

Risks and Challenges for Management in Media Production

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ABSTRACT

In the age of digital media, the production of media products has become easier and faster, but the management of the media production process has become more complex than simpler. This paper will analysis what are the key points to management from media production perspective by the methods of literature research, qualitative analysis and case studies. Through the research, it is found that the challenges and risks faced by media organizations in production mainly come from three aspects. The key to solving the problems is to actively respond to the risks and challenges faced by production management, which is also a potential opportunity for the long-term development of media organizations.

Keywords: *Media Production, Media Management, Risks and Challenges*

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital media provides a new platform for media production, but media production is inseparable from media management, so that media organizations will face many risks and challenges in managing media production. This paper aims to outline the main challenges that media managers may face in media production management.

The current paper finds that the challenges and risks faced by media organizations in production mainly come from three aspects. Firstly, balancing the tension between creativity and commerce to facilitate the production of media is a significant challenge for managers. Secondly, as the manager of the media organization, it is necessary to coordinate the relationship between members of the organization to ensure that media workers can not only exert their individual creativity but also show collective wisdom in cooperation. Finally, since the production power of most media workers comes from intrinsic motivation, managers need to improve the self-motivation of media workers, so the workers can actively participate in media production, thereby improving the efficiency and quality of media production. Following the three main sections, there is a conclusion. The current paper uses literature research methods, qualitative analysis and case studies. Through the use of theoretical arguments from

the literature, findings of empirical research, and examples, the challenges and risks for management in media production emerge, while this will also help to find new development opportunities for media production.

2. THREE CHALLENGES IN MEDIA PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

For traditional media, the process by which professionals such as journalists produce news content is considered media production. However, the emergence of new media has blurred the boundaries between consumers and producers, so blogging, sharing information and shooting short videos on new media are also considered to be producing media products [1]. Therefore, media workers are increasingly used to referring to all participants in media production, which means that the concept of media production can further lead to the process of media workers producing media products through physical and mental labour.

Media management is an applied discipline that combines management and the particularity of media organization. It covers the whole process of media practice: input, production, consumption and service [2]. As an essential part of this, media production refers to how media organizations manage media workers and turn employees' labour into products and services for audience consumption.

Through analysis and research, three distinct crises and challenges in media production management tasks are pinpointed: How to balance the relationship between creativity and commerciality? How to coordinate the relationship between members of the organization? How to maximize the initiative of media workers?

2.1. Creativity Versus Commerce

The production of media is inseparable from the support of creativity, but media products ultimately need to flow in the market, allowing consumers to pay for them to bring profits to the media organization and invest in the next production. Banks noted that the tension between media workers' desire for creative independence and capitalist pursuit of interests is a contradiction that cannot be ignored in media production [3]. Media workers want to produce new and creative media products, while media companies prefer to choose profitable products. Sometimes these two desires can be fulfilled simultaneously, that is, creative products made by employees can be lucrative for the company. However, more often it is not easy to satisfy these two wishes at the same time, that is, companies only want to produce profitable products, while media workers want to produce more creative products even though these products may not be accepted by the market and cannot make money to the company. So the factors of creativity and business are always in conflict with each other in media work. Therefore, managers in the media industry are faced with the dilemma of finding a balance between creativity and marketing.

The unpredictability of the demand for media products is the main reason for this dilemma [4]. Neither media organizations nor media workers can be sure how consumers will evaluate a newly produced media product. If consumers can quickly embrace and love a new product, it is a win-win for both employees and the company. However, if only a few people embrace it, even if it meets the creative needs of media workers, it may not serve the purpose of making money for the company. This means that media production is also a high-risk business, and not all companies can take this high risk [4]. Developing a new media product takes a lot of capital investment, but there is no guarantee of how many consumers will pay for the new product and whether the company can break even.

The tension between maintaining the creativity of creative workers and managers' demands for predictable production is a unique and salient feature of media production [3]. But in this contradiction, creativity is always in a weak position [5]. Media workers are reluctant to produce the same products repeatedly, but enterprises are more concerned about how to keep the company running. Since most managers prefer business-oriented, employees are required to produce products according to the company's market demand,

limiting their creativity [4]. While this can ensure that the company is profitable, it is likely to hurt the creativity of employees. Therefore, managers need to think about balancing the relationship between creativity and profitability.

Edwin Catmull, the president of Pixar and Walt Disney Animation Studios, tried his hand at balancing creativity and business when making Disney animated films. He talked about movie series that are more likely to be successful at the box office, such as *Toy Story 3* or *Cars 2* [6]. But he pointed out that sequels could lead to creative bankruptcy because it always uses similar creative points. Catmull acknowledged that Disney's animated films tend to choose products with lower commercial risk, but he still reserves the opportunity for creating films with high commercial risk to diversify the market.

Meeting commerce needs does not mean giving up creativity while sticking to creative needs does not mean completely ignoring the market. Managers of media organizations find that only by giving employees the independence and freedom of production, can they have better opportunities to produce new products that meet capital needs, so companies and media workers can negotiate to achieve a balance [7]. In this case, managers can meet the needs of the company's profitability and give media workers creative space. A similar example is when Steven Spielberg was asked to direct *Jurassic Park* before filming *Schindler's List*. The company required Spielberg to finish the commercial film -- *Jurassic Park* before making *Schindler's List* that he wanted to make [8]. Because *Schindler's List* is more concerned with artistic value and the content is painful, the company is worried that it may not get a lot of box office. But with the box office support of *Jurassic Park*, the company does not have to worry about losing everything.

2.2. Individuality and Collectivity

The media industry relies more on individual and collective creativity, but the myth of individual genius remains mainstream in creative theory [9]. This can lead to an overemphasis on individual talent while ignoring collective creativity [10]. The creation of media products is the result of individual and collective efforts. Thus, media organizations are exposed to the challenge of how reconciling individual capabilities with collective intelligence.

