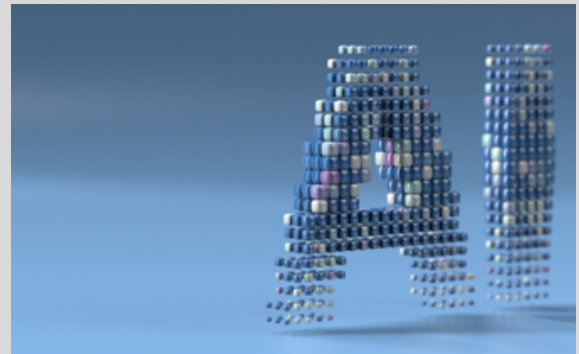# VERREX INSIDERS
MARCH 2024

Verrex's Top 5 Themes from ISE 2024

By Bill Chamberlin

Last month, Verrex sent a team of six to Integrated Systems (ISE) Europe 2024 in Barcelona—the most successful edition in its 20-year history. The show attracted 73,891 unique verified attendees from 162 countries, a record since the show's inception in Geneva in 2004. This represents an increase of 27% on the 2023 edition.[1] And what did we see there? A comprehensive view of the vibrant landscape of innovations, technological advancements, and trends that promise to transform the AV industry.

We thoroughly enjoyed meeting with old and new friends from leading brands and emerging players and taking in what's next and who's who in AV solutions. Verrex's VP of Global Sales and Marketing and ISE attendee, Bill Chamberlin, summarizes the team's key takeaways.

Deep Thoughts on Artificial Intelligence in AV

By Rob Kunz

Thinking about Artificial Intelligence, or AI, and how it has already begun to impact collaboration sparked a memory for me the other day. I went back to conversations I had nearly 15 years ago with a gentleman who was directly involved with decision-making and implementing video conferencing and media platforms for one of the largest retailers in the world. His vision was to radically change the use of their Cisco Video Conferencing platform for internal collaboration and their Digital Signage strategy in retail locations to affect shopper experience. The concept was to identify an individual through facial recognition and customize the experience by integrating their social media footprint or work patterns. It did not occur to me that these concepts would require the orchestration supplied by AI, but today, that is easily recognizable.

www.verrex.com

VERREX INSIDERS
MARCH 2024

Verrex's Top 5 Themes from ISE 2024, <u>continued from Page 1</u>

Top 5 ISE 2024 Themes
It is always fun to experience emerging themes in AV firsthand at ISE each year. This year, we continued to see more of a focus on solutions rather than boxes and on usability. Here's our take on the top five themes of 2024.

1. **Hardware Price Reductions in 2024**—Exciting news for our customers is that the industry anticipates hardware price reductions in 2024, paving the way for more accessible and cost-effective AV solutions. In addition to hardware price reductions, another significant conversation at ISE highlighted the anticipated drop in display costs, particularly for LCD and LED technologies, in the coming year. This development is expected to reshape the AV landscape and open new possibilities for customers.
2. **Open APIs for Remote Management Support**—The adoption of open APIs for remote management support indicates a move towards interoperability and seamless integration of AV systems.
3. **USB Solutions—Extension and Switching**— Many new and valuable USB solutions were unveiled, ranging from extensions to switching.   Finally, many USB solutions we envisioned two years ago are a reality.
4. **AVoIP Continues to Dominate**—The trend of Audio-Visual over Internet Protocol (AVoIP) solutions continued to thrive. Q-SYS maintained its substantial presence in this arena, offering a robust platform that resonated well with the audience. NETGEAR took the spotlight for AV switches with smart network setup, featuring manufacturer logos per port on the WebUI.
5. **Intelligent Camera Solutions Sprouting Everywhere**—We witnessed a growing trend in camera intelligence, notably Crestron's new 1Beyond Cameras, which are expanding into Asia and offering lower-priced options, Q-SYS Vision Suite with Seervision technology, and other manufacturers pushing the boundaries.

Verrex's Top 5 Themes from ISE 2024,

Notable Mentions
Here are a few more items we can't stop discussing since ISE 2024.

