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Two Industries, One Future: Broadcast Meets Pro AV with AVIXA

Purminder Gandhu in conversation with Dan Goldstein (AVIXA) and Saleha Williams (IAMT)

IAMT Studio Visual Podcast Series

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Welcome to the IAMT Visual Podcast, and I'm delighted that we're going to be discussing today with Dan Goldstein, the chief product officer at AVIXA, and our CEO, Saleha Williams, about the convergence between broadcast and AV, and how that's shaping the industry, shaping the IAMT, and we'll be getting a little sneak peek into the future of this kind of partnership and some of the ambition and hope for the development of this relationship, and what members and the wider industry can expect to see from this collaborative work. Welcome.

Thank you.

Hello.

So we've been talking an awful lot in the industry for the last year, two years, maybe even longer now, about this convergence and how important it is. Why are those boundaries now becoming so much more difficult to distinguish, and where is all of this muddying of the waters happening and-

Yeah. It sounds a, it sounds like a negative thing, doesn't it? Muddying. But it's a positive thing in my mind. You know, we... And you mentioned two or three years. It is a bit longer. We started to see this convergence happening in our demand side when we were surveying our market intelligence function of AVIXA which does, you know, quarterly buyer side studies, these MOA reports, market opportunity analysis reports. And I remember seeing one that we produced probably just about a year after the last of the lockdowns, COVID lockdowns, and I saw broadcast studios and control rooms being... These are forward-looking, so this is, this is asking corporates, enterprises, "Where do you plan, where are you planning to invest in new technology?" And I went to our head of market research and I said, "Hey, is this right?" "Oh, right," to me.

"This is, this is, it looks like an error in your reporting. Why would they want this stuff?" So, like I said, we do it quarterly, and when the next quarter came back even more robustly, even stronger growth, we thought, "No, it's not a blip. It's not an error in reporting. This is a, this is a structural shift that we're seeing." And I think it's really about, you know, post-pandemic, a few things, a few things happening together. You've got brands wanting to take control, more control over their image and their reputation. And that can, that can be outward-facing but also inward-facing to their own employees to their investors to their other stakeholder groups. You've got... They've got the means to be able to do that with the broadcast technology becoming more affordable with streaming, with you know-

VOD

OTT options. Yeah.

VOD.

Software-driven- workflows and all that kind of stuff. And then you've got the acceptance of remote participation, the acceptance of Teams and Zoom as communications platforms. But then at the same time, we've all heard that phrase, Zoom fatigue. You know, we're in all these meetings, and so how do you make... You turn these meetings into something more like this, something more like a show with broadcast values, television values? And so all these things happening at the same time, it is muddy. I completely agree, Purminder. It's a, it's a, it's not a, it's not an elegant confluence, you know, but a lot of these things happening together at the same time, quite hard to navigate, but that is where I think we come in as industry associations, right? We... Because it's part of our mission to chart a path forward for our members. So on the AVIXA side, we're saying to our corporate AV integrators and our end users, "Here's what can now be done with broadcast technology." And I think on your side, Saleha, it's about explaining to your stakeholders, "Here's the, here's the opportunity outside of traditional linear television in the enterprise."

Yeah. And there's a lot of collaboration that's happening across the two industries because effectively, as you say, Dan, you have corporates, house of worship, healthcare. They want a quality, immersive experience. You know, it isn't just about being on camera or being on a screen. You know, the Zoom fatigue thing is a real thing. Anyone that has 40 Zoom meetings a day like we do. Not with each other. But it's how-

It's 20 with each other

20 with each other. Can't stay away from Dan. But it's about how do you create engaging content and communications that is driving your business forward, and there are lessons to be learned from both sides. You know, flexibility, scalability, quality, value. Both have, you know, views on that, experiences on that at different levels in different markets. But the ability, I think, to be able to drive fantastic content is at the heart of the convergence.

And I think also it's no longer perceived as the less important part of broadcast.

For sure. Yeah. Well, and I think that on both sides, right? I mean, so, so I think, you know, at one time, yes, definitely, I would have walked around at, you know, a broadcast trade show and maybe seen a few pockets of corporate applications, and it was... But it wasn't sort of part of a, any kind of mainstream conversation. But then I think on the demand side, on the end user side it's not a nice-to-have anymore. You know, a corporate CEO that's presenting to all staff across the world. So, you know, let's say 1,500 people in an auditorium in headquarters. This is a very common use case that we see. 1,500 people in headquarters, but then a global distributed-audience, some of whom are watching live, but depending on their time zone, they might also be catching up. So it's all, it's all archived and instantly available through those software tools that Silicon Valley has developed.

