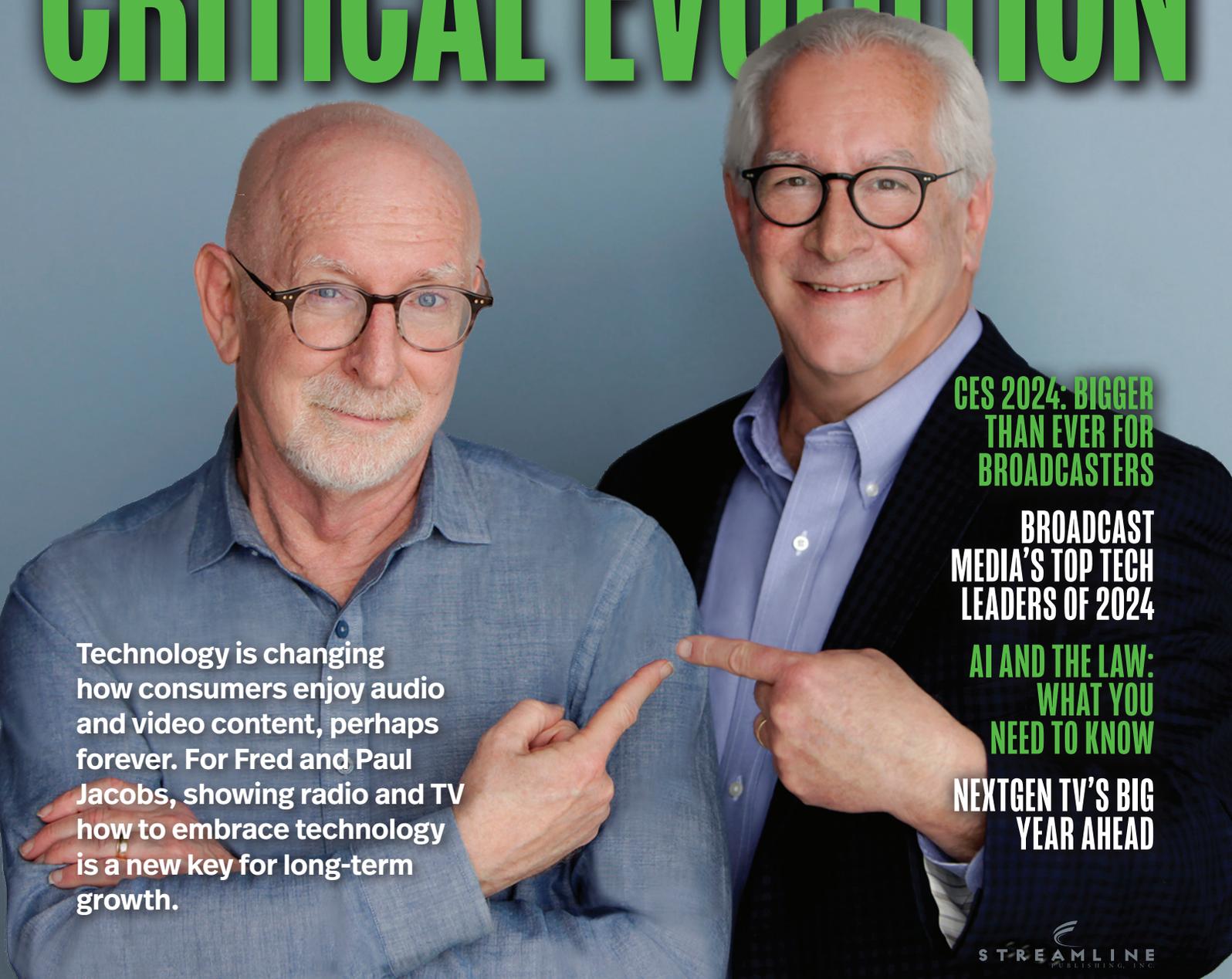


RADIO+TELEVISION BUSINESS REPORT

THE FINANCIAL + REGULATORY VOICE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

CRITICAL EVOLUTION



Technology is changing how consumers enjoy audio and video content, perhaps forever. For Fred and Paul Jacobs, showing radio and TV how to embrace technology is a new key for long-term growth.

CES 2024: BIGGER THAN EVER FOR BROADCASTERS

BROADCAST MEDIA'S TOP TECH LEADERS OF 2024

AI AND THE LAW: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

NEXTGEN TV'S BIG YEAR AHEAD

OPTIMISM & POSITIVE M

Jacobs Media's Fred and Paul Jacobs

From January 9 through January 12, more than 140,000 individuals are expected to attend the 2024 CES conference and expo, a gigantic, tech-filled spectacle hosted by the Consumer Electronics Association. In recent years, CES has attracted an increasing number of radio industry executives. That's why Fred Jacobs, President and Founder of Jacobs Media Strategies, and his brother, Jacobs Media Strategies Vice President and General Manager Paul Jacobs, created tours expressly for those charged with leading audio content creation and distribution companies.

