

Content creation

Introduced by Gerry Anderson, ACMA Member, convened by Martin Dalglish, CEO, Convergent Media PBL with Rob Antulov, Director of Strategy, Fairfax and Michael Walsh, Group Strategy, News Ltd.



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Martin Dalglish suggested that we need to take a wider view of content, since the traditional broadcasting view can be narrow in the blurred non-linear convergent world. There have been many definitions of convergence, but what ever it is, we are in it now. He has arrived at a useful working definition which looks at convergence across device, content and network domains. Previously convergence has been within these domains, now it is across domains and this intersection is the hard middle-space, where a company can try to be all things to all people, or perhaps can try to achieve partnerships. These partnerships raise important questions about who to partner

with, using what model, and critically, who gets paid and how.

The new drivers of content consumption are immediacy, interactivity, ubiquity, and user self-selection and organisation

'The blockbuster locomotive is under pressure.'

of content. In a borderless world, consumers are taking control—things like BitTorrent downloads are breaking the windowing releases system. Users are generating their own content, while piracy remains a real problem. They are creating and publishing pod-casts. They are writing blogs that are emerging as a powerful voice,

but with no traditional editorial control. Wikipedia is a good example of user written and edited content.

Devices are no longer the barrier, content is critical. We are in a world of limitless and

ubiquitous storage. Broadband changes everything—it is changing household media consumption. Unlike dial-up it is used frequently, with multiple touch points in peoples' lives. Mobility is also critical, and the mobile phone is the fourth screen in peoples' lives, the other three being cinema, television and the computer.

Media abundance means there is a need for consumer control: users need to be able to order and navigate the content. From the creator side, there is a new content model where the media brand exists in a multi-platform environment. This is not linear and the various elements contribute to each other—web, magazine, mobile, instant messaging, blogs and personal spaces.

Rob Antulov noted that as a publisher in essentially one media, Fairfax faces particular challenges, maintaining strong content in its 'traditional' vehicles, but also engaging and growing in the so-called 'new' media. Following an entertaining outline of how

Fairfax sat as a multi-media brand in the eighties, he discussed how the company is seeking to be less reliant on traditional mass media strategies, using new platform extensions to improve reader choice.

Technology and new media are making content creation easy; finding audiences is more tricky and finding paying ones even more so. Media is fragmenting, but a compensation for content makers is that more media is being consumed than ever before. It is increasingly important to publish to where the audience is: devices, formats, time and location.

Panellists considered the future of print. They agreed that print still has a role: it can provide levels of insight and analysis, but not immediate news. Media fragments, but is resilient—the traditional pieces often retain and re-invent their relevance. There is utility in physical media like paper. Different media offer different experiences for things

like searching, browsing, and display.

Discussion about the role of subscription models for content distribution suggested various mixes work with different vehicles. Some vehicles can monetise free content with advertising and judicious transactional elements, such as archival material. Others can seek to make subscription model work based on substantial and unique content.

Michael Walsh outlined his vision of how technology is delivering media choices to consumers. He illustrated this with the iPod which he said is not just a better Walkman, but a Trojan horse for a whole new model of content consumption and distribution.

Media production is changing in key ways: It has traditionally been a factory, where producers decide what is to be made, creators make it at the cheapest cost, content is then distributed through defined channels and marketers try to convince consumers to buy it.



QUESTION TIME



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The new model is a network, chaotic and seemingly disorganised. Users are deciding on, making and distributing content. There is a seamless integration of the audience and the product. Consumer brand appropriation is seen as a healthy sign of involvement.

Traditional linear media is not dead, but the challenge is to work within the new consumer ecosystem. Access brands (like Fox) and content brands (like *The Simpsons* and *The OC*) operate across various channels potentially in bundles which define the dollar value. What matters is that you like the content and that the box will get it for you.

Multiplayer game space combines elements of linear content with community content and interaction models, and a transactional component—for example, game item trading such as virtual swords. Entire

virtual worlds are emerging, some connected to ATMs so people can cash in and out of the game. Some people are working entirely within these game spaces.

There was some debate on the relevance of nationality and localism and opportunities for Australian content in a global context. The keen interest of consumers in US shows is demonstrated over and over, lately by the use of broadband that is breaking down window release boundaries. Global audience and content creators can and should build content: lower costs of creation and distribution make it is feasible to create specialised content for relatively small audiences that can be viable on a global scale. This is an opportunity for content creators to develop new markets. However, there also remains a demand for local content. Community and relevance are very important forces in content development.