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# Herding the cats:

**How to lead journalists in the digital age**

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## **1. Introduction: Creative people are high maintenance**

“Remember that an editor does not lead this department even if it appears so. We, the writers, do.”

That was the memorable welcome given to me, a newly appointed editor at the Helsingin Sanomat Sunday features department, by an experienced journalist in 2005. It was a warning that left me a bit shaken and stirred which I hopefully managed to conceal at the time.

However, it offered a useful insight into the thinking shared by some feature writers at Finland’s leading newspaper: we are the cream of the crop, the best of the best. Editors may come and go, but we the writers are far more important to the content. And the content is why people subscribe to newspapers.

This attitude, however obnoxious it sounds, is partly true. Leading creative people is not about the leader, it is about bringing out the best in others. However, this is not achieved by letting journalists lead themselves, as hinted by the experienced writer. Quite the contrary, many journalists would abhor the idea of having to take on their boss’ responsibilities from bureaucracy and budgets to dealing with managing editors, lawyers, freelancers, consultants and random calls.

What they want is to concentrate on their own craft. Creative people need the creative work itself, as the documentary editor Pentti Väliähdet from The Finnish Broadcasting Company Yleisradio said when interviewed for this research.

How then, should creative journalists be led?

This is the core question of this research. It is especially relevant during a time of digital revolution and economical difficulties caused by the decline in newspaper circulation and continued diversification of television audiences.

In the past, journalists had the luxury of concentrating on the product – a story, an article – without having to worry too much about its distribution afterwards. Digitalization and shrinking audiences have changed this: now journalists try to engage their audience by crowdsourcing ideas for stories, sharing their work in the social media and accepting instant feedback. A story is no longer the end of a discussion, but the beginning, as the Economist digital editor Tom Standage put it.

This presents new challenges to the editors. Not only do they have to lead a group of talented people not too willing to be led, but push them – and themselves – out of their old comfort zones. No wonder one editor compared leading journalists to herding cats, giving this research its title.

The research concentrates on how to lead journalists in newspapers, public broadcasting companies and magazines in both Finland and Britain. It attempts to explain current changes in the media

market from the editors' viewpoint, describe the challenges of leading creative journalists at the time of rapid digitalization and financial uncertainty, and provide practical advice to editors in the new environment.

This is done through interviewing 15 Finnish and 11 British editors with experience in leading creative personnel in their respective media. Their opinions are supplemented by interviews with academics and media consultants dealing with digital transition.

The focus of the research is on editors leading features departments: in other words, departments producing long format narratives or in-depth analysis. The reason for this emphasis is that most features content derives from free-flowing ideas about what journalists and editors consider interesting and relevant each day. This freedom makes their work stand out from hectic work in a newsroom, which can also be creative but whose agenda is more dictated by daily events.

This creative material is more important than ever before because in the digital age the hierarchy between audiences and media companies have flattened. Audiences search for and click on content distinct and relevant to them, not any content published by a certain institution. The collective universe of flow channels or newspapers has been replaced by niche publications, individual offers and user generated content, where users are demanding customers rather than a loyal congregation and always look for a new, exciting content.<sup>1</sup> Therefore all news publications try to offer distinct content that sets them apart from others.

Since creative content is crucial for the future of journalism, knowing how to lead creative people is crucial as well.

Earlier studies about leadership and creative people have dealt with business in general. However, leading journalists deserves a research of its own: in journalism, creativity is not only the means, but also the end. Each product, each story, is supposed to be unique.

This emphasis on creative content in recent years is seen to have tipped the traditional balance of power between media leadership and creative journalists to the side of the 'creatives'. Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones define creative people as "individuals who make disproportionate contribution to what the organization does".<sup>2</sup> These creative people are more valuable to the success of an organization than their leaders, even more valuable than the CEO – or editor in-chief – nowadays. The reason for this is that creativity, defined as the generation of new ideas and innovations, has become the key goal of many organizations.<sup>3</sup> These goals cannot be achieved by a top-down

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<sup>1</sup> Nissen, *Organizational Cultures and Structures in public media management*, The Danish Management Academy conference, Copenhagen, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Goffee and Jones, *Clever – Leading your smartest and most creative people*, Boston, Harvard Business School Press, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Mumford et al., *Leading creative people: Orchestrating expertise and relationships*, The Leadership Quarterly, 2002.

hierarchical model; on the contrary, the organizations have become dependent on the creativity of their individual employees to the extent that the challenge to their leaders is to make the organization valuable to the creative people, not vice versa.