You know, by and large, these are the creations of Microsoft and Zoom and Google and so forth, right? But then the bit that the broadcast industry has created, and when I say industry, it's not just the technology, it's also people skills. So the ability to light a room, the ability to say to a CEO, "Actually, we've got..." And this is actually a real world issue, is like, you know, "You've got

a gap between the hem of your trousers and your socks. We don't need to see the bare leg of the CEO. Can you... We need to sort this out." Those sorts of skills which are, which are really... They're film and television skills. They are, they are about how you create the right scene and the right setting. Those skills are things that I think, generalising here, and now don't get me wrong, I love AV, but AV people don't...

It's not in their DNA. They're not... You talked about content creation. They're not storytellers. They're not... It's just not something that they've had to really think about. So it's definitely a two-way dialogue where I feel that as in two industries, we're kind of learning from each other, but it's absolutely must-have now, not nice to have on both sides.

What kind of feedback are you getting from IAMT members about understanding that you have this really close partnership now with AVIXA that's enabling you to enter that market, understand what that market needs?

So there was two key feedback points that I want to highlight. The first was, "This is fantastic. We want to be able to understand the pro AV market. We want to work with AVIXA members and customers, clients in that ecosystem." So this is seen as a very positive thing. The second is because there is revenues to be made, new revenue streams, new adjacent markets to go into. So as a result, you are seeing real business value as well as innovation, as well as the shared understanding of, how do I then enter and approach this market so I can bring the best of both? And we've been hearing stories of, you know, where we thought the worlds were so separate from a talent perspective, and by talent, I mean the engineers or... And then suddenly you're finding broadcast engineers turning up in a major bank in New York. Because as you say, they want that level of understanding of, how do I create a story for my CEO, not just how do I plug pieces together or manage a remote production? So I think it is it's around value, it's around creativity and innovation, but it's about the expansion of the market opportunity because everybody wants to have an immersive, engaging, communicative experience.

And I think possibly from a, an individual perspective, if you are a craft technical operator working in a big broadcaster, you might not have as much freedom to exercise your creativity, whereas in a situation-

Yes. Well, good, it's good point, Purminder. And I think if you, if you think about the sort of training that, that a, that a broadcast professional would go through, right? Very few people, I think at this point, are going through that training thinking, "I'm going to go and work for a bank." You know, that's not why people- you know, do these courses and do these apprenticeships and internships. They want to be working for Netflix or they want to be working for Sky, right? They... That's always been the career path. But and you might say, you know, from the outside looking in, you might think, "Oh, well, you know, it's a step, taking a step down to get a job in a bank." But actually, as you say, there's maybe more potential to be creative. You're probably working in a smaller team. You're probably working... You're a, you're a subject matter expert who's trusted, or you, or it's your job to build the trust of the CEO, the corporate communications team, the HR team, the facilities team, the IT team, lots of internal stakeholders to work with who are not, who are not technical, don't have an engineering background, don't really want to be technical.

So there's the trust that you need to build. But if you, if you can do that, if you can build that trust and understand how to operate in what is a very different network of people, network of stakeholders from what you would expect at a television company or a film company. Bear in mind, you know, as much as it's, as much as it's need to have, Mastercard doesn't make money out of making content. They make money out of providing financial services, you know, and that's not going to change. They're not, they're not going to shift their business model. But at the same time... And so you're not, you're not involved in trying to make the company money. You're just, you're just there to make sure that, that everything that's produced is on brand.

Just enhancing, right?

It... And you're enhancing the existing message, you know? You know, Mastercard is, using that example, right? They've been using that single word priceless for, what is it? 20, 30 years in the, in the... You can tell I'm a CMO, can't...

It's younger.

I mean, may- it might be younger, maybe. You know what I mean? Yeah. Let... Anyway. Let's not split hairs over a good... Split hairs a decade or two. You know, and so then you get... Like I say, it's corporate communications. It's making sure... But then there is that, there is that broadcast piece that I think, I think people from television can bring to the corporate world, which is, okay- You, I understand what the brand guidelines are, I understand what their high-level message is, but I'm going to build off of that to tell a story now. And that's the piece that I think we can get really creative.

I think that's a really interesting overview of that opportunity because what we're seeing in the broadcast sector, unfortunately, is, you know, rationalisation or redundancy. So for that talent that's out there to understand that actually there's this whole world of opportunity for you, that your skills and your abilities... So I think sometimes when we talk about the talent pipeline, we forget about the people that are perhaps at the other end of that. They're not trying to enter, they're trying to think about what their next move is. I'm going to imagine that the corporate world as a, as a technical person is a little bit better for your work-life balance than perhaps working in news, for example. So, so, you know, beginning to increase- the width of what the opportunities are in the industry is, is a really- important message to land with people and to just kind of dispel those myths about this is not at the same level. Yeah.

