

Innovation Without Compromise: Speed, Agility & UX

Matt Stagg in conversation with Ajey Anand, Norigin Media

IAMT Studio Visual Podcast Series

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Hi, everyone, and welcome back to the IAMT podcast with me, Matt Stagg, and I'm delighted to welcome Ajey Anand, CEO and founder of Norigin Media. Now, this is going to be a really interesting one, because we do tend to get — you know, in the broadcasting industry, streaming industry, we get sort of, I don't know, dazzled by the lights of new technology, and the things that are really important — you know, the quality assurance, the understanding of certification and engineering — are the things that don't get enough attention until it's time that they'd already been done yesterday. And so hopefully you can shed some light for our members on what you do, because you're living and breathing it and forging the way through to help companies. So would you be able to give us a brief background and an understanding? Because this is going to be a topic that not that many people will know about. They might have even... They will have heard of you guys but don't really understand, you know, what it is you're doing and what it is that they need to realise they're not doing.

Absolutely. So quick introduction to myself and the company. My name's Ajey. I'm the CEO of Norigin Media. We're a Norwegian company working with anything and everything got to do with streaming video, the UI/UX, how consumers actually find, use, and consume streaming video content, as long as it's premium, which means that it's paid by the advertisers or a costly subscription. What we do is across from design to engineering to quality assurance to make sure that something is conceptually created. With UI/UX, it can be quite simple to say that we navigate on a mobile, but when you're consuming content on mobile which seamlessly also interacts itself onto smart TVs, taking it onto a living room environment, it's a big thing to consider that could be consumers are using content both personally on their mobile as well as on a communal device at home. And this is what we do. We design those experiences which is evolving by itself, and the speed of which that people assume that technology needs to evolve alongside AI has changed that tremendously, both in terms of what people expect and what people can get with the relevance of how much money one can spend, where the ROI in itself is a big question with relation to streaming, which is an all-new big question that we can talk about as well.

Yeah. And we see that, and look at it from a customer experience, which, you know, sometimes can be the problem of people not sitting there and being... But everybody is a consumer. If they're in the sports business, they actually are also consuming it. And there is quite a big disconnect, especially I would say within broadcasting, of trying to bring those multi-formats together. You know, you have potentially one team, they do the broadcast, that's great. Then you'll have another team that do the streaming side of things or the, you know, the engagement platforms, and they overlap, but they don't seem to talk to each other. And I'd be really interested — you know, as we said, when we're moving away, we're moving into agile — where do you see

the pain points that people are hitting, and how do you help them to navigate through what is just a bombarding of different ways of people consuming and trying to get to all of those different customers' needs?

In the world of media that we are in, where streaming for the last 20 years, it's changed every year. You know, I've lasted in this industry simply because it's a new year every year that I'm learning something completely new, whether you're streaming on a single mobile or today you're streaming on 10 different devices, the business case being subscriptions and ads. There's social media, there's broadcast linear, you know, quality content, as well as now there's video on demand. All of these are different environments that needs to work individually and together as a whole. People consume social media content like you never can imagine, but then again, the consumption and binge-watching that you see on video on demand services is quite high for a very low subscription that's working today. You can see more and more ads interfering with your social media content.

These are things that are happening by the day, that you don't know what the current status is unless you get onto your mobile on that particular day. I think the agility that you need to think of in terms of design, in terms of engineering, in terms of making sure that the quality aspects are there is extremely important. You can expect lower quality on mobile because that's something that people are used to, but you can't expect low quality on TV. The word "broadcast grade" means 99.99999%, which means that there's no space for error in broadcast. When you talk about engineering, there's so many tools, and the engineers itself are trying to figure out how AI and tools work. We're talking about interference with an aspect of trust where of course you're not going to be able to trust something that you don't know but you're getting familiar with.

It takes time, but you're not going to get familiar with it unless you use it. What we're seeing today with AI is companies are adopting it, they're trialling it, either officially or unofficially. I would be surprised that there's any company that says that we don't allow AI any more. The BBC said this a year ago. I can vouch for a fact that their engineers are using it, whether they're allowed to or not. SVT, the public broadcaster of Sweden, they are the exact opposite. They encourage their teams to use it.

And that is exactly the way. And actually, it's almost — we'll feed into that — there's some similar things in education, where something new comes along and it's, "No, that's going to make things easier for you to do." It's almost like, but you've trained to do it the right way. And I often talk — I did a lot in AI, when I'd often speak at industry events, especially around, you know, broadcasters and people, you know, that worry about "it's going to take your job." And I always said, "AI won't take your job. Someone who knows how to use it when you don't, they'll take your job." And I think that's the — but, like you said, you know, people are saying, "Oh, we don't use it," but the PR department are using it for copy. You know, and people are using it in their job: "How can I do this?" And I think it's trying to understand that it's just a tool.