What prompted the Jacobs brothers, known for their pioneering look at the automobile dashboard — and into the periscope seeking the next “disruptor” — to create these tours?

In a roundtable conversation with **RBR+TVBR**, Fred Jacobs shares the genesis of how the tours of CES for broadcasters came to be.

He says, “We first started going to CES in 2009, right after we started jaccaps, the app company, on the premise that we were now ‘techy’ guys and we should go to this thing.” This started a 14-year endeavor to gain the attention of the radio industry and explain why industry leaders should travel to Las Vegas to start the new year. For Fred Jacobs, attending CES could give radio “a shot of innovation.”

As much as Fred and Paul Jacobs preach attendance at the mega-sized event, he credits industry veteran Buzz Knight, known for his many years with Beasley Media Group and, before that, at Greater Media. Interestingly, both Knight and the Jacobs brothers have roots in Classic Rock — Knight was Program Director of WZLX/Boston from 1992-2002, while Fred Jacobs is widely known as the format's creator, following a successful run as research director of ABC Radio's FMs, including WRIF in Detroit, which he also programmed. As much as they may enjoy 50-year-old music, ensuring radio's relevance 50 years from today is also a common goal.

“He knew that we would really enjoy it,” Fred Jacobs says of Knight. “We were writing about [CES] all the time in our blog.” He continues, “I got a call around 2016 from Bill Hendrich,” who at the time was the Executive VP leading radio for Cox Media Group. “Bill said, ‘OK, you've convinced me. This is something I should definitely go to. I am definitely interested in attending.’”

He got excited as he envisioned dinner with Knight and Hendrich and touring CES together for a day. Yet Hendrich

clarified that he wasn't going — he simply *wanted* to go. Hendrich explained that he was convinced that CES is so difficult to navigate, and so busy, with so many people, that a trip would be unsuccessful. His proposed solution? He told Fred Jacobs, “If you and your brother, with the knowledge that you have, could put together a tour curated for radio broadcasters and you would take us to the really cool places that would matter, I'd pay money for that.”

Up to that point, neither Fred nor Paul Jacobs had thought about it. But they acted quickly, contacting the Consumer Technology Association, which stages CES, and connecting with CEO Gary Shapiro, whom they had developed a rapport with. “He actually lives in our neighborhood in Detroit,” Fred Jacobs says.

Little did the Jacobs brothers know that there is a tour division devoted to CES. The two parties talked, and a tour, modified for radio, was born in 2017. Since then, between two and four tours have been hosted by Fred and Paul Jacobs at CES.

NEW TECH, KNOWLEDGE FOR ALL

When the curated tours began seven years ago, they were exclusively for CEOs, Paul Jacobs notes. “It was really for C-level folks, and the response was great,” he says. “What's happened over time is that ‘democracy has kicked in,’ and it is now an absolutely delightful combination of like-minded, curious people from all different aspects of the business. We've had personalities attend.”

If people think they can buy a ticket to the Jacobs' CES tour in much the same way they may acquire one for the Las Vegas Monorail or High Roller, they may be disappointed.

INNOVATION MOMENTUM



“It is a significant investment on the part of attendees,” Fred Jacobs points out. For those able to attend, he lauds the scheduling of CES, traditionally held within the first 15 days of a new calendar year. “It’s a perfect way to start out the year with just a tsunami of innovation.”

The other viewpoint on CES’s timing? “It is massively inconvenient,” he admits. “You’ve just gone through the holidays, you’ve had some time off, you want to hit the ground running in the new year, and instead here you are spending a week in Las Vegas with 140,000 people. I mean, it’s exhilarating, but it’s kind of a little out of focus for a lot of people who just want to start working.”

When CES first started, the first days of January were selected because it was an off-peak period in a city known for its conventions, such as the NAB Show. Thus, it was affordable for tech startups in the era before the “dot-bomb” implosion of 2000.

RBR+TVBR Editor-in-Chief Adam R Jacobson attended CES 2000 for *Radio & Records*; until now, that was the lone CES he had attended as a reporter. The experience was overwhelming, exhausting, frustrating, and exhilarating, with barely a space to plug in a laptop and share his observations with readers.

Even then, perhaps, a curated approach to the show was needed.

What are the most important or profound differences between the CES of 2024 and that of nearly 25 years ago, from the broadcasters’ perspective? “Well, it is not as gadget-focused,” Paul Jacobs observes. “It used to be the hot smartphone or the new iPad, and now it is ecosystem-oriented. AI is a great example of that. How technology permeates all of our lives is on display. And the types of companies — Delta Air Lines is there, talking about human/machine interface to help in the loading of bags! It has really branched out into an amazing thing.”

