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with **Richard Jonker**

Vice President Marketing and Business Development, NETGEAR

*Seasoned Vice President with over 30 years of experience of global leadership, **RICHARD JONKER** of NETGEAR sat down with the editorial team of **AV-ICN Expo Magazine** to talk about the high-end technologies coming up in the AV market and how India is a great country to adapt to the rapidly evolving world. In his interview, he shares insights on the achievements of NETGEAR and the future possibilities that can shape the IT and AV segments.*

1. Can you provide insights into your responsibilities as Vice President of Marketing and Commercial Business Development for the Asia-Pacific region at NETGEAR?

I cover global commercial marketing for our commercial IT and AV business. I work on positioning, public relations, messaging and channel communications.

For the commercial business development part, I try to build relations with the manufacturers in the industry. With those relations, we build product integrations. The goal here, is to make network IP technology easier for the channel and for users.

While, black and white spoken, AV people don't know IT and IT people don't know AV, it's very well possible to teach AV professionals about relevant IT. They already have great skills understanding user experience. So, what we at NETGEAR try to do, is build integrations with manufacturers in the AV space for easy deployment.

Whether it is success in I.T. or A.V., I always compare it with being a great plumber. If you are rich and you try to build a large villa with a beautiful wash-room and shower with marble everywhere, it's necessary to select the right plumber. If you don't do that, and there's a problem with a pipe, you might have to break open the beautiful marble floor and put in a new bigger pipe. That's our message - Call the plumber first. We are the plumbers for I.T. and for AV-over-IP.

Therefore, my job is to ensure we have the absolute integrations and network design capabilities required by our customers. We achieve this while keeping up an agnostic approach.

I also assist the local sales teams with their relations, like what I do here in India, connecting with distributors and manufacturers, keeping up with expansion in the APAC region.

2. What are the important milestones in the history of NETGEAR?

I think we had a couple of milestones since NETGEAR's inception, which is a 28-year-old company. A very important milestone that I noticed in NETGEAR's history is that the people who started early with the brand are still with us, including myself, coming up to 18 years. Business is done by people and NETGEAR, also in India, completely relies on local relationships built by people.

Another milestone for NETGEAR was entering the AV world. Besides, the fastest growing business that NETGEAR has worldwide, is in India. In fact, NETGEAR's fastest growing technology is AV-over-IP and that is absolutely exploding in the Indian market today. USA is our number one market, the second largest market is

the region that's currently managed by **Marthesh Nagendra**, who was previously the Country Manager of India. He now oversees all the Asia business, which also includes Middle East, Africa, Australia, and Japan. We realize, talking about a milestone, that his team now covers more than half of the global population.

3. How does NETGEAR's AV switch line cater to the specific needs of commercial audiovisual installations, and what sets it apart from the competitors?

Pro AV is changing to AV-over-IP, which is based on network technology. That, by itself, is highly standardised. It consists of a bunch of IEEE open standards - but to deploy it is difficult. Understanding and addressing the network and AV-over-IP part of the technology is NETGEAR's specialism. We are the only company in the world that makes this easy, by providing a lot of automations. We work with over 300 manufacturers in this space. The settings and configuration tweaking we do with them in the background take years of investing in testing, engineering, and certifying. Once that's achieved, we add a preset profile that the users can see their favourite manufacturer in the user interface of the switch or engage site controller.

Another unique proposition of NETGEAR is that we include the design assistance for networks in the IT and AV space, along with the set-up, installation, and the post sales service - all-in-one.

There's no shortage of technical talent in this country, but it's crucial to train people on how to do commercial WiFi or AV-over-IP well. NETGEAR's aim is to expand expertise in the country. The integrators and reseller communities show gratitude and appreciate this initiative, and we can see that thousands of people engage with us at tradeshows or training events.

4. How does NETGEAR's portfolio of networking products, such as switches, routers and WiFi, address the evolving needs of small and medium-sized businesses?

We have two businesses - one is the

IT applications where we focus on commercial businesses and the education sector. That consists of wired networking and switching, and WiFi.