Obviously, this has meant a major change in old attitudes. Leaders are no longer the ones leading the charge up the mountain, but the ones identifying the people who can reach the summit while they pace at the base camp waiting for the good news.<sup>4</sup>

The former head of the Danish broadcasting company Christian Nissen calls this internal tension within media organizations a “battle of two cultures”. The professionalization of top management in media companies has brought in managers who have no experience in journalism. These managers realize that they need a creative culture, but want to keep it on a short leash. As a result, the creative personnel of the media houses feel that they are tied down by bureaucratic control mechanisms forcing their work into a suffocating conformity.<sup>5</sup>

However, Nissen argues that the individualization of media usage has led to a more fragmented media market, which in turn leads to a more loosely structured organization and the decentralization of management. Decentralized power structure requires top managers to exchange the “hardware” of rules for the “software” of common missions – in other words, motivational leadership. This is a necessary change to upgrade media’s innovative capabilities.

What is this motivational leadership like in practice?

Christian Nissen gives two examples: the Spice girls and the imperial German army. The Spice girls sing “Tell me what you want / what you really really want”. Nissen refers to the British academic Stephen Bungay who argues that the leaders of creative people should ask this of their employees, provide them with resources – and shut up. In other words: leaders should set creative people broad goals and necessary constraints, but not go into detail about how the goals are to be reached.

According to Nissen, this Spice girl principle was successfully put into practice by the imperial German army in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The army had a decentralized power structure in which troops at the front were not guided by specific commands from the officers, but were encouraged to take the initiative themselves. This resulted in Germans beating Nissen’s countrymen, the Danes, in 1864. In line with Nissen’s arguments, the present research will investigate the tactics shared by media professionals in order to provide useful advice for anyone in a media leadership position wondering how to lead people more talented than himself or herself.

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<sup>4</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Nissen, *ibid.*

## **2. Background: Features journalism in the digital age**

This research is about leading creative people who are more important than ever before to media organizations. They produce the creative content that is supposed to guarantee the future of the media organization in the digital age.

What, then, is creative content?

It is something distinct, unique and special that sets it apart from other content. It is not easily repeatable or copied. It escapes definition in a way that it has no set formula that applied to something else would automatically turn that content creative.

Mumford and his co-authors characterize creative work as tasks involving “complex, ill-defined problems” where performance requires “the generation of novel, useful solutions”. It can be expected to be time consuming and involve “uncertainty and risk”.<sup>6</sup>

In the real world, creative content is something that audiences should find so unique and valuable that they are willing to search for it, return to it and pay for it.

In a media publication, this kind of distinctive content takes many forms. It may be good writing, it may be valuable information, commentary or analysis, it may be unique access or best sources.

However, distinctive content is not something that is easily available in many alternative sources for free. Therefore, it is not general news.

For example, in the Times columnists like Caitlin Moran drive new subscriptions for the paper. Her unique voice is the kind of content whose worth to her publication can now be financially measured.

Drawing a line between news and non-news is artificial, even impossible. Yet, for simplicity’s sake this research defines as features content the very different forms of narrative and commentary journalism that bring added value to a publication.

The research focuses on the feature editors of newspapers and broadcasting companies because their work is less dictated by the daily news agenda and more by creative ideas and innovations about what is considered interesting and relevant each day. Obviously, work at a news desk can be creative as well, but traditionally features content is highly valued among journalists themselves.

Features departments are on the top of the internal food chain, in other words places where many of the best journalists end up when they have made their mark elsewhere. Thus, they should provide the kind of distinct content that would differentiate the publication from others, add value to it and guarantee its financial future.

