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Radio TechCheck

The NAB Labs Newsletter for Radio Broadcast Engineers



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Change, Choice and Principles:

Sam Matheny's Vision for the Future of Broadcasting

Sam Matheny, NAB's EVP of Technology and CTO, outlined his vision for the future of broadcasting in his keynote address at the 2015 Broadcast Engineering Conference this morning.

"Stephen Covey says there are three constants in life," Matheny said to the packed conference room, "change, choice and principles. I agree with this, and suggest that the constants for broadcasting are no different."



With respect to change, Matheny spoke about how the role of the broadcast engineer has evolved with the growth of new technologies and IP distribution. "It used to be when a broadcast engineer was asked about IOT, he would most likely answer with something about the way Inductive Output Tubes

impact the RF amplification," he said. "But today, that same engineer may start talking about the Internet Of Things and a TV everywhere or streaming radio strategy."

Matheny said that this rapidly changing world leads to choices for the broadcast industry.

"We need to believe in the virtuous cycle" he said, "The idea that adopting new distribution via web sites, mobile applications, and social media all serve to build the overall audience and engagement in our core broadcast service."

Matheny said that by combining broadcasting's strengths with new technologies, broadcasting has a bright future. "I was talking with the CEO of Bit Torrent, Eric Klinker, the other day," said Matheny, "and he estimated an average household of TV viewing would equal 66 ExaBytes of data per month...that's 10 to the 18th power."

The infrastructure to support this doesn't exist to meet this scale, Matheny observed. It takes too many servers, too much power consumption and too much bandwidth, which reinforces the importance of broadcasting.

"When I think about what this means for broadcasting, I see a high power, high-tower, wireless IP video and data network that reaches virtually 100% of U.S. television households and consumers. I see a new extension of the Internet, one that delivers the most popular and valuable content to the masses more efficiently than any other way – via broadcasting."

Matheny said that the choices our industry makes will be based upon our principles of quality, reliability, community service, competition and democracy.

"I'd like to add a fourth constant to what Covey said," Matheny said, "and that is that there are no facts about the future. It is ours to create."

To help build this future, Matheny highlighted the work of NAB Labs, NAB's research and development vehicle. "It is part incubator, part test bed, part showcase and it is all about innovation," he explained.

Matheny gave an overview of Labs work over the passed year including all-digital AM testing, FM chips in smartphones, and its investment in new technologies and start-ups like NextRadio and SyncBak. He also spoke about NAB Labs' partnerships with companies to provide demonstrations of next-gen technologies like UHD and HDR, and the newly form Digital Officer (DO) committee that advises the NAB Technology team on "emerging digital and online businesses, issues, policies and technologies."



"Looking ahead, we are ready to invest, to test, to push, to foster and to build," he said, "and that is another reason why I'm glad to be here with you today, because I know you can help inform and guide these decisions."

We want to hear from you. Tweet your opinions of the keynote @nab_labs.

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