for a broad audience, it breaks down complex concepts into clear, relatable insights, equipping participants with the knowledge to leverage AI effectively and responsibly in their work."

More than ever, context is everything – and this also applies to the identification of new market opportunities. Despite the profound global uncertainty, IABM's latest [Democratization of MediaTech report](#), issued in January, confirmed that the convergence of technology between media and pro AV markets such as corporate, worship, health and education is now having a significant impact on members.

"There is a huge uplift in buying pro-video equipment, so it's essential that our members – some of whom are already in or related to [the pro AV] space – are able to understand the opportunities and expand beyond what have been traditional markets for IABM members," says Williams.

### Making an Impact at NAB2025

A sense of how the IABM's outreach is being refocused should be gained at the NAB Show in April, where the organisation's member lounge will incorporate a new IABM Impact Stage – set to combine thought-leadership talks with panel sessions – and deliver a wider range of content on IABM TV. The Association is also taking its entire BIU (Business Intelligence Unit) team to the show, allowing members to drop in and obtain targeted insights, and will be arranging more region-specific networking sessions, including one about Asia-Pacific at the show.



At NAB 2025, IABM's member lounge will incorporate a new IABM Impact Stage

"I think we've really ramped-up our presence at NAB this year, and again a lot of that is in response to what both our members and NAB have asked for," says Williams, who notes that IABM has brought in distinguished former BBC producer and presenter Purminder Ghandu to oversee the Impact Stage.

Conversations with Karen Chupka, Executive Vice-President of Global Connections and Events at NAB and a former exec VP and producer at CES, over the last few months have also informed preparations for the show. "The NAB Show is critical, and I think that we're of the same mindset that it's a pivotal time in the industry and that making things better means you need input from both sides of the fence, [ie.] from the perspective of IABM's members and what they want at the NAB Show, as well as what the NAB Show needs from IABM in terms of value content."

Hence there will be a series of joint interviews, both at the show and in the IABM Journal, about "the importance of that relationship".

Meanwhile, in terms of understanding the global picture, Williams notes that the IABM has just launched its industry geo-tracker survey for 2025. "It focuses on regional media tech trends and opportunities, as well as examining the bigger picture. It's so vital that there is an understanding of [regional and global developments] because they are yielding such significant buying changes."

### Superlative TV

Although it may feel as though there are endless issues to trouble us, both within the industry and beyond, at least there is one thing that cannot be denied: we are in the midst of a golden age of television. So it feels logical to ask Williams, who has spent so much of her career working in broadcast production, which recent show she has been particularly enthralled by – and her answer only underlines her connection with the industry.

"I love *The Morning Show* – in fact, I've nearly watched it three times," she says, alluding to the Apple TV+ drama set around a network broadcast news programme and starring Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon. "I can understand both the older generational aspect in terms of 'this is how we used to do TV and put it all together,' and also the younger generation that is thinking in a very different way about how media, and in particular news, is put together and disseminated. And then you bring in the whole era of big tech. So as well as it being brilliant from a production, writing and characterisation perspective, I love the storylines because they're about the industry I love and [link to] the reason I took the role at IABM."

Indeed, the show itself reflects an industry that is changing more rapidly, and unpredictably, than at any time in the last half-century. All of which means that the need to be responsive is highly acute. "That's the main message I want to get out there at the moment," affirms Williams. "The industry is transforming, and we (IABM) are transforming. Our mission remains the same – to connect, support and inform our members – and as a neutral, not-for-profit trade association, everything we do is for the benefit of members and the industry as a whole. That's where my heart is, and that's why I'm here."

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