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<sup>6</sup> Mumford et al., *ibid.*

How has the digital age changed feature editors' work and the content they provide? How do they see the future of feature? And what are the paywall options that their publications have chosen as far as charging for their content is concerned?

Digitalization and economic difficulties have so far had a deeper impact on the British media than the Finnish media. Therefore this chapter concentrates on the views of British features editors from The Financial Times, The Guardian, The BBC and The Times. The Economist and its digital editor represent news magazines.

Each of these publications has strong news coverage but also a lot of value added material. Each has also chosen a different paywall strategy with a varying degree of success.

## **2.1 The Financial Times**

The Financial Times is in a unique position among the struggling British newspapers: it is charging for its online content and doing financially well. In May 2012, the FT.com managing director Rob Grimshaw predicted that the Financial Times could have more digital subscribers than it sells print copies by the end of 2012. The FT has 270,000 online subscribers, almost as high as its 310,000 print copy circulation.

In the time of fluctuating advertising revenue, the FT's future looks bright: its digital subscription revenue is on course to overtake its advertising income later in 2012.

Why has the FT succeeded in what others have not? There are two reasons: its business news coverage is stronger than that of its rivals, and secondly, this information is considered essential by the FT's core audience, who are relatively wealthy subscribers of median age around 50 years.

Thus, FT Weekend and FT Weekend Magazine are not the content that primarily sells the newspaper, as the FT Weekend editor Caroline Daniel and FT Magazine editor Sue Matthias admit. Daniel calls FT Weekend features content "a hidden jewel" in the paper, while Matthias talks about "an intelligent treat".

Strategically FT weekend features material is treated differently from the news. Whereas the FT news content is behind the paywall, the Magazine is available online for free.

"It is enormously beneficial for me to have the magazine outside the paywall, because we are trying to reach new audiences with it", Matthias says.

According to Matthias, the readership breakdown of the FT Weekend is that a whopping 70 percent of weekend readers don't read the Monday to Friday FT. Whereas the FT weekly newspaper is sold

mostly by subscription, the FT Weekend Magazine is sold on newsstands where it is competing against other magazines.

“If an audience comes to us (the Weekend magazine) online, they probably are not subscribers to the FT”, Matthias explains.

“If our content was behind the paywall, we would be just sitting there and our internet traffic would completely plummet. But if it is outside the paywall, we can market ourselves online.”

FT features content is still very much print first. The Weekend Magazine does not yet have its own app, and the content is still published online in a similar form to the print magazine.

“I do not normally judge the success of weekend FT by how well we do online”, Daniel says.

“It’s still about the paper, the look and feel of the actual product. So it’s great if something does well online but I am more interested in how many copies we sell during the weekend.”

That figure is not published, but in 2011 the print magazine sold so many ads that the numbers of pages had to be increased. Since the money has been in print, an aggressive online strategy has not been a top priority. However, overall FT readership online goes down in the weekend so more marketing of the weekend material would be in order.

Sue Matthias expects the FT to put its features material behind the paywall in the future.

“The FT charges for the rest of its content. It is anomalous that there are areas where you don’t charge. If we say it’s a premium product, people should be paying for it online as they do off line.”

According to Matthias, the readership for long format features is high on iPad on the weekend.

People are using their iPad for longer reads and for things they want to save. “In that context charging for features makes sense,” she says.

## **2.2 The Times**

In June 2010, the old and respectable Times newspaper made a bold move and put up a paywall for all its online content. Thus, its material cannot be shared or commented on in the social media. This led to the Times losing 90 percent of its online readership in a few weeks.

Other newspapers have been following the Times’ experiment closely, and so far the results of the tight paywall in the English speaking world with many competitors are not encouraging. The Times has a print circulation of 397,000 copies and around 130,000 subscribers to its digital content.

The paper is thought to be losing about £50 million a year.

The T2, The Times’ features publication, has been forced to reduce its number of pages from 28 in 2007 to 20 in 2012. The number of reporters has also been going down.