Cisco's Cross Platform Support
Cisco stood out with visually impressive offerings this year, solidifying its position as a critical player in the industry. They made a notable comeback with cross-platform support and new solutions and are one to watch in 2024. Here are some of their latest solutions:

The **Cisco Board Pro** and **Room Bar Pro** can run Native Teams and Native WebEx. Both are fully featured in Microsoft Teams Rooms (MTR) and Webex. The Room Bar Pro is their all-in-one device that uses RoomOS to add control buttons when running MTR to control other room functions, such as lighting and environment controls.

The **Cisco Room Kit EQX** is an intelligent room all-in-one solution to which the user adds displays to create a cinematic experience. The EQX kit includes the Codec EQ, which uses AI to choose which camera to transmit and knows which direction people face. The audio is immersive. You can add extra IP microphones, and licensing is available for expansion.

Cisco Spaces is a room booking solution with an interactive display that helps users find appropriate spaces with available technology. The video conferencing system will turn on automatically for the booked time.

Ultrawide Displays (21:9)
The emergence of ultrawide displays with a 21:9 aspect ratio creates a promising opportunity to replace existing dual-display conference rooms. This shift towards more expansive displays could enhance collaboration and presentation experiences.

Verrex's Top 5 Themes from ISE 2024,

K-Array
The **K-Array Lyzard** is the winner of the 2024 Inavation Award in the Best Speaker Technology category and one of the thinnest micro-loudspeakers in the world with a fantastic sound experience. The discreet elegance of this model is a selling point; it can be hidden anywhere.

The **K-Scape Rail** was released at ISE this year. It's an all-in-one solution for track lighting and audio that would work great in a Lobby, near elevator banks, and long hallways. They would work great in hospitality and museum installations.

Final Thoughts...
More and more so every year, ISE serves as a platform for unveiling innovations that will undoubtedly shape the future of the AV industry. From automatic cameras to ultrawide displays, the event highlights the industry's commitment to pushing boundaries and providing cutting-edge technology for AV Integrators like Verrex to create innovative AV Solutions for customers worldwide.

Deep Thoughts on Artificial Intelligence in AV,

He took the model even further by envisioning the creation of a conducted content experience where the messaging would change, suggestions for supporting information or attendees would be made, and verbal commands or physical gestures would drive user control of the experience. While wonderful, this all sounded very space-age at the time.

Today, these models are becoming reality. The conducted or coordinated virtual meeting experience is now moving towards fully adopting these concepts in the corporate environments with the support of the significant hardware and platform providers. Examples of advancements in messaging and collaboration through Digital Signage can be seen daily in restaurants like White Castle, which, with support from Samsung, are launching voice interactive experiences for their patrons.

We have grown accustomed to AI in our daily lives; if you disagree, think of how often you use or hear "Hey Google" or "Alexa" when performing simple tasks like requesting music, asking for today's weather forecast, or adding something to your shopping list. Voice command and gesture control automation can and is being integrated into Video Collaboration platforms today at rudimentary levels to alleviate the need for remote controls for displays, audio levels, cameras, etc. Still, it is evolving to include the use of machine learning and Chatbots as well.

From a technical perspective, AI has been utilized in collaboration spaces for some time. Microphones have been used to trigger cameras to focus on speakers, and audio cancellation has removed background noise, for example. The current generation of advancements is being used to enhance the participant experience further while making it possible to offer meeting equity, a term now widely used following the burst of remote meeting attendance in today's familiar hybrid work environment. Generally speaking, meeting attendees in a hybrid work environment will be a mixture of those gathered in a more traditional conference room and remote participants. However, many will be attending remotely via personal devices through platforms such as Teams or Zoom. Conference room attendees began voicing their discontent based on the fact that their shared room view did not allow the same personal footprint or active participant framing as those joining remotely, and hence, meeting equity became a hot topic by which those room attendees were segmented out via the room based system and were given the same virtual real estate as those joining remotely. AI makes automated, intelligent choices managing the hardware and software to enable this coordination. But we are on the cusp of the experience taking yet another step forward.

