

MANAGEMENT ISSUES: TELEVISION ARCHIVES IN A TIME OF GREAT TECHNICAL CHANGES.

THE AIM

The main aim of my lecture is to report about my personal experiences in the field of management or mismanagement of an important department of any television company: The Film- and video library or the audiovisual archives or the collections of moving images – the audiovisual history of any nation.

As an introduction to the issue, let me begin by quoting a statement made by a former director of a television company in one of the Baltic countries: The average lifetime of the director of a television company is about three years only! I was not surprised getting the information from the director whose education was a degree in history.

He had understood that the most important work of the company was to produce programmes of high standard. The changes in new technology had to come whether he wanted the change or not.

THE COMPETITION

Departments within a television or a radio company, are working hard to get money for the work. It is a budget competition going on all the time. If you don't know the main aims for your company, you get a situation where each of you set up your own priorities. My work is more important than your work and I need more money. Directors whose experience in management are less than a platoon leader in the Boy Scout Association, enjoyed the fight between the different groups and left it to the department leaders to find a solution.

(Political leaders in German used the same method during the Second World War).

THE STRUGGLE

The audiovisual archives are not the winner of the money. Sorry. After the transmission of the programmes to all the people of the nation, the programmes, the tapes, the films, the sound reels, and so on are finally moved to the archives. The job is done and we go to the next job making new programmes and fighting for more money. What about the last station of the production line- the archive? Who is fighting for the standard and the storage of the visual history of your nation or at least part of the history?

What I am aiming at is to make a statement that too much energy is spent on too many individual aims forgetting the main aim of the company. Even the head of the archive has to take part in the fight like all the others. The working condition mentioned is not to be recommended because all should focus on the same aim decided by the board of the company.

STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Stability of the management of the television company is a must for a long term development and planning of the work. The directors must get the right to make mistakes. To fire the leaders of any department within the company due to mistakes made, is a mistake.

LACK OF RECOGNITION

During my four years as President for The International Federation of Television Archives (FIAT/IFTA) and later on as General Secretary for two years, I made personal contacts with

Heads of Television archives worldwide. I still recall the main complain about the working conditions for the archives addressed to me personally: The lack of professional recognition of the management within the television company. The work we do is of no importance to those who are responsible for setting up annual budgets and making future planning. No. Even if this negative attitude to the work among media archivists and media librarians is history to many companies due to the new change in technology and policy of digitalization of the transmitted audiovisual collections, you still meet Heads of Televisions who approach you with the same negative attitude: No official recognition yet.

RETIRED LIBRARIANS- SENIOR WORKERS

Reports made in Norway lately about getting more work done by seniors who have taken an early pension, are negative. Efforts to get assistance from retired workers are met with a negative approach due to lack of an official and positive recognition made by the management of the company. You have to make people happy by making official statements contenting the importance of the work. Some have tried to move people from one department to the archives as a kind of final solution: Take it or leave the company. An encouraging and stimulating policy doomed to fail. The policy of getting a job in the archives with no reference to experience or education in the field of audiovisual archives, is doomed to fail and represent a not stimulating policy for those have chosen the work in the archives or for those who by force have to move to any archive to remain working for the company. No.

A NEW AND POSITIVE APPROACH TO MAKE THE LIFE BETTER FOR TELEVISION ARCHIVES, COLLECTIONS, BANKS AND LIBRARIES.

Let us take a look at some books that might be of interest for those of who intends to make actions for a radical change in management policy.



The selection of the four books is made due to the fact that they all have one common goal: To highlight the ability in the human resources to make changes and progress in different fields.

The Swedish filmmaker, Ingmar Bergman, the Swedish businessman, Jan Carlzon, the American professor, Douglas McGregor and the Danish author Karin Møller Rigas do all believe that the work can be done better if the official policy of the company is based on a positive attitude to the workers all over. Television archives or banks do not differ much from any other business.

TRUST AND RECOGNITION – RECOGNITION AND TRUST Nordea Bank of Oslo, Norway

The book : “ Du er noget . Stærke fundament skaber dygtige medarbejdere “ (Solid grounds are making qualified workers), written by Karin Møller Rigas was presented to me some weeks ago by a representative of the management of a bank in Oslo, Nordea Bank. I had involved myself in a private debate about issues of recruitment of new people in generally presenting my negative opinions about the vast of human resources among pensioners in Norway.

My opinion is that we must make use of knowledge gained during a lifetime in business like: Education, content description of television and radio programmes, libraries and also working with children in kindergartens just to mention some professions. You should have the right to

make money without any reduction of your pension. It is a political issue and a controversial issue but an important issue for the future standard of any nation. So far, my own opinions.