“I think it is really a shame that other newspapers have not followed us (and put up a paywall)”, says Times 2 editor Emma Tucker. “Someone had to do something about the situation. You cannot have content for nothing.”

The picture is not completely bleak, Tucker emphasises. In June 2012, there were just over 100,000 subscribers to the Times iPad app, and their high earnings (average household income over £100,000 a year) make them an appealing audience for advertisers.

According to Tucker, hard times have changed the content that T2 provides. Earlier, there was room for more foreign features and gritty social issues.

“Our features are often in the top ten (of the most read online stories each day). Then they tend to be about sex, about something contentious, like male-female relationships or anything about celebrities. They have to be somehow original or controversial or sexy”, Tucker says.

Tucker estimates that there will always be demand for fashion, “like the best ten dressed for Christmas”, food and drink, lifestyle, fashion – all specialist areas. What gets kicked out first due to lack of space are the general features, “like reportage on childcare in Sweden”.

“I think the market will become much more specialized. The New Yorker or the Atlantic will be places for great features, and newspapers will become more responsive.”

However, the Times internal research shows that the way people read the paper on the iPad and on the web varies greatly. On the web readers tend to “snack”, spending only minutes or seconds on a story. On the iPad they spend longer and big, crunchy features have been a winner in this regard. Despite its long tradition and great writing, the problem that the Times faces with its paywall may be its lack of distinctiveness. If you can read the news from the BBC or the Guardian for free, why would you want to pay for them in the Times? Politically The Times is also in the middle: it is not as right wing as the Telegraph, not as left wing as the Guardian, and in the digital age occupying the middle ground may not be an advantage.

“In asking people to pay a lot of money I think columnists with individual voices are really important”, Tucker says. Caitlin Moran’s columns, for example, drive the online subscriptions.

“It may be that in the future journalists have to market themselves as sort of caitlinmoran.com, and then they are hired by newspapers and websites to write for them”, Tucker speculates.

## **2.3 The Guardian**

The Guardian has the most ambitious digital strategy of all British newspapers. “Digital first” means that all material is planned for online first, print second. With a print circulation of about

210,000 copies but a massive online readership of 39 million unique browsers worldwide, The Guardian has become a global voice of the liberal left.

However, as far as charging for content is concerned, the Guardian has made an opposite decision to the Times: all its content online is free. Only the Guardian iPad app has a fee.

The Guardian has come up with innovative ways of building a paying customer base around reader engagement. It sells trips, writing workshops and even clothes, and has its own book club and a dating site called Guardian Soulmates. The Guardian's Facebook app, launched in September 2011, was downloaded by eight million people in six months, yet brought in only a few hundred thousand pounds.

The total digital revenue is about £50 million a year, but it is not enough to cover the losses caused by declining print advertising and circulation. The Guardian is losing annually around £40 million. However, it is funded by the Scott Trust that does not actively seek profit.

Whereas news, comment and culture are already doing well in the digital form, the Guardian long reads – features and magazine content – haven't yet found their final form online. The head of guardian.co.uk Georgina Henry is working to change that.

"I expect the print will still be the main budgetary holder for some time, but we need to do much more to make sure features are commissioned with digital in mind", Henry says.

That means thinking more internationally, not just thinking what may be of interest in the UK, Henry says. Secondly, it's about always thinking beyond text: what is the audio, what is the video. And thirdly, it's about community. How will the community engage with the text and what community actions does the Guardian wish to have with the text?

"Those three things mean a profound change before you get to what they look like", Henry says.

The main challenge in digital transition for long reads is the lack of hierarchy in the net. Almost all the Guardian pieces look the same, whether you're reading a 4,000 word interview on the Guardian magazine or a 300 word blog.

"It is confusing to the reader: Most of them come through the search and may have never seen us in print. What is that user's experience when they land on that page? Should we somehow signify that this is really a huge read or a more visual read?" Henry asks.

Now the Guardian site has something called "the long good read" where the staff posts a couple of long (over 3,000 word) articles a day so the interested readers scrolling through news may save them on iPad or Kindle for later. According to Henry, the long reads have a long tail: they are doing extremely well online and on Facebook even a long time after their publication.

