Managing in the Media
written by Peter Block (editor), W. Houseley, T. Nicholls, R. Southwell
reviewed by Bozena I. Mierzejewska, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Overview

This book offers an attempt to create comprehensive treatment of topics within media management. Authors: Peter Block – consultant at PriceWaterhouseCoopers and practitioner in media production, William Houseley lecturer at WestHerts College, Tom Nicolls – Senior lecturer at University of Lincolnshire and Humberside and Ron Southwell lecturer at WestHerts College present the reader with text that explains dynamics and practice of media management in audio-visual media sector.

Its nine chapters cover an introductory body of knowledge centred around the audio-visual sector of media industry. Despite its title, the book’s scope is limited to the basic issues in film and TV production and it is written largely from a UK perspective. Readers seeking to understand global media industries, competition, foundations of mass media policy and development of regulatory institutions reaching further than United Kingdom will need to look elsewhere. As will readers looking for lessons in managing old print media, new digital media or problems that may be facing media managers in the future. Readers will not need any solid foundation to understand it.

The book proceeds as follows:

Block et al. open with sections on media environment consisting of 6 chapters. These describe British audio-visual industry and Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) and set the area of the main interest of the book. They give insight into the TV and film production environment in UK. Lessons learned from the oldest PSB are worth looking at as well as the attempts of London to maintain its powerful position as the Hollywood of Europe.

Authors indicate that main drivers of change – government policy, technological advances and concentration of ownership in this sector has led to its actual shape and position. Discussing the concept of PSB the authors develop very simple treatment of state and nationality, and corresponding to this, theories of the media operating within state structures.

Despite the fact that British model is well presented, its comparison to “elsewhere” do not satisfy one’s curiosity. UK PSB is being compared only with Canadian and German models chosen as examples of pluralistic and social responsibility models respectively.

Chapters on British film policy and European Union media policy set foundations of regulatory environment within which the film sector is operating. Finally chapters on mass media theory and media and its cultural implications aim to fulfil the picture of media companies’ environment. Those two are the most “academic” chapters of this book. Selection of theories presented and discussed is predominantly done from a film studies perspective – useful for film producers and directors.

Second section (Part II) provides explanations of management theories that maybe applied to media industry. Among them reader will find behavioural approach to organisations, very basic strategic management tools and, what is surprising, principles of British regulatory system, British media law and media ethics. Starting from Maslow’s theory of needs the authors guide through group behaviour and creativity theories. The section on employment landscape presents useful information on various types of enterprises and employment possibilities within them. The chapter on strategic management reads like “a crash course in management for non managers”.

Last section (Part III) presents extensive, yet very practical explanation of the production process and management tools for the independent small audio-visual producer. Details into production risk and impact assessment, tendering, asset management and distribution accompanied by set of charts may prove to be of high practical value for independent newcomers to media and TV production business.

I am aware of no single work that provides comprehensive and readable treatment of problems in media management. The mix presented here is a nice attempt to create a useful book for instructors, corporate trainers, undergraduate students and potential media producers. Its website http://www.mediaops.net/ gives a book overview and promises tutor notes and updated list of further reading. Potentially a very interesting idea, however not much has changed on this website within last 6 months. Discussion group set up there is not very active either.

Conclusions

This book does an important service in providing a one-volume textbook for those teaching/studying media management. So far most educators have
been faced with using several sources for teaching materials or created their own “home made” textbooks. List of further reading at the end of every chapter, glossary of terms and abbreviations, list of useful sources and websites and 20th Century Media Time Line at the end adds to the book’s value. Instructors and practitioner will find this book a comprehensive resource for practical and detailed information.

Rating

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