

BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING FUTURES: THE NEW FACE OF IABM

A new CEO. A fresh vision. And a long-overdue shake-up at IABM. Saleha Williams tells Vijaya Cherian she is here to do more than lead – she's here to disrupt



When Saleha Williams stepped into the role of CEO at IABM – the International Association for Broadcast and Media technology suppliers – she wasn't just filling a vacancy. She was stepping into history.

As the first woman to lead the organisation in its decades-long existence, Williams brings more than just industry experience to the table. She brings vision, courage and a refusal to maintain the status quo.

"I was brought in with a clear mandate to revitalise IABM," she says. "The industry has gone through a turbulent few years, and so has IABM. It was time for change."

Williams' appointment reflects a marked shift in the broadcast technology sector. With more than 35 years in the industry, spanning roles across technology, media, consultancy, marketing and commercial strategy, her deep understanding of the ecosystem is matched only by her passion to future-proof it.

"I've grown up with IABM," she says. "I've been a

member, a presenter, an interviewee. I've helped with conferences. I know what it's been and what it can be."

Williams is generally perceived as a transformation agent, driven by innovation and bold thinking.

"If you want someone to just keep things going the way they've been, I'm not that person. IABM has often been perceived as very British, male-based, older, even focused on legacy broadcast hardware – not global, not diverse, not innovative. Some have even questioned its relevance. That's the perception I'm here to change."

That honesty has been a breath of fresh air to many members, but she acknowledges that transformation comes with friction.

"Change is hard. And it's not just about new leadership – it's about an industry at an inflection point. Some have built amazing careers in this space, but the world is shifting. Technology, AI, convergence, geopolitics – it's all coming to a head."

There's also no ignoring the fact that some pushback has had a different undertone.

"There are people who don't think a woman should be running IABM. That's a very small group, but it exists. My answer is simple: I'm not here because I'm a woman. I'm here because I'm the best person for the job."

One of Williams' priorities has been reimagining how IABM delivers value, not just at trade shows but year-round.

"There's a perception that IABM is where you go to get trade show discounts. And yes, you'd be mad not to take advantage of that.

But there's so much more we offer, and it's often buried."

From free AI courses and professional training to market insights and strategic support,

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Williams wants members to tap into what she calls "buried treasure".

"We've launched new training programmes, expanded our Vantage analytics platform, and we're offering tailored regional insights. Most of it is included in the membership, and members are genuinely surprised when they discover what's already available to them."

She also speaks candidly about internal challenges.

"Without a CEO for nearly two years post-Covid, we had to reset our internal systems – CRM, data platforms and onboarding tools. We're not just rebuilding the website, we're rebuilding the machine behind it."

Her strategy has also placed a strong emphasis on international engagement, particularly in the Middle East. At



CABSAT 2024, IABM isn't just attending – it's curating, convening and creating a destination.

"We're reimagining the lounge experience. It's not just coffee and chats anymore, it's a hub for deals, real conversations and collaboration. We're also programming conference sessions, returning with the UpStream event and working closely with AV groups like AVIXA as the industry continues to converge."

Williams is acutely aware of the need for neutrality and independence.

"We are not-for-profit, genuinely independent, and every penny we make goes back into member benefits. That's important in an industry that's questioning who's really working for them."

At NAB this year, Williams and her team piloted a new model of member engagement that included strategic visibility, curated interviews, speaker placements and active storytelling.

"In just 100 days, we were

“I want to leave something behind that the next generation can build on. Something that genuinely moved the dial”

SALEHA WILLIAMS, CEO, IABM

overwhelmed with requests. Now the question is, how do we scale that in a way that works for all our members, not just the ones with the biggest stands?"

Her answer? Keep listening. Keep innovating. Keep moving.

"We're offering a 360-degree member experience now. It's not just trade shows, it's about how we engage with you throughout the year, around your announcements, your goals and your growth."

For Williams, this role is "about helping the industry flourish in a time of massive change".

"I want to leave something behind that the next generation can build on. Something that genuinely moved the dial."

With bold plans, a member-centric strategy and a fearless approach to transformation, Saleha Williams is not just leading IABM into the future – she's helping shape what that future looks like. **PRO**