The Guardian is also crowdsourcing its features, for example by asking readers to contribute their own memories of the 9/11 and the 2005 London attacks.

Henry stresses that despite The Guardian's digital first strategy, the print product cannot be forgotten. For example, the weekly interview on Mondays in the Guardian g2 supplement has to fill three pages. If it was published just online, the questions could be community sourced, there could be a video – but the g2 in print still brings in a lot of advertising revenue that the digital version would not necessarily do.

Therefore, Henry expects that most of the long format journalism will not be commissioned digital first for some time. “In order to pay for that, it's still in print.”

What about the rest of the newspaper? Despite the huge costs associated with printing, the digital first publication needs to be published also in print for two main reasons, explains Henry. First, there is real revenue coming in through print sales and advertising, because the Guardian knows a lot about its readers. Secondly, public debate in the UK requires a newspaper to still have a strong print platform.

“It's not really an option to get rid of print yet even if we wanted to”, Henry says. “So we just have to keep trying things, preserve the journalistic work and cut the costs, like everyone else.”

## **2.4 The BBC**

The BBC's public broadcasting content is financed by a licence fee. The fee has to be paid by all British households watching television and is set at £145.50p a year until 2017.

The fee is not inflation linked and that is why the BBC – with its staff of 19,995 in 2011 – is looking into ways of spending 20 percent less by 2017 to counter the effects of inflation. However, the licence fee gives the BBC the kind of security and ability for long term planning that print media lacks.

The digital age has flattened some of the internal hierarchies and competition within the BBC, says the features editor Giles Wilson of the BBC News website.

“For example the staff of the Panorama program is eager to get their journalism out on as many platforms as they can and would not worry whether it's on their website. So the thinking is much more multi-platform now.”

Wilson is in charge of two web magazines published on the BBC website. The features published there are based on daily news, but Wilson strives for an original angle or originality in storytelling to add value to the news content. He tries to include audio or video, but does not want the text to be dependent on the visual elements. Therefore, the quality of the text comes first.

The features on the BBC News website vary from 500 to 3,500 words (the 5,000 word ones proved to be too long for the audience). They get regularly about 500,000 viewers on weekdays and the BBC online magazine publishing the features has about 2.4 million readers a week.

During weekends the readership goes down. Peak time is weekdays at lunch when feature readership is higher than news readership. “We think people just like to sit with their lunch and read”, Wilson says. According to him, the BBC audience clearly appreciates long format features. “For a news story you might get 3, 4, or 5 approving tweets, but for features, you get dozens. Readers want to share the stories with their friends. We also find that average page time for our features is twice the time spent on reading news pieces.”

Not surprisingly, feature readership on mobile is lower than news readership on mobile. However, tablet has the scope to change consumption pattern and to give the user the possibility of saving of long reads, Wilson says. “If people are going to sit back and take time in reading again, then that puts the emphasis back on the quality of storytelling to make it as satisfying as possible.”

Compared to ten years ago, Wilson thinks that the value of features content online is recognized much better now. “It took us a long time to understand that you don’t need to change the content online all the time. These (features) are good enough to be here all day.”

“And the content is just much more social. Facebook gives you the opportunity to use people’s desire to show to their friends what they are reading; they position themselves by it.”

Wilson does not see that features content would be threatened by the savings needed in the BBC. “If you calculate that someone is writing ten news stories a day and someone one a day, then it (producing features) is expensive. But then that one story could be 20 times better than the other one”, he says.

The BBC also sells its features to international markets, and BBC material on its international-facing websites can include advertising, unlike in the U.K.

“As our engagement figures are the key aspect advertisers are interested in, and given the way that audiences appreciate our content and engage with it, the site becomes more valuable to advertisers than if the audience just read news.”

## **2.5 The Economist**

The Economist has been incredibly successful even during the financial crisis: its circulation (1.5 million copies worldwide and 200,000 readers in the UK) has been going up since the measuring began and is currently increasing at the pace of about 3 percent a year.