The big lesson, according to Paul? “Every company, including radio and television companies, is a tech company, and we can’t get away from it.”

Oh, and there’s no longer a conflict between CES and another event that a quarter-century ago attracted tens of thousands of people — the AVN Adult Entertainment Expo. “There was significant integration between the two events,” Paul Jacobs recalls. “Fortunately, there’s been some lift and separation since then, and CES now takes over everything.”

Fred Jacobs chimes in, noting how “it is really easy to get caught in a rabbit hole” at CES, something that hasn’t changed since 2000. “There are big things going on away from the Las Vegas Convention Center. They are at the Aria, and at the Venetian. If you don’t know what you’re doing and you don’t navigate well, you can lose three hours. And that’s one of the big things for us — we have learned how to go from Point A to Point B and avoid a lot of the long lines. It has taken time to collect that expertise, though.”

THE KEY TOPIC OF INTEREST

For the 2024 CES affair, Jacobs Media has put together two tours. Interest was strong going into the mid-October 2023 roundtable chat with Fred and Paul. What can they say is the No. 1 topic of discussion among those who RSVP’d for a tour experience?

“Not surprisingly, it’s AI,” says Fred Jacobs. “What we are explaining to attendees is that there is no ‘AI exhibit.’ It isn’t in a display case or a wing in one of the halls. It is the oxygen of CES and will permeate the entire show, and we are convinced so many exhibitors will be talking about AI applications in their devices and their systems.”

On the subject of AI and radio, Fred Jacobs wonders if they “got off on the wrong foot,” given much of the “early noise” about how AI could replace air personalities at radio stations. “So many of the other applications of artificial intelligence kind of got left by the wayside,” he says. That’s why the Jacobs brothers are on the lookout for “some really amazing and innovative ways that companies are using AI that are transferable to our business.”

Paul Jacobs sees another “buzzy thing” grabbing the attention of many who have Las Vegas in their travel plans this year — the Sphere, the revolutionary new performance venue that saw U2 conducting a residency to officially open it. Those on Jacobs Media’s CES tour will get to go inside the Sphere. “We’ve watched this ugly building being built, asking ourselves, ‘What are they thinking?’ Then they lit it up, and if you’ve seen it, on the outside it is truly amazing, and on the inside, I think it is even more so.” A film featuring scenes of Earth is on the bill for the CES tour attendees.

“I think it is going to make IMAX look like the Model T and could redefine the entertainment experience to a great degree,” Fred Jacobs says.

CES has proven to be an event where new tech products can bring more questions, and opportunities, for broadcasters. For those who take the Jacobs CES tour, what will be the big takeaways that do not precisely have to do with AI? Fred Jacobs responds, “The tour helps to put what we all do in a fascinating perspective. When you work in radio, you’re kind of in a bubble. When you go to CES, your world just expands and explodes, and you see where radio actually fits into the largest ecosystem of media and technology.”

Indeed, one can walk around the Las Vegas Convention Center for hours and see neither a radio nor anything remotely related to radio. “That is why I recommend you at least stop at Xperi and make yourself feel better that radio is still well-represented in the dashboard of cars,” Fred Jacobs says. “It really does provide a sense of perspective about how radio is part of the landscape, but a small part. There are so many other things going on in media and technology, and that is what CES brings.”

Paul Jacobs adds, “One of the key benefits of the tour is the ability to talk to the leaders of these companies that we visit. It isn’t just seeing the cool new TV. It is asking the head of product of Samsung about how local television is going to appear. We have the opportunity to talk to these people. I guarantee our tour attendees can’t wait to talk to people about the future of AM radio in the car.”

The convergence of media, technology, and marketing will also be discussed during CES, but not on the expo floor or at any booth. “C Space” is the speaker-driven event where these conversations will be had. Among those on the speaker roster are NBCUniversal EVP Meredith McGinn and SiriusXM VP/Global Head of Revenue Partnerships Kelli Hurley. “It’s all sessions, but you can get up close with leading thought

“It’s a perfect way to start out the year with just a tsunami of innovation.” – Fred Jacobs

leaders,” Paul Jacobs says. “You can’t take a picture of any of it, but being able to rub elbows will generate things we cannot even anticipate yet.”

CLEAR AND PRESENT SELECTION

The “connected car” remains a topic for those who remain convinced radio’s presence in the dashboard has an expiration date, even as Congress works to pass legislation mandating the continued availability of AM radio in every vehicle sold in the U.S. What updates can Paul and Fred Jacobs share on this subject or related topics?

Paul Jacobs immediately turns to the future of Apple CarPlay in General Motors vehicles. GM is eliminating it, and going with its own platform — at least as of this writing. “I guarantee you we will be lined up to talk to people from General Motors,” he says, with one key question for the company as it creates its own proprietary platform: “What the hell are you thinking?”

