

April 7, 2014



Radio TechCheck

The Weekly NAB Newsletter for Radio Broadcast Engineers



Gage Challenges Broadcasters to Build for the Future at the BEC Keynote



Kevin Gage, NAB Chief Technology Officer and Executive Vice President, emphasized the need for flexibility and participation in his keynote address at the 2014 Broadcast Engineering Conference.

Gage addressed the challenges facing the broadcast industry today asking, "Have you ever witnessed more challenging times for our industry?" He continued, "New and improved ways for consumers to enjoy our content are emerging, long time standards are being re-written, and the pace of technology development is accelerating."

"We are seeing companies that have been industry stalwarts restructuring and rebranding, and in some cases, closing their doors forever."

Gage said that an answer to this rapid evolution is flexibility. He said that the ability to adapt to changing customer needs will keep broadcasting current in an ever changing world. To highlight this need, he pointed to a recent study from Milward Brown that showed that smartphones and tablets beat out television for the first time in being the number one screen for consumers. Gage said "Consumers are a long way from abandoning traditional broadcast media. They just want their content anytime, anywhere and on any device."

He continued, "We need to take a page out of the playbook of the powerhouse innovators in other industries: speed to market, agile development, and constant Deployment."

Gage acknowledged that this strategy is not without risk, but in a rapidly changing technological environment it is a necessity. "Check out the NAB Show floor," he said, "Some companies have not been flexible enough to change with the times and are simply going away. Others are making dramatic changes."

As an example of this flexibility in action, Gage highlighted Harris Broadcasts recent split into GatesAir and Imagine Communications. "Time will tell how this restructuring plays out for them," he said, "but the

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key factor is that their strategy incorporates flexibility by redefining company objectives based on their perspective of where the broadcast industry is heading."

Gage also stressed the need for participation from the broadcasting community, "We need your individual ideas," he said. "We need to hear your thoughts and those of your management. Think about the legion of engineers working for Consumer Electronic powerhouses. We don't have the manpower of that force, but in a united effort we certainly have the wisdom to move our industry forward."

Gage explained how this flexibility and participation was already innovating new ideas including AM All-digital, and Hybrid FM Radio on mobile devices. "There are now over a million new FM Radios in mobile phones on the market that provide our consumers a re-envisioned graphical and immersive FM radio experience."

Gage also looked ahead to an all IP core broadcast platform that will provide the crucial services broadcaster supply today, but better than ever before. "The flexibility of an all IP core opens up potential new opportunities in both the short and unforeseeable long term future," he said.

Gage believes broadcasting is going in the right direction, but urges his audience to not only keep the pace, but to move ahead of the curve and define the path.

In closing, Gage said "I challenge you, our best and brightest to build on what we have not only accomplished to date, but to accelerate the progress. Dare to fail," he said, "and join me for another year accelerating our industry forward."



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