Whereas average European papers get about half of their revenue from advertising and half from subscriptions, the Economist gets only 30 percent from advertising and is profitable by subscriptions alone. The magazine boasts over 100,000 digital subscribers, most of whom use the iPad app rather than the web.

The Economist's success is hard to replicate because it is the only global weekly magazine read by an international elite whose ranks are growing at the same time as national newspaper audiences are shrinking. However, some of the lessons learnt by the Economist may help other publications.

First, just like the Financial Times, the Economist offers distinct content for its subscribers.

"Once you have finished the magazine, you should have the feeling of being informed about the most important events of the week in the world", says the Economist digital editor Tom Standage.

The 'finishability' of the magazine – also on iPad – is crucial. Therefore no more pages are added to the magazine. If subscribers don't have time to finish the magazine, they feel guilty and cancel their subscription, Standage believes.

Second, the Economist provides a voice from God: It does not so much break news as provide distinct analysis and commentary about what the news means and what readers should think about it.

This authoritarian approach was first seen as a potential problem for the Economist in the social media where institutions are not valued as before; instead, it turned out to be an advantage.

"The more noise there is, the more need there is for a filter. In the time of excessive information, a publication that is telling you what to think is becoming more, not less popular", Standage says.

Being among the most trusted filters means that you can become a huge brand.

"By sharing the Economist stories on Facebook or Twitter you tell your friends that you are the kind of person who reads the Economist."

According to Standage, the Economist subscribers become a part of a global community of "cleverest people in the world" that benefit from each other's opinions. The power of the brand is demonstrated by the fact that the Economist articles are shared more in the social media by its subscribers than the New York Times articles by its subscribers.

The Economist has adopted a between-model of paywalls: readers can access five stories a week for free, and if they register, they get ten stories a week for free.

"This is a great model because it allows a lot of variation: for example, all stories can be free during the elections."

Standage calls the Times or the Telegraph paywall "idiotic" because it excludes a publication from online conversations and social media sharing. He thinks it also diminishes access to interviewees:

if actor George Clooney gives one interview about his new film to UK newspapers, he won't give it to one that puts the interview behind a paywall.

Standage argues that the Economist also benefits from the fact that in the digital age the idea of balanced reporting has become old fashioned. News is more partisan, and a reporter cannot and should not give equal space to opposite views in every article.

“The Economist believes that transparency is the new objectivity: you tell your readers where you come from and they can either agree or disagree with you. We are open about our bias and often write ‘as a liberal newspaper, we think...’ Not deciding who is right is a false badge of objectivity.”

Standage sees the current situation as a return to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century community coffee shop where publication is the beginning, not the end of the conversation. Everyone participates in the news making and there is lots of competing information. This is bad only for “incompetent newspapers”.

“Unfortunately the world does not owe journalists their living. Thus they have to add value in the conversation or change jobs.”

## 2.6 Summary

Print circulation in all British newspapers is declining. Digital advertising revenue does not yet substitute for the losses of print advertising revenue. Thus, the best positioned publications are those which are able to make real money from digital subscriptions, like the Financial Times or the Economist.

However, charging for content requires that readers find it distinct and essential. In a competitive English speaking market a traditionally strong quality newspaper, like the Times, may find itself marginalized for being too general for readers to be willing to pay for it. News is available from other sources for free, and the Times exclusive news and features content is perhaps not strong enough to lure paying subscribers to the extent that the Times' losses would be significantly reduced in the future.

The Economist has shown that if the quality is distinct enough, even the conventional wisdom of old authorities crumbling in the digital environment does not apply. You can imitate the voice of God from above, like the Economist does, but then you have to be the most popular of gods.

The Guardian has succeeded in establishing itself as the free liberal forum of the global online world, but has not yet been able to turn its millions of readers into money. The paper is gambling with time: does the Scott Trust, which is financing the Guardian operations, pay for the losses long enough for the Guardian to start making real money with its huge global readership and innovative

digital products? Does it turn into a digital-only paper at least during weekdays to cut costs? Or is it forced to follow others and put its material behind a paywall?