Absolutely. I think the way we're looking at it is a lot of engineers feel that they're going to lose their jobs, and a lot of them have lost their jobs, right? And they're going to figure themselves out and figure out how they're going to use it. Let's take AI tangibly. The output that one can have using a simple AI tool is anywhere from 200 to 800% the work output or the work product that one can create in a workday, which means that if you work a day, you can get two days' worth or eight days' worth of work out of the output that you can make, or you can still get what you're

expected to deliver, which is 100% a day's worth of work in an hour. What that's going to do is it's going to give an engineer that much more quality time at home if that's what they want, give them enough time to get a second job, give them time to do eight times their value, which means that they're going to get paid that much amount of money as well.

So I think how AI will find its way and creep itself into our lives is going to differ from company to company, year to year, but at this point in time, I think companies are evaluating it. Ourselves, we were using one AI tool four, six months ago. We're using six today. We're trying to cut it down to three because the costs have gone tenfold. People might say AI helps get rid of people, but it should, but then again, at this point in time, it's actually a cost centre. The amount that we're spending on tokens, the amount that we're spending on accounts is quite high, and I think that companies need to keep a check on costs. The KPIs that we're setting are going to be simple. We've got 10 people. They're going to be having an X amount of output. That expectation is going to be 400% with 10 people.

Otherwise, we're going to cut that down to make sure that we actually deliver and have that much lower cost. That cost of trying to make sure that we can have a bigger output goes to AI, but not 400%. We're trying to figure out how much that there is. Now, wrong decisions and choices is a big question mark. A lot of the AI tools that we've heard of, whether it's Copilot a year ago, whether it's Cursor six months ago, whether it's Claude one month ago, these are changing as fast as fashion. I don't know how quick Claude's going to go out of fashion, or is it going to go so strong — that also scares me. If you're going to be dependent on a tool that's going to have all of your code and IPR in one place, you're going to get yourself into trouble because you're going to be able to, you know, then depend on one company, which is a big risk for a company as well, and you don't want that to happen.

And then your entire engineering force is going to use one single AI tool, which you don't want to happen as a company, that you're dependent on a certain particular tool, which we know we want to eliminate that risk. So we're trying to become as agnostic as possible, and we don't know how that works at this point in time, so we're vigilant about how many tools we're using. We're vigilant about how we get into a new tool, but how we also get out of one, if it becomes expensive, if it becomes a roadblock, if we're tied into it too much that companies tell us to walk out of it. We just need to know how to get out of it.

And this is a fascinating chat, because this isn't what's being discussed. This isn't what vendors discuss with their customers, is, you know, in no other side of technology or, you know, organisationally would you let everything run on a single platform. But now people are moving towards, you know, obviously modular and agile, but you would not go in with a single vendor for anything else. But if you're optimising everything, that AI layer, even in workflows — you've just used, hey, something — you've got a single point of failure to make all of your non-single points of failure work. And it was just as you were saying that. And so, you know, how do companies address that?

No, not becoming dependent on one. We, you know, the marketing and design part of the company was using ChatGPT and Gemini to a huge extent, and I still expect them to do so because we've invested for year-long investments. That needs to be used. There's Claude that's come in even on that side of the business, and we're seeing a couple of things. We're seeing our staff saying that they need to repeat a lot of work that they have on the previous tools, and

they're extremely keen on using new tools, which means that there's going to be a lot of repeated work that you're going to do to port the kind of intelligence that you've gathered over the last six months. It should be easier to port it, or it's just a waste of time if you're going to change, refactor the work that you do, whether it's design, whether it's engineering. Refactoring is a horrible, horrendous word which has no value to it, which means that you're redoing work for an output that's never going to be monetised. Like —

Yeah. And everybody is starting to feel that pain. You know, I — so all of my work, be it the work I do in my day job or I write a column for a magazine, I have trained ChatGPT to understand me, because that's the one I use. So, you know, I see it popping up on LinkedIn, "Here's a way to move it to Claude," but, you know, people are... I'm just not sure. I'm not sure if —

You know, this is like saying, you know, two different cultures understand each other at hello. It doesn't happen. You know, ChatGPT is a culture in itself. It's been trained to do a certain way of thinking and analysing any kind of content that it's given. Claude is completely different. The level of generative AI that there is in it is a huge level of difference in terms of, you know, open creativity, objective creativity. These are things that are soulfully very different in these languages, which means that even if you do take the input and output from ChatGPT onto Claude, there's going to be a miscommunication, and certainly the languages are different, which means that there's going to be overlaps, there's going to be wrong information that's ported from one to the other. When you need to bring back in a manual check, which eliminates the whole idea of the efficiency.

