

Empowering the Next Generation of MediaTech with IAMT

Matt Stagg in conversation with Saleha Williams, Grace Pugh and Elliot Milner, IAMT

IAMT Studio Visual Podcast Series

Duration: 14:07

Hi, and welcome back to the IAMT Podcast Studio with me, Matt Stagg. And this is going to be really interesting, and it's certainly something that we need to be sitting up and understanding. I'm here with some of our new people we're employing, working for IAMT, and it's their first NAB. And we're going to get their views. We're not as attractive as an industry as we used to be. When I wanted to come in, you'd do anything to get into any kind of broadcasting. And if you wanted to be a producer, you were a runner. If you wanted to work in post-production, you cut bits of film together. So we want to know what attracts people and what we should be doing to attract people to our industry, and get some views from the people who were there, who were living it. So I'll let them introduce themselves. We're joined by the IAMT CEO, Saleha. We've got Elliot, and we've got Grace. If you want to just quickly introduce yourselves and say what you do at IAMT, we'll move on from there.

Do you want to go first?

Yeah, of course. So my name's Elliot. I'm our new membership growth manager. So that really encapsulates us bringing in as many members as possible — as everyone knows, we're doing quite well on that at the moment — but just wanting to be a greater collaborative space within the MediaTech industry, and having as many voices and companies from a wide spectrum internationally. So not just targeting those that — obviously, we're all UK-based — but trying to get the voice spread around all four corners of the globe.

Yeah. And I'm Grace Pugh. I'm a content coordinator and creator. I'm working under the marketing team, which is a really exciting time because of, obviously, the rebrand, and helping to align with brand voice and all of our socials and collateral and everything. So, yeah.

Hold on. And the fact that you built this and designed this whole podcast studio. So yeah, don't leave that one out. It's my home. So what I'd like to know a little bit more about is — were you looking to go into the MediaTech broadcast, or was it you wanted to do that particular job and it could have been any trade organisation? It's always quite interesting because you can have any job in media and entertainment. So I'd be quite interested if that was what drew you towards it.

I wanted to be a journalist firstly, but anything in media really was what I was gravitating towards, just because I like writing and content of all sorts. But my job's good because I get to put together things like this, and it's going beyond just writing for magazines or doing anything like that. And it's very exciting. It's a very fast-paced industry. And tech was quite new for me. I'm not a tech person, so it's actually been a good learning experience as well. I feel like I'm learning all the behind the scenes of broadcast and everything as well.

Elliot.

Yeah. So my side really started as an interest quite young. Me and my brother used to make short films together at home, so I've always wanted to be involved in that storytelling aspect, which obviously the MediaTech industry is kind of founded on. And I was lucky enough to work at a film festival in Morecambe just before coming. So having the opportunity to be within the industry, to speak to creators, innovators, and see how storytelling has got more of a dynamism now than before, especially with AI, and how that's going to change for our generation and generations to come, is super interesting. But as I say, at the heart of it, that storytelling aspect is exciting to be around, and being able to have an imprint in that is going to be exciting to be part of.

And it's so nice to hear the passion from you both. Saleha, when you're going out and you're looking for people to do these kind of jobs, how do you find them? Because not just anyone — not just this industry, but the things that you guys do is not normal nine-to-five work, is it?

Yeah, absolutely. For me, I've been the CEO of, now, IAMT for just over a year. And as you say, trying to attract talent into the industry generally, it's hard to do. But yet on the other hand, there are so many students out there that have amazing degrees, work experience. And I think we're in this dichotomy of finding great people, but at the same time, the industry as a whole is sometimes, I think, not going about that in the right way. So for me, I wanted a new generation of voices and energy. And for me, it was — they may not have years of experience in the industry; we all started somewhere — but it was looking for people who were passionate and who had the skill sets that were both the technical skill sets, and by that I mean writing or building relationships, content.

I mean, as you said, Grace has put together this podcast studio. She's been with us six months. She started just before IBC, thrown into that two weeks before the show. Elliot joined us two months ago. He got a longer intro than Grace did. Less than a year on, these people are producing content, branding, writing, relationships, which is the new voices of the industry. So the passion as well as the ability was what I was looking for. And people who, again, in a post-COVID environment are able to look at — we're all a remote team, so being in different parts of the world, we come together for the trade shows, obviously. There are young people out there who want to be part of this industry, and we need to go out there and find them and give them that opportunity, was my view.