The speed of WiFi networks now exceeds the speed of a wired network. You know two years ago WiFi 6 was getting deployed in India and now we have moved to WiFi 7. We also recently announced a collaboration with **Samsung** for their WiFi-7 mobile devices. NETGEAR's WiFi access points can seamlessly be integrated for the best quality roaming and the highest possible speeds.

The other part of the business that we see grow in large and mid-market companies is audio-video-over-IP. This is not focused on very small companies, as they might only have one meeting room put together with a display, camera, microphone, a bunch of speakers, over USB.

However, for large companies, there's permanent installation in meeting rooms, and that is typically something where big American manufacturers focus on, in this country, like **Crestron, Shure, Kramer, Q-SYS**, and others. The 5,000 largest companies in India are deploying these solutions now in this huge booming economy.

The global market for Professional Audio & Video (ProAV) is growing to over 400 billion dollars in 5 years from now and we could say that India is more than just a small percent of that.

5. NETGEAR's CEO visited India with the vision to expand the Indian market. Could you elaborate on the expansion plans proposed for the Indian market after his visit? Please also elaborate on NETGEAR's plan of establishing manufacturing facilities in Bangalore, India. Could you shed some light on its establishment plans, if possible?

The expansion plan of NETGEAR in India is in action. When **CJ Prober**, our new CEO, arrived in the country, we were just starting to define the resources for today and tomorrow. I could say we now have the resources for today and we are busy recruiting the resources for tomorrow, in order to grow the business with the right resources.

We are bringing new products in the IT and AV sectors, and we can see the demand is growing exponentially. The only thing that holds us back is that scaling the teams in all the large cities around the country takes time.

We currently have a presence in the top

20 cities in India, where we could also further expand in the commercial audio-video and broadcast industries. Businesses are also moving to higher networking speeds and to AV-over-IP at the same time. As our broadcast business is not as big yet as the commercial AV business, but we want to catch up, it does require us to do double investments in these resources, focusing on Mumbai and Bangalore, as these cities are the hubs to go after big broadcast.

We see many CIO's investing in getting A.I. integrated in their companies. The network becomes less of a focal point in their budgets, which plays towards our more economic positioning as an enterprise wired and wireless networking player.

India has always been independent in its geopolitical relations across the world. While the world is in turmoil, India has its own course. In terms of economic growth, India is accelerating. These factors could be an opportunity for the country to take an extra leap. Fast forward 10-15 years from now, and this seems to be a very likely scenario, India could not just be producing technology for the Indian market but for any global market. I think that's a whole new perspective and Indian people have to get used to that. India as a leading tech manufacturing hub in the world!

We're not necessarily poised to have our production in every little core market in the world, there is economics in centralization. But if logistics is affordable and the products go in containers on boats, we can move centralized production to decentral, while still optimizing for quality and cost.

However, if the logistics' costs go up, then we start to produce closer to core markets and that's a balancing act. According to me, India has the right papers, the skilled workforce, and the willingness from the government to invest so this is a very unique opportunity for us to diversify.

6. Do you think there is a rise in demand for AV products and solutions in India? How is it impacting NETGEAR's sales strategies?

The rise in demand is an understatement. It's exploding. India is our fastest growing country in the world, even faster than Middle East or Southeast Asia and that's particularly driven by the need for conferencing AV solutions. This confirms two things - The fact that the technology in this country moves from AV generic technology

to AV-over-IP, and there's an economic factor where the Indian economy is still accelerating, accelerating investments.

It's the technology adoption and economic growth that drive business growth. In fact, we can see that bigger projects are coming in, including the Supreme Court of India and with us participating in such projects, integrators will learn to know us now. They're not shy anymore. They're confident because we help them in executing these kinds of installations efficiently.

7. Can you highlight any upcoming NETGEAR products or technologies that will address emerging trends like IoT, AI, or edge computing?

AI is still mostly a hype. But there are successes. If you look around in the commercial audio video industry, we have an element of self-learning or Machine Learning. For instance, in a room full of multiple conversations, some people have a very loud voice, and some have a very soft voice. This equity of experience needs to be created by technology. By installing microphones in the ceilings that pick up the voice, digital signal processing can amplify soft voices accordingly.