Yeah. And I think you know, clearly there are things that do need to be at the same level, right? You know, things like, things like robustness and redundancy and protection against cyber threats and things like that. You know, if a CEO is making a big announcement to, you know, Wall Street or the London Stock Exchange or whatever, then, and it's live, that is a mission critical application of the technology, right? So that has to be, that has to work. Where I think things, you know, are a little bit different, and you mentioned the pro AV markets there, right? So but in many ways there isn't, there's no such thing as the pro AV market. There's a pro AV industry which supplies, but there are multiple pro AV markets that that the technology goes to. And where I think we see some challenge, and that's why our partnership with IAMT is so important, is...

And I don't want to use the word education you know, because it's not really about educating, it's mutual learning and discovery, I think, for both of our communities. But helping broadcast

vendors along the journey to pro AV markets and you know, maybe help, maybe giving them some guidance on prioritisation, for example, because there are so many applications. Can you, can you address four or six markets at once, or are you better off saying, "You know what? We're just going to concentrate on education," or, "We're just going to concentrate on worship or cruise ships," or whatever it might be, just to start with. There are multiple... And it's not our job to tell people what to do, but just to, just to map out what the opportunities are. And I, and then have a discussion about that and learn from each other and then, you know, vendors can go back and make their own decisions about their next steps.

Definitely. I mean, I think that's where as two industry associations, both not-for-profit, we're on completely the same page. You know, we are not here saying, "You should do this or shouldn't do this." We are saying, "Okay, this is what we have learnt. This is what our members have experienced or found. Here is the data, the insights on both sides in terms of market opportunities, investments, and ROI, as well as the technical side of that." So we are able together to say, "Here's a bigger opportunity for both sides here" in terms of whether you're coming from the pro AV side into the MediaTech side or MediaTech. At the end of the day, people want fantastic content on lots of different devices, lots of different platforms. How do you do that in the most simple, effective, scalable way that is still creating those fantastic experiences? And, you know, there's lessons or things to be learned. As you say, it's not dictating educating in its purest sense, but it can only be good if you can share learnings that accelerate- a market opportunity, creativity, tech innovation together.

And to make the industry even more exciting than it currently is, right? You mentioned about the two associations working together. Tell us more about how that relationship is going to develop. What are we going to see in the next few weeks and months?

So we've already been working together for a few years now, and we... You said it at our last event. It used to be like we were dating. And now we're definitely in a relationship. That was last year.

It's such a Facebook status, we're in a relationship.

Exactly. Exactly. And now, in fact, it was Dave, AVIXA's president, who said, "Now it's like we're married." I think it's, you know, we're both wanting the same things for our members and the market and so we continue to look at how can we innovate as organisations together. So as part of that we are delighted to announce that the IAMT Annual Conference, which will take place on the 1st and 2nd of December in London, is in partnership with AVIXA, and therefore we are looking at what are those market opportunities. How do vendors look at positioning themselves, their go-to-markets? What are the learnings, but also who is buying what? What are the stories, the case studies behind that? So that you're really showing how to and where things have worked on lots of different levels and scales on a global environment but based at our London event, so.

Yeah, it's exciting. I think, you know, we started working with your association three years ago, I want to say, doing- Toe in the water, you know. Definitely light dating, I would say- you know? It-

Yeah, not sure. On sort of the cocktail stage, yeah. And then maybe a co-

Maybe a coffee

Cappuccino. With cinnamon sprinkling on top if I'm, if I'm feeling courageous. Because we just weren't sure, you know, how much synergy was there really. because it's all very well to do some market research. It's all very well to have that quantitative data, right? But how does that translate into people, and how they interact with each other and learn from each other? So so we did a few sort of relatively small-scale events in different places. And then I think when the opportunity came up, and so then you raised this idea of your big annual conference, I, you know, I think we were... We looked at that and thought, "Well, if we really are..." And I think it was your team that came up with it, that tagline, you know, Two Industries, One Future. If we really are to, if we really do have one future together it is sounding a bit like marriage, isn't it? Then we should plan this together. And so we're doing a joint, a piece of joint market research together, which will... And some of the data there will form the foundation of the content at the event. And then we're also pulling in, as you say, so like pulling in some of these real-world use cases so that, so that we can make it real- for people. Um-

Build it and they will come.

Yeah. And-

They've already registered.

Yeah, I was going to say.