And I think it's very interesting because we as an industry — I can talk about sport — are really losing the Gen Z, Gen Alpha, because we sat back in a kind of arrogant way and said, "Don't worry, they'll watch sport. They'll grow into it, and they'll watch it." And now that's gone. And then we used to come out — I was actually not like that — but we'd come out and say, "Oh, it's all right. They've got a short attention span." Which again is wrong. What they have got is a forensic filter of what's relevant and what's engaging. Now, I understand that, but we need the people who actually live it to come into our area. For me to say, "This is how you feel" — we need you to say, "This is how we feel." So it's both your first NAB. What struck you when you walked into it? Was it what you expected? And if not, what were your impressions of it?

It's way bigger than I thought it was going to be. I went to IBC, and IBC was — I think because there's more halls, it's less intense. I think the halls are huge. The whole building's massive. But it's really exciting. It's a really different sort of show, different sort of energy, and having this podcast studio and a different space here as well is really exciting. Yeah, what were your

impressions?

Yeah, the impressions — I would say, echoing Grace, massively bigger than I was expecting it to be. We spoke about it, doing a lot of running around the halls each day. Definitely feeling that at the moment. But it's huge. I think on my side as well, this movement towards AI — as we've spoken about before — being the buzzword, and seeing that label there on everyone's booths, on the tongues of everyone that's selling, and seeing the demos that are around AI and how interactive, engaging they are, is something that I take a lot of interest in. And on the agentic side of things, where is that going next? It kind of feels like we're at the end of a path, and it's about to change very quickly. And a lot of the startups that I've been speaking to feel at the forefront of that technology, and it's exciting to have those conversations. And they also are able to have the conversations with the bigger boys in the conversation as well. So, interesting to see how AI has got a footprint within NAB this year.

And do you think there needs to be more outreach from us as an industry into universities? Because we need to start a push, because we don't have the pool that we used to have. Is that something that you guys do? I know you have outreach, and if you could tell us about some of those programmes that IAMT do.

So yes is the answer. We definitely as an industry need to do more in terms of outreach to students and awareness of what this industry can bring as a career and opportunity. I think what's really interesting is, when we started in the industry, we were a similar age, Matt — what, 35 years ago? Maybe I'm older than you.

I wasn't born. Yes, I was quite old at 35 years ago.

There were then four channels on TV. We're from the UK — there were four channels in the UK. Then I started with the BBC and was there at the time that Sky — BSkyB, as it was then — was brought to the UK. We're now in a situation, just in the world, where there is just so much content, so much information, that you are competing to cut through that noise to students in the first place. As well, as an industry, I think we need to be more intentional about getting new talent in. In terms of what we are doing, we have a bursary scheme where we support a number of students internationally to come to IBC each year to go around the show. They're part of a structured programme. We also support the Talent Manifesto with Carrie Wootten — a fantastic initiative.

There was a 24-hour news production that they did with students and universities all around the world. So this 24-hour live event happened, and it was wonderful for me because I was in India doing a number of talks and speeches at the show, and I went up to Whistling Woods — an amazing educational institute in Mumbai — and they had just finished their one-hour segment on the Talent Manifesto. And so the point is, there are things that are happening, but we need to do more. And as IAMT, I am extremely passionate about how we engage. And to do that, you need to bring in the new talent and the voices. You don't have to necessarily have done a film degree or done a production technology degree in, I don't know, remote production or whatever. I think it's getting that message out that this, for me, has been an incredible career.

I've had a number of different jobs in it, and as you said, Matt, there are those opportunities. So it's amplifying that to the student world, as well as realising these are the people who are going to buy, produce, watch, consume.

Yeah. And you're the customers of the industry we're in. We're going to leave it there, but one thing that I did want to say: if the members have got children that are interested, friends — come on, reach out to IAMT. We need your children.

Can I — I actually wasn't going to announce this, but based on what you said, I'm actually going to announce this. So you have an exclusive here, Matt.

Oh, here we go.

Here at the launch of IAMT. So we have just rebranded as theiamt.org, or we are the IAMT — that's our web address. But we will be launching over the next few months a talent platform, which is entirely free for students to upload their videos, their projects, their graphics, to put up their CVs, their contact information.

So yes, all of those in the industry, as well as the marketing we will do about that. If you have children or young adults — I think they probably are — get in touch. You can reach us at marketing@theiamt.org, and that will become a global platform where we can amplify you and promote you into the 400 member organisations, with the hope that you may be able to get internships, possibly jobs — who knows? But it's a place, with the reach that we have, to really focus on showing the new talent that's out there all around the world.

And that is fantastic. What a great message to end on. I mean, we see a lot of technology, but this makes a difference to people's lives. It's going to be great. Can the team do any more? So anyway, I'll be back later on. Thank you for joining us, and thank you, team.

Thank you.

Fantastic. Thanks, Matt.

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