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Snell and Wilcox adapt to changing markets with AmberFin

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Monday, April 7, I spoke with Simon Derry, Chief Executive of Snell and Wilcox spin-off, AmberFin. Launched this week, just in time for NAB, the new company signals a split in S&W between traditional hardware products like Alchemist and Kahuna, and software products like iCR. AmberFin's offering is based around the iCR software platform for mastering, QC and distribution of file-based content.

Simon told me how the company felt that the demands of the film and broadcast industries are changing to meet different ways that consumers digest content and the different business models that are emerging for the distribution of content.

AmberFin acknowledges that software-based products are selling into a much wider marketplace than the traditional broadcast products of S&W. As telcos and mobile operators move to become media organizations to support quad-play offerings, the old sales models for the broadcast sector must be adapted. Simon said that AmberFin's iCR would enable corporations to take control of what they have, and to turn it into what they need.

This shift from hardware to software is very apparent at NAB. I used to enjoy struggling through the melee on the Ampex booth to see the amazing new box that could do unbelievable things to images. All that picture manipulation can now be done with a laptop computer by a schoolchild. In many ways the fun has gone from the business. File-based production means we have all grown up and entered the world of enterprise corporations, where content is just another product to be sliced, diced, packaged and sold more efficiently to the public.

We may yearn for that old world of hardware, but the business has changed and S&W have adapted with AmberFin to meet the new challenges and good luck to them. For other vendors out there, just remember RCA and Ampex.