I think they're coming anyway.

But-

They're already at over, I think it's 70% capacity in terms of pre-registration. So it is- there is a-

So that is nice curiosity. Like, oh, are we, you know-

Well, I think if you build something different- build something new. So yes, I agree. You know, build it, but build something that people haven't seen before. Build something exciting. Build something that is, that is around a new set of opportunities for our two industries.

Yeah. It's exciting because- this industry is just full of people that get excited by new and- new shiny things. So, yeah.

Yes. Yes. And I, and I think, and I think, yeah, three years ago, maybe we were not sure, or maybe it was just a shiny thing. And it, whether or not it was really going to have legs we didn't really know. But I think we felt you know, in our gut was that it was real and that it was long-term. It was a structural shift. And now I think we clearly see that that's the case, and that's why it's that deeper integration- which in how we're working together.

It's really powerful. I think it's a really powerful message- two industries such as yours- to make this statement- and to allay any of those uncertainties-

Well, what is it?

Was that-

It's really trust- as well. And again, you know, we trust we are doing the best for our members, for the industries, you know. And so, and that's really important, especially in a world of AI and everything else. You want to ensure that, yeah, what you are doing, you know, as a, as a real

partnership and collaboration is, you know, it's true partnerships- true collaboration. So I think that whole, you know, we talked about credibility, trust you know, sovereignty around how do we help the industry grow and move forward. And we both want to do that. And on a scale that is going to deliver, you know, financial value, technology value, shared learnings, crafts, imagination, innovation and-

Community

You know, it is. And-

Yeah, absolutely. I, you know, I think potentially we do become one community. Although, I think the thing about communities is in some ways you don't want them to become too big, right? Because they don't really work, you know.

And I, and I think, and I think one of the things I like about the conference idea, right, is that it's not thousands and thousands of people. It's a, it's a fairly, it's a, it's a managed group. It's a managed venue. We're careful about who we're sending invitations to.

Like speed dating- maintaining that relationship.

You know, it's like-

It's very-

But you don't want anybody showing up- you know, like coming in off the street who you haven't, who you haven't, who you haven't vetted.

We have to vet you first.

Yeah. So, and that, and I, and I think, you know, all joking aside, I think it's really important that it's curated because you know, it's what? It's a day and a half then with the awards on the second evening. You want that feeling of community. We want to build this, and we want, we want people to feel comfortable sharing a room, sharing dialogue, sharing ideas building a, building a tr- a trusted and trusting environment. And it, that's really hard. So that much as, much as I love our shows, I love ISE, I love InfoComm, I love the big gatherings of Pro AV. You know, convening at scale in that way is enormously powerful when you have existing markets that are already functioning very well. Where it becomes, I think, a little bit more challenging is where you're trying to do something new and a bit pioneering, and you're trying to bring people together who haven't previously seen value or seen relevance in co-working. And so that's much better done, I think, in a, in a smaller, a smaller setting where you can be smaller but more impactful.

It's where business gets done. Because it is small enough that those real conversations are happening- with the right people-

At the right time

In a fantastic venue at the right time. And again, you know, we've chosen the Richmond Hill Hotel in Richmond in London, 20 minutes from Heathrow and 20 minutes into the West End. So whether you're in the UK or flying into the UK that works. But the space itself, you know, we didn't want a boring conference room with just, you know, a coffee bar outside. You know, this beautiful hotel, it's the quintessential English experience.

It looks beautiful. It's on the edge of Richmond Park. But there is space for people to talk, to have a coffee, to have a drink, as well as the wider drinks, networking, dinner, the awards and the main conference stage, et cetera. So we're super excited.

Is there going to be a murder? Yeah. I think of, I think of the sort of quintessential-

Can we get a sponsor?

English country house. You know, expecting a, expecting a detective to suddenly appear uninvited, you know, on the scene at about 11:30 in the evening.

Cluedo. Yeah.

There will be no murders at the event. I'd just like to put that on record.

Okay. Certainly not planned anyway. Yeah.

Murder on the dance floor maybe.

Oh, maybe. Yeah. Maybe.

And there is a disco. There is... I mean, we are celebrating 50 years of what was IABM. We're now IAMT. So there is an after party after the awards, which is a '70s, '80s disco. So I think, yes, absolutely murder on the dance floor.

Way before my time.

Dan, Saleha, what a wonderful partnership. I'm excited to see how the conference turns out. Hopefully I'll be able to attend. I shall put it in my diary. And yeah, it's a beautiful symbiotic relationship between AVIXA and IAMT. Thanks very much for joining us in the podcast studio.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you, Dan. Thanks.

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