

WHERE THE INDUSTRY IS HEADED

Ramki Sankaranarayanan, founder & global CEO, Prime Focus Technologies, on what's next for the media industry

How was the experience at this year's NAB Show?

Sankaranarayanan: NAB provides us with an incredible opportunity to connect some of our best business leaders, technocrats and inventors of our industry, while giving us the ultimate platform to showcase our transformational solutions and services. Automation was definitely in the limelight at this year's event - its key role in transforming the M&E industry landscape was evident.

What was different, as compared to its previous versions? What is the latest wave of technology doing the rounds of the media industry?

Sankaranarayanan: Just a few years ago, Cloud technology, OTT and MAM were the biggest buzzwords at NAB. With the industry rapidly embracing digital transformation, the focus today is on smart, centralized solutions for supply chain management, particularly those built on the back on automation. While Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have been a focus area in previous versions of the event as well, this year saw a deeper focus on how to practically leverage AI and ML for solving real life M&E use cases.

In recent times, multi-platform content has witnessed a meteoric rise; original content is being created at a pace never seen before, and getting it to domestic and worldwide viewers is the first priority for content creators of all sizes.

With multiple formats, versions and vendors in play, automation is proving its mettle as the key driver to help solve critical operational challenges. Embracing automation across the content supply chain, powered by ONE software across the enterprise, is helping broadcasters enhance efficiencies to meet their business goals.



Ramki Sankaranarayanan

Today, there exist AI-led micro services, which have been custom-made for solving strategic M&E use cases - right from content segmentation to OTT distribution and live sports.

Which technologies did you see more of, at NAB Show 2019?

Sankaranarayanan: Technology is the new creative, and content creators at NAB 2019 were on the lookout for new-age solutions that enable them to create & deliver the best possible content. AI-led technology was definitely at the forefront, closely followed by Cloud-based solutions for automating specific content operations like content acquisition, promo operations and mastering. Centralisation, the emergence of 5G wireless networks, and the much-awaited 8K UHD were major talking points as well. Overall, there was a sharp focus on innovative technology to help content creators securely collaborate across the supply chain, future proof their workflows, and make their content available on multiple global platforms with ease.

How do you, as a company, intend to keep pace with the ever-changing tech landscape?

Sankaranarayanan: PFT constantly endeavours to augment its portfolio of transformational solutions and services to address the needs of the dynamic M&E market. We have over 300 highly skilled R&D engineers working round the clock to build product capabilities, and ensure that our offerings are future-ready. We also set up dedicated innovation labs with key clients to pursue joint projects that drive our clients' business priorities. These efforts go a long way in helping us bring industry first offerings to the market. For instance, we recently launched an AI-led custom model for sports, which offers automatic metadata extraction through multi-pass inferencing and patent pending technology for action tracking. It auto generates packages and user configurable highlights, allowing users to auto publish live to VoD.

Where do you see the industry heading in the next 2-3 years?

Sankaranarayanan: The industry is definitely heading towards a smarter, more digitalised future! Personalisation will lead the way, and content creators will be focused on giving people exactly what they want, whenever they want. The future will also see audiences enjoying more immersive experiences, with advances in technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) and interactive videos, re-defining the conventional lean-back experience.

As the explosion of multi-platform continues, automation and centralisation will emerge as key drivers for M&E enterprises to enhance efficiencies, increase monetisation and lower costs. AI will soon move from the pilot phase to the early adoption phase as well. ■