Just, yeah, you've... And the thing is, if you can't trust it to be 100%, you can't trust any of it, because you don't know which part of that 100% is wrong, and you're, you know, you're working on... So that is something really interesting. And I think that also stems — you know, that the CEO needs to understand that, not just the technical director or the CTO. The CFO needs to understand that. The whole organisation needs to be having a strategy around AI, overarching. And not just the people who do this side of workflow have brought in something, and that works because that does all your logging and tagging, and that's great.

God, and if you're not a tech CEO — you know, I'm running a tech company. I'm not a technology person myself. I haven't studied engineering, but I've learned it over the last 20 years.

And a CEO probably shouldn't be, you know? Yeah.

No, but, you know, you need to understand because, you know, everyone's understanding it right now. I'm in the process that I'm actually interviewing all of my lead engineers at work. I'm interviewing, you know, it's one-on-one. I think that's the brilliance of it. It's so new that it's not going to be difficult to understand if someone explains it to you well enough. And you can interpret it in a way that people are not investing in the wrong direction. I think creativity needs to be curtailed to a level that you can control it, that it can be maintainable. You don't want it to be exaggerated to a level where, you know, agility is misunderstood and you're doing what you want and what you please without an output and a value to it. So I think what we're doing is we're literally checking multiple things — the processes and tools that's available, what it does in its output, what its value is in terms of a quantitative work output, which means that what have you been doing manually for the last one year?

How do you quantify it? What is the kind of tools that you're using, you know, three months ago, one month ago, and, you know, one week ago? Is it different? Is there a certain amount of work product that is quantitatively and qualitatively as well different? And how do you actually present this as a KPI that I can say, "Okay, for the next 12 months, you can use this"? Experience doesn't happen overnight. We're going to see a new tool that comes out every month, and maybe every week, in the rest of the year. I'm scared of it, but we just have to dive in and try and use them.

Yeah. And it was very interesting when I was on a panel with someone a couple of years ago looking at AI for sports broadcasting, and he said, "We're all amazed at how good it is." He said, "But you do realise that's the worst it's ever going to be, because it's only..." And you sort of go, "Well, how much better could it do?" We don't know. And so —

No, you know, every argument has been answered. The first question was, are you going to be able to maintain it? Are you going to be able to read it? And that's become a prompt: make a code that's maintainable. That's... You know, code has never been better documented, ever. And I'm talking about what you see in the last three months, not even six months. I'm saying that in January this year, I heard that documenting code is just a new thing, and now I can see that there's 100% of good documented code, which means that I can get and change a developer or a coding tool with that documentation, which is a prerequisite for anything that I do in the future, which means that if it's well documented, you can sieve through it, and you can find what you need to find to make it better.

And it's good that you mention the future then. But, like, you're known — your company and yourself personally — as a visionary. I'd be really interested in — we know, and as you said, it could be weekly, these technological advances — but where do you see next year, when we're here and we're having this conversation again? Where do you think technology will have moved on, and in what areas, particularly around, you know, AI? Or is it just we don't know, because it's moving so fast?

Yeah, we don't... I mean, it would be a little too arrogant for me to say where I'm going to know where exactly we're going to be, but I think we're going to be in a good position where I think engineers are going to have much better output, and we're going to have a lot of creativity out there. You know, today a lot of companies, when you talk about ROI, you talk about how well companies are doing, I must bring up the absolute factor that there's been a huge level of layoffs across media and telecom. More than we've ever seen before, and this is being done not just because companies aren't doing well in the financial climate that we are, but people are anticipating that the need for AI is going to take up the space, and the output needs to increase. But, you know, Darwin said it long ago, you know, the survival of the fittest.

The best of engineers will fit in. They'll train the best of, you know, second-level engineers. I think that this will become the new norm. Maybe the number of engineers will reduce, but then again, you know, you have that workforce, they're going to find something else to do. And I think that profitable parts of the companies are going to still remain as is and become bigger and better, but what do you do with all of that profit? Companies are going to become more, you know, flexible and going to spend that money on something new. I think it's going to give us all, whether you, me, or our parents, all the time in the world to do something new that they've never done before. I'm thinking already what's, you know, business vision 2.0 in 2027, and I can't wait

to start planning it.

Brilliant. And plan it you will, and you'll be leading. So we could, and we probably will, chat about this, you know, the knowledge we can get. And, you know, I really appreciate you coming on here. But we're going to go for now. We're going to be back in about an hour to talk with some more of the innovators and the sort of industry titans. Thank you, Ajey. It's been a real pleasure to talk to you.

Ditto. Thank you so much.

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