Personal creativity has certain advantages, but it needs to be appropriately matched to work tasks to take advantage of this advantage. Bilton considers that individual creativity can be regarded as a positive force to promote media production, but the use of individual creativity needs to be restricted; otherwise, it may do more harm than good [10]. Wallace and Gruber emphasize the importance of outstanding creative

workers, but they also mention that it is not necessary to concentrate all creative pressure on one person, because the creative process results from the intersection and interaction between people [11]. If managers rely entirely on individuals for media production, the product may tend to be monolithic, but leveraging the capabilities of everyone in the collective can provide more impetus for media production. Therefore, all media workers need to be mobilized in the creative process, which requires managers to have the ability to match the correct tasks according to the abilities of individual employees [12].

Media production is a complex process, and managers need to assign the work content to the most suitable people in order to ensure the efficient and orderly operation of the entire process and the final quality of the product. Compared with individual ability, the advantage of collective intelligence is that it allows everyone to express their ideas, and the collision of thoughts among members in the process can generate more sparks, thereby promoting the production of media. In fact, the relationship between the individual and the collective is more complex. When team ideas and individual ideas are inconsistent, although team ideas are more cliché and traditional than individual ideas, individuals may submit to team ideas in order to avoid intense conflict. It means that individual ideas are in danger of being overwhelmed by collective ideas [13]. Therefore, managers cannot blindly emphasize collective ideas and need to allow individual ideas to be displayed.

Coordinating individual and collective relationships is also about ensuring product diversity and fairness within the organization. If managers over-amplify the ability of individuals, all ideas and products will revolve around a small group of people, or even wholly revolve around one person's ideas to produce media products [10]. Once this core member encounters a bottleneck, the entire company's ideas can become repetitive and monolithic, which is not conducive to the diversity of media production. Meanwhile, if all attention is focused on the core figure, other capable people may be overlooked. This is unfair to the people who also put in the labour and may even bury creative ideas. According to Prichard [13], managers must ensure that the organization remains heterogeneous that excels in production by constantly diversifying ideas. Therefore, managers need to ensure that individuals and collectivities can play a role in the media production process, which can not only avoid the simplification of products, but also protect media workers from unfair treatment.

British film directors, for instance, admit to having a teamwork relationship with the film crew, which includes the director's management of other staff. While the director needs to manage the entire filming process,

a sensible director would not try to reinforce the "boss and employee" feeling, as this would create a conflict with the film crew, which could mean the disappearance of more valuable ideas [14]. At the same time, the completion of a movie is inseparable from the cooperation of the director, actors, lighting engineers, editors, Etc., but movie posters generally only record the most influential directors and actors, and other creators can only appear in the curtain call. Furthermore, far more clips and productions occur during filming than the audience sees in a movie theatre [15]. These reflect the cooperation of individuals and groups and the possibility of individual existence being ignored.

2.3. Managing Self-Motivation

The production of media products is inseparable from the efforts of media workers. If managers can provide them with a creative working environment and combine individual and collective advantages, they can encourage media workers to actively participate in media production [16]. The production enthusiasm of media workers will help to improve the efficiency and quality of media production. Therefore, how to maximize the enthusiasm of employees has become a challenge that media managers need to tackle.

As the result of creative work, the production motivation of media products usually comes from the creators themselves, so the management of media workers often relies on a high degree of self-motivation [9, 17]. Producers need intrinsic motivation to stimulate their talents in order to complete the product better. Smith and McKinley believe that through the "light touch" of management, employees' self-motivation can be improved to provide sufficient motivation for production [9]. Therefore, managers need to improve the motivation of employees to serve the company better. Self-motivation for media workers is not necessarily all about wages or money. Media workers' intrinsic motivation tends to focus more on professional values (personal value) rather than organizational value (company value), when they are pursuing more work autonomy, higher social status, and the production of high-quality news works [18]. Smith and Mckinlay also mentioned that individuals, under self-motivation and management control, have a high degree of recognition for the products or creation processes they produce [9]. Therefore, on the basis of material incentives, managers should also strengthen the recognition of media workers' spirit and professional identity and increase the emotional connection between individuals and work. The dual satisfaction of material and spirituality will motivate media workers to be more active.

Similarly, DeFilippr, Grabher and Jones refer to the case of German theatre managers [19]. Theatre managers do audition for the show before deciding on roles. If an actor wants to get a certain role, he needs to

pass the audition through his efforts, which greatly increases the actor's dedication and thinking about the role. The passing selection also means getting approval from managers and other participants. Another case is the collaboration with Disney mentioned by Adam Watts in an interview [20]. He said it was cool to produce music for the same brand he loved in childhood memories, as Disney accompanied his childhood, while now he accompanies other people's childhoods as a Disney member. This deep emotional connection is something he cannot experience in other companies.

3. CONCLUSION

This paper discusses three challenges that managers may encounter in media production: balancing the relationship between creativity and commerciality; coordinating the relationship between members of the organization; improving the initiative of media workers.

Faced with the tension between creativity and commerce, managers need to provide creative space for media workers and ensure the regular operation of the company on the other hand. Meanwhile, the idea of media products can come from individuals or the crystallization of collective wisdom, which requires managers to coordinate conflicts between individuals and collectivity. Good products are inseparable from the active production of media workers, so managers need to mobilize the enthusiasm of media workers through recognition and emotion. Managers still face many challenges not addressed throughout the media production process. For example, changes in cultural policies may affect the production of management media; the impact of digital technology on media management, Ect., follow-up related research can be carried out from the above perspectives.

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