



Member focus...

Ian Nock

Managing Consultant, Fairmile West Consulting

At the SCTE we take great pride in our individual members, who have made such a contribution to the growth and development of our industry. This is a new section of Broadband Journal and we'll be shining an overdue light on you wonderful people in every issue going forward, as well as regularly online.

Ian Nock leads the TV consulting company Fairmile West. Ian's expertise covers glass-to-glass product, technology, strategy, and delivery consultancy at all levels and has been behind the launch of 20+ major video entertainment services across Europe on satellite, cable, IPTV and OTT.

Ian also is engaged in the development and promotion of next generation Video and Audio technologies and services through being the Chair of the Ultra HD Forum Interoperability Group since 2017 and an executive member and Vice Chair of the IET Media Technical Network. The Ultra HD Forum is an open forum/industry group focused on advocating for the deployment of Ultra HD based services and technology, including the creation of Guidelines and leading Interoperability work with the industry at large.

The IET Media Technical Network is the industry facing part of the Institution of Engineering and Technology, tasked with sharing and advancing knowledge through lectures, workshops, and conference with IET members and non-members.

Ian is a member of the SMPTE, IET, IEEE, and Fellow of the SCTE: The Society for Broadband Professionals. He blogs on the Fairmile West company blog at fairmilewest.com/blog, on LinkedIn ([linkedin.com/in/iannock](https://www.linkedin.com/in/iannock)) and can be found on X, formerly known as Twitter, at @iannock. Ian also co-founded and manages the Digital TV Professionals LinkedIn group (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1801289/>) which has over 31,000 members.

What got you interested in a career in the industry when you first started?

I had graduated in the early 90s and spent time in academia with research into needle sharpness, dynamics of crisp packets, AI and sacrificial wear sensors, before moving into designing IP Networks. I saw an advert for a Satellite DTH company based in Kent that was looking for a Head of IT.

They were on an accelerated path to launch a Digital TV platform known as Wizja TV in Poland within 6 months (yes broadcasting from Kent to Poland), and this was so extreme that I could not help to want to be involved. I had an incredible 6 months getting it all together, including a lot of new learning. On the cusp of launch however, our main competitor launched a merger attempt which delayed launch for another six months, and with the ending of that merger attempt we eventually launched in September 1998 (beating Sky as a UK based Digital platform by a couple of months, but no one remembers us for it!). The rollercoaster ride did not end there, with the launch of a live Sports channel, our acquisition by a UPC in mid 1999, and with our expansion into other countries in Central Europe through 2000. That was the start of a fun number of years working with tech from cable, satellite, and the Internet – all the lovely toys. For those without a history bent, UPC became Liberty Global.

You've had a varied career and have a lot of strings to your bow. How would you best describe what you do, and what do you enjoy best?

I say it best on my LinkedIn profile heading: Maker of Strategy, Product, Technology and Delivery for Video, Device and Consumer Solutions. I get things done. I don't stop, which is really what I enjoy best - driven by my earliest industry experience of getting the 'almost' impossible done. Making solutions makes me happy.

What memories really stand out for you over the years you've been involved in this industry?

Working with fantastic people in all those launches. This is whether it is relaxing with them for a beer after working 27 hours straight to get a TV platform operational for a critical date, or seeing a colleague grow from being a relatively junior engineer to become a leading product expert in content metadata just a few years later.

The sector has changed a lot in 50 years; what for you is the biggest shift?

The IT'ification of TV - the shift of the video/audio payloads from custom hardware and traditional broadcast to software defined delivery and the use of IP as the medium. It is a huge leveller that is of massive benefit to the consumer, as it allows them truly to consume video exactly as they want to. It also allows us as the provider of the video to focus much more on the experience of the consumer rather than the plumbing. It has merely converged so that we no longer should think about being 'cable', 'satellite', 'terrestrial' or 'IP'... we are in the entertainment delivery business.

What do you get out of being an SCTE Member?

For me it is about learning. Discussing the latest and greatest with old and new colleagues: learning lessons, finding out about the new technology, or a new way of doing things, and then taking that into what I do.

What's the single biggest impact that AI will have on the streaming/broadcast industry?

AI's biggest impact is on creating optimum solutions for almost any real-world situation that we see, through the application of Machine Learning (which is just one subset of AI). Quietly, it has been applied for years in the streaming/broadcast industry. For example, optimising the encoding of a programme to minimise bit rate whilst maintaining quality, identifying traffic flows on broadband networks to identify failing connection nodes and end points, and analysing consumer viewing to identify a set of recommended 'next viewing' options on an SVOD platform. The challenge today is applying these ML techniques to more and more problems that are currently left unoptimised and allow the humans to look after the creativity and innovation.

How do you see the streaming industry developing over the next 5 years?

I see it disappearing in name... by that I mean that less and less will we see the need to say 'streaming' and it will just be the industry. This is because we are approaching inflection points in the world's video entertainment markets, where the delivery of video entertainment via broadcast style networks as we know them today - Satellite, Cable, Terrestrial and traditional IP Multicast - will switch to delivery over IP via streaming. The critical inflection point will be where the legacy mechanisms are uneconomical to continue, due to so much of the video consumed being provided over IP-based networks alone (driven by consumer behaviour). I believe that will happen in at least two major markets in the next five years, and eventually everything will be via IP at some point.

Did you have any mentors over the course of your career?

I have not had just one mentor in my time, but I have had quite a few 'like-minded' senior colleagues with whom I have talked, and still talk to about where things are going or not going. I would have to go back to my MD at the company where I started in TV, who gave me the space to realise that the most important thing is to 'get it done - not perfectly, but good enough to work and to improve upon'. I also see it as important to see everyone around you as a possible mentor - you can learn from everyone, young or old.

What would you tell a young entrant just about to get started in this industry?

This industry is important to almost every single person on earth because of just how much time we engage with it. People spend pretty much a quarter of their life every single day being entertained by us, which is the third highest usage of our time today after sleep and employment. Whether you are creative or technical, to be involved means you are making a worthwhile impact on everyone's quality of life. Also because of the pace of change, you will never be bored or static. I also hope to learn from them at some point.

What is the best thing about this sector?

The pace of change, the "not standing still", that I will always be learning is the very best thing. I don't think I have left that world of academia behind...



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