If you ask professional consultants in the business of administration for advice in how to make your work better and more efficient, the answers might be confusing for you. It all depends on what you want to archive making changes. My presentation is an attempt to present some thoughts that might be possible to test in your organisation.

Let me put this way: I believe in a democratic administration where the decisions are delegated to leaders working at the lowest level of your organisation.

All four books presented do advocate for this policy of making future or day to day decisions.

What about the new technology within television, movie- and radio business called digitalization? While waiting for the new and promising change in technology what are you doing with the original products stored in your storage after transmission? Is there any contradiction between the introduction of new technology and a positive approach to the work of the radio and television corporations? My answer is: No. Trust and recognition are words to be highlighted. The policy of the management working to make a radical change of the television bank and the production and the transmission of the programmes must not forget to trust people and pay attention to the work done. You have to know those with whom you are working.

MEDIA TECHNOLOGY-OLD TAPES AND FILMS-MANAGEMENT POLICY

When a corporation wants to make an active use of new technology often presented to the Directors of the department for technology at the international conferences in Las Vegas, USA, the management is facing an administration problem: How to make the employers supporters of the change? In some cases you do not have any choice at all because the company which made the machines is not making the products any more. 2” tapes might live for generations if you treat the tapes is a correct way. The viewing machines are the problem because you will not find any more in the marked. Sorry. Anyway, a close contact with the media librarians working for you day by day are the main task for the head of the archive. Even if the broadcasting corporation set up task forces to deal with all the introduction of new machines and a new system for cataloguing of the sound and the photos and the moving images, you have to know who is able to adopt himself to changes. It is important to know the qualifications of every media librarian working for you. Nordea Bank has given the task to professional bank employers who know the bank and the official policy of the bank. But the contact must not be limited a one or two so-called personal business talks during the year. I do not believe in formal business talks between the head of the archive and the workers only once a year: A meeting for mutual admiration and respect only. No. The contact with the workers has be a part of the daily job of the head of the archive. The head of the archive must spend a lot of time making evaluations of the quality of the workers to avoid letting somebody begin with tasks too complicated for them. Those who are not qualified for the new tasks must get a new education paid by the company. The policy of firing people is out of date.

DON'T WORRY – BE HAPPY – RECOGNITION AND PARTIES –HAVE FUN

A policy of including

It is important to tell the media librarians if the work is done in a good way. But you have to be honest about the information you give. I want recognition for work done by me. It is more important to continue telling the workers what is good about the work than to focus on the

negative results. We have to learn from professional sportsmen who make good results. Positive results made by the librarians and the staff of the library have to be recognized. Why not celebrate the results by setting up a party for all who did the work? Group solidarity is not done by a weekend seminar or a local conference. We did the work together and we did it well.

HOW TO PREVENT THE ACTIVE POLICY OF FIRING THE DIRECTORS OF THE BROADCASTING COMPANIES?

Too many directors have been fired in different broadcasting companies in the Baltic countries during the last ten years. I have been active setting up seminars and conferences worldwide. It is easy to work if you know that the director of the company is still in charge when you give your opening speech. Let the directors get permission to make mistakes. We all do it. Without making mistakes, no progress in the business. But you have to learn from the mistake. My advice to the new directors and leaders of departments within the broadcasting companies is:

- Make the workers believe that they all are important for the production
- The policy of including all the business is a must. We need you all.
- Make a radical reduction of your own salary and no reduction of the salary of the workers.
- A close contact with the workers is a must to make an effective use of the qualifications of all workers at different levels of the company.
- Stop firing heads of departments due to mistakes.
- No more personal headlines in the newspapers about yourself. You spend your limited time talking with your staff and listening to the workers at all levels.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Trust and recognition between the management and the workers are a must. The leaders must get a better daily contact with those who are working in the archive. Education to face new changes is also a must. New technology will come to the archive all the time whether you like it or not. To make an active reuse of the programmes stored in the archive you have to make sure that correct information is catalogued. A car is not a car but a special car.

What about my statement of the reduction of the salary of the director of the company? Is the action a good signal to all of you who are working to make a product and who has the courage to do so? It has been done. The Director of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), Hans-Tore Bjerkaas did it. A bold decision made by a director who does not see any advantage for himself being interviewed weekly about his dog, his house or his family. No. It is important to work close with leaders working on different levels of the corporation to make changes within the company without headlines in the newspapers.

What about the old tapes, the films, sound reels? My answer is: Keep the original tapes as long as you can after having digitalized the tapes as safety copies and forward all the tapes to the national archive for eternal storage. See to it that the machines for viewing the tapes are moved to the national archive in due time. Don't forget to send a copy of your catalogue too.

Finally: Don't worry – be happy and take care of all who are working in the archive. Good luck and thank you for your attention.

Best regards
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