As of today, when I want to schedule a meeting where I know some attendees will be in my office and others will be remote, I first need to use a scheduling assistant tool to find a time when everyone is available. Next, I need to coordinate a room in my office that matches the time and requirements, such as adequate space for the number of physical participants, supporting technology, and maybe even convenience of location. Once in the meeting, I need to make sure all the hardware is powered up, connect my personal device or access a control panel, start the meeting at the scheduled time, and move through my session as anticipated. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? But what if it could be simplified or made even more intuitive?

Deep Thoughts on Artifical Intelligence in AV, continued from Page 5

Enter the virtual (or AI) assistant. AI can now help support your efforts in many ways throughout the example above. Advancements from companies such as SoundHound have made it possible for a user such as myself to complete the request: "I need to meet with Joe, Beth, and Steve here in the office as well as Tom and Sue from customer XYZ joining remotely. The meeting needs to take place Wednesday mid-day or sometime Thursday on the second floor." With a full implementation and secure access, the virtual assistant can perform all the required background work and offer options that best suit my request. I make my selection and move on with my day. Fast forward to the meeting, and now AI can respond to voice control to start the session or, if integrated to the level where facial recognition or other forms of non-physical identity management are active, the room itself can respond when I enter and react with something like, "Hello Rob, would you like me to start your 2:00 meeting now?" Control vendors Crestron, Extron, and AMX have long offered the capability of integrating these types of authentication, while Microsoft, Cisco, Zoom, and others are further extending the solutions directly into their collaboration platforms. I respond, "Yes, start my meeting and take notes. Translate to French for Sue and keep a To Do list with follow-up action items." Seamlessly, my meeting will start, a transcription of the session will be captured and translated into Sue's native language for her view only, and a running list will be created for the next steps. Groups like Otter.ai, currently partnering with Zoom, offer these transcription and action-item capture solutions and there are many others in the works as well.

It was a natural, fluid, and highly effective use of time for the entire group and was as simple as stating my request to the AI assistant. Chatbots can be leveraged to extend the experience further by offering additional predictive support, such as having the system incorporate associated materials during the meeting, take note of participant body language for post-review, and even provide details about the meeting participants' background or specialization, which may prove helpful during conversations.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning have been working behind the scenes to ensure our systems perform at peak levels. Hardware is now not only capable of self-diagnosing possible issues but can make corrections independently as well. Automatic adjustments for desired audio levels, video capture and reproductions, room temperature, and lighting can be stored as user preferences or parameters can be set to guide the systems for optimum performance.

From an end user experience perspective, rationalizing AI is a bit more complex. I have always encouraged the clients I work with to think outside the box to help me understand the workflow they envision based on what they may feel is fantasy rather than what they believe technology is capable of. This approach is critical today, and while major manufacturers are responding to new use case scenarios through both hardware and software development, easing the burden of transformation and adoption, technology partners still need to wear their solution evangelist hats to help clients better understand the possibilities.

Deep Thoughts on Artifical Intelligence in AV,

Employers continue to struggle with Return-to-Office mandates. As employees stand fast in their position, they can be just as, if not more, productive in a hybrid environment.There are unquestionable benefits to personal interaction in the office. Still, I doubt anyone believes the work culture will return to the historic Monday through Friday regimen. This being the case, employers need to ensure that when people are in the office, they have the best experience possible and that there is no sentiment of feeling like their collaboration experience was better overall from their home office. Organizations need to embrace the possible advancements in an effort to move to Return-to-Office magnets rather than mandates.

Could we all continue to leverage meeting and collaboration solutions the way we have been for the last five or even ten years? Absolutely. Can we benefit from embracing the current advancements with an eye to the future? Undoubtedly.The way we work is changing and once we get past our Terminator fears of having artificial intelligence and machine learning take over the world, we see how exciting it is. Think Ironman instead. Simple, intuitive, and supportive. Next stop, holograms!