Another instance is, if multiple people speak in a conference and this conference is also on video, it is called a hybrid meeting. In the old scenario there would be one static camera, which is really boring to watch. But if you use multiple cameras and Machine Learning, speaker tracking is possible. The cameras would focus on the person that's talking and will change or zoom out if two people are having a conversation.

An Indian university would not want to spend 2,000-plus USD on one access point when they need more than 100. Therefore, we understand the demands of colleges and regional universities in India and we fulfil their need for affordable, fast-roaming, intelligent WiFi.

In the higher-education segment, if we can make AI integrated in WiFi affordable, it will be a massive hit and India is probably one of the greatest education systems in the world where companies can get highly skilled labour in millions.

8. What new can the customers expect under the 'SMB' division of NETGEAR?

There's the technology evolution where power-over-ethernet networks are everywhere. It's possible to just run inexpensive network cables everywhere and then have an amplifier-speaker, a WiFi access point, or camera at the end of that single cable. It's really easy and a lot more affordable. On the WiFi side, we rapidly move forward towards WiFi 7, ready to be deployed in India as soon as it gets signed off.

We also have lined up services to make it easier for Indian resellers and integrators. They walk around with big smiles because their teams sold a lot in the last couple of years since Covid-19, where they were able to rely on NETGEAR's presales engineering team. The rebound out of the pandemic in India has been massive, particularly thanks to companies that had to adapt to new networks and video conferencing massively.

9. How does NETGEAR's Insight Cloud Management platform simplify network management and monitoring for businesses, and what new features can users expect?

Insight Cloud Management is an evolving management platform. The advantage of doing things in the cloud, instead of in the metal boxes, is that we can keep on improving it. Therefore, it is iterative and at the same time simple for us. We listen to what the customers want.

If multiple customers say "this is what I want in a management cloud for networks", we just add that. In India specifically, we look at the needs of the sector like regional colleges and universities and prove to them that it works by often letting them dry run our products a couple of weeks next to what they already have, once they're ready for an upgrade.

We've automated configuration of radio signal strength and called it **Instant WiFi**. All that the users must do, is click that button – and a few minutes later it's done. All the radios will increase or decrease their radio power just to ensure that everything is even, reducing the complexity of optimizing roaming.

We've seen that one of our most successful markets for WiFi is India and we also learnt that the reliability and performance combined with ease of use is the winning recipe here.

10. Can you share details about NETGEAR's partnership with Crestron for audiovisual-over-Internet Protocol solutions and its benefits for end-users?

Crestron is not only one of the largest AV-over-IP manufacturers in the world. They lead the innovation and have a very longstanding position in the Indian professional AV market. NETGEAR shares a supply- and technology integration relation with Crestron. The partnership ensures that we team up together to deploy AV-over-IP and guarantee seamless integrations.

We guarantee a 100% positive outcome if **Crestron's DM-NVX and AirMedia** products are deployed with NETGEAR switches.

There are simply three things we need to do: train, train, and train. It's all about the knowledge-transfer to the Indian integrator community.

11. What is your vision for NETGEAR's future growth and development over the next five years?

There are a couple of things happening in the technology front, both in the IT and AV sectors. We can say it's the move to the cloud - because we can pretty much do everything in the cloud, instead of in the local equipment room, more efficiently and cheaper. Only if we don't have time to send data to the cloud and back, on-premises software-defined networking and edge networking will do the job. The IP network is everywhere in everything we do. We went from calling people on a landline phone, to video conferencing through Teams on smart phones. The network IP world has unlocked a lot of possibilities. We'll see more applications evolve and AI will be added everywhere.

NETGEAR is here to support the higher bandwidth and lower latency that users need, for 4K resolution in video conferencing, AI, or anything else. Currently, features like making the audio quality go up in Teams or Zoom are starting to get out there. That's done in software, which is heavily cloud-centric. The pandemic was actually a boost for this, and we expect this to evolve.

Network speeds will go up, especially with AI in picture and NETGEAR will help to shape. In 5 years from now, particularly the Indian market will have done a huge catch up with these technologies because it just goes twice as fast here as it goes in other countries.