Paul Jacobs expects to see this forthcoming GM streaming platform at CES 2024. For him, it brings back memories of the introduction of Ford Sync, and how he called Fred from CES to express his biggest thought. It had nothing to do with threats to AM or FM, or how a proprietary service was going to perform. Rather, his “OMG” moment was that CES is an auto show not so dissimilar to the ones staged in Los Angeles and Detroit each year. “That’s been in the DNA of this whole thing, but Xperi has been the only representative of radio on the floor, exhibiting, the entire time there has been a CES,” Paul Jacobs notes.

The statement was surprising to **RBR+TVBR**. Yet Fred Jacobs confirms that iHeartMedia has never had an expo floor exhibit, though it may have been there in other ways. “They’ve thrown a party a couple of times,” Paul Jacobs notes.

For Fred, “Here are two industries that have been joined at the hip: radio and automotive. For the first 80 years, radio people didn’t talk to automotive people, and vice versa. The thing we’ve learned by going to CES every year is that we have met so many people in the auto industry that didn’t know anything about radio, and we have forged relationships with those people. Let’s get to know these people. We believe there is synergy here. But we don’t talk to each other.

“Radio needs to be at CES more than just throwing parties. We really need to get serious about technology and innovation. Believe me, nothing would make me happier than to see radio represented at CES in a meaningful way.”

That said, satellite radio hasn’t been consistent with its CES presence, and automotive’s ties to CES have been sporadic, too.

Paul Jacobs reminds radio that CES is fundamentally a trade show. Thus, the underlying purpose of the event is to allow companies in the tech space to do business. “That’s why I think people are attracted to our tours,” he says. “As an industry, we have not been leveraging the opportunity.”

As Fred sees it, the last decade has seen collaboration and partnerships emerge as the No. 1 takeaway from CES, with companies of all shapes and sizes linking up. This includes

the CES 2023 introduction of an electric vehicle between SONY and Honda.

With the roundtable conversation winding down, there was curiosity about some of the more popular tour stops for the Jacobs Media duo at CES. “The sleeper is Eureka Park,” says Fred Jacobs of the Venetian’s Expo event, where thousands of bootstrap entrepreneurs, organized by nation, show interesting technology and inventions. “It’s really inspiring, and you can usually talk to the inventor,” he says. “That’s where we first saw Peloton. It’s home to really innovative things you will not see at the convention center.” For Paul Jacobs, it is a parking lot behind the West Hall that has been taken over by a flying-car company.

For CES 2024, the Jacobs brothers, as in past years, will arrive two days ahead of the show and walk the floor, getting an advanced mapping scheme in place, allowing them to make last-second shifts when it comes to their tours. “Sometimes even the CTA doesn’t know what their various exhibitors are even showing,” Fred Jacobs says. For his brother, the preview does come with some risk. “Last year we were thrown out of Samsung,” Paul says.

One place where radio and some broadcast TV industry leaders will be able to schmooze and share their learnings is at the annual invitation-only “Cocktails & Conversation” gathering, an event Jacobs Media is offering in partnership with Beasley Media Group, Xperi, Quu, vCreative, Benztown, Skyview Networks, *Radio Ink*, and the **Radio + Television Business Report**. What has typically been

the No. 1 topic of conversation at the casual affair?

Paul Jacobs notes, “What happens at the cocktail party is that people will already have been at CES for a day or two, and they will all have different experiences.” As such, someone at the reception will undoubtedly share an experience he didn’t get to see, or perhaps was wholly unaware of. “Everybody is bringing their individual experience to the party, and that’s where the electricity really starts happening,” Paul adds. Fred Jacobs notes that bringing experiences from CES back home brings a whole new perspective, and the “Cocktails & Conversation” reception aids in that facilitation of new ideas.

Meanwhile, Jacobs Media’s CES 2024 tour will be ending at LG — a 100,000-square-foot facility that offers a multimedia digital experience heavy on TV. Given NEXTGEN TV’s big year ahead, CES is a key venue for broadcast television leaders, too.

In closing, Fred Jacobs offers perhaps the best endorsement for why attending CES has more value than ever for broadcasters. “Overall, there’s an air of congeniality over the entire event that’s just hard to nail down, but there is so much optimism and innovation,” he says. “Everybody is very friendly, even though there are a lot of people and teeming crowds. Yet it is so easy to strike up a conversation. It is not like conventions we are used to going to.” For Paul, “It is impossible to go to CES and not emerge smarter by leaps and bounds. Anyone who says, ‘Eh, it was okay,’ did not go to CES.”

“The tour helps to put what we all do in a fascinating perspective. When you work in radio, you’re kind of in a bubble.” – Fred Jacobs