If the Guardian succeeds in reaching digital advertising revenue that is even somewhat comparable to its print advertising revenue, it will become a model in digital revenue making for all other major publications in the new millennium. If it opts for a paywall instead, it will have to content itself with plummeting and probably much more national online readership.

The competition for the Guardian does not come only from other British newspapers and the BBC but also from overseas: by striving to become a transatlantic media, the Guardian faces competition from the New York Times that it is politically close to. In selecting which newspaper they are willing to pay for, liberal East Coast American readers may consider the New York Times or the Economist a more essential read than the British Guardian.

What, then, defines financially successful publications in Britain?

So far, it is two things: distinct content essential for international elite readership with a lot of money and high medium age (the FT, the Economist) combined with a paywall that makes charging for that content easy. In a way, the digital age has not changed much in this respect: the same publications were successful print operations.

What has not turned out to be successful so far is a combination of paywall and a quality newspaper with general news agenda and middle-of-the-line political stance (The Times). Audiences go for free news content elsewhere.

In the case of the Guardian, which has by far the most innovative digital strategy with its membership clubs and audience engagement events, the jury is still out on whether huge international readership and liberal agenda can be turned into real revenue without a paywall.

As far as digital transition of journalistic content is concerned, long format narratives are the last to go digital. News, opinion, columns, analysis and all special sections travel easier to online form because of their instant, polemic and brief nature.

To make long features more attractive online, features editors are adding audio, video and photo galleries to texts; they may be using crowdsourcing in producing articles. However, British editors expressed a varying degree of dissatisfaction with the form that long narratives take online and admitted it is work in process.

The reason for this is a fundamental controversy in long narrative content in the digital world: it is supposed to be the material that is unique and sets the publication apart from others, yet it is the most time consuming and expensive to produce.

If you think purely in financial terms, long features material online is not (yet) worth its price tag; it is the print advertisement in the magazines that bring in the money. Therefore features in the FT,

the Times and the Guardian are still produced with print in mind. (The BBC, free from major financial struggles, does not have to think ways of financing its features content).

The second challenge comes with the lack of hierarchy on the net. In the digital environment, the idea of a coherent magazine with a selection of different stories is hard to grasp; a reader may search articles on fashion, or food, or by a certain journalist without knowing that it is a part of a magazine content.

Therefore features material with a clear identity such as travel or health or family is easier to transfer to online form than a general feature whose existence is partly explained by its context, in other words how it is related to the other stories in the same issue of the magazine. Also, advertising for specialist content like fashion has actually increased for example in the Times.

Hence, it can be predicted that general features on social issues or foreign subjects that readers don't have a strong relationship with will become rarer, and features material focused on polemical, controversial topics, entertainment news and consumer needs even more prevalent.

This is one of the reasons for the tabloid Daily Mail's success: Mail Online's material focuses on celebrity and entertainment gossip and is attracting a readership of 5.3 million people a day and 45.3 million unique visitors a month. It claimed to have overtaken the New York Times as the world's most popular newspaper website in early 2012. (The Mail Online's editors declined to be interviewed for this research).

However, newspaper feature editors are placing big hopes on the iPad. There is a shared conception that readers don't like to read long stories on a computer; in the words of the Economist's Tom Standage, reading news on a computer is an active "lean forward" experience, and that is why long stories have presented a problem in the last ten years. Now iPad and Kindle produce a more "lean back" experience, resembling that of reading a book.

Research supports the idea: both the Times and the FT has data showing that readers spend more time reading long stories on iPad than on a computer. The Economist data even shows that readers spend more time reading the magazine on iPad than in print.

Moreover, in the words of media consultant Juan Senor, "iPad equals I pay" meaning that it is psychologically and practically easier to charge for iPad apps than suddenly start charging for online content that readers are used to getting for free.

However, so far iPad subscriptions have been so low that they don't seem to solve newspapers' financial problems.

None of the features editors interviewed claimed to know what will happen to features journalism in the future. They all believed long narratives will survive and estimated it should be of higher quality

in the future because it is, in their opinion, the distinct content that readers appreciate and like to show their friends that they are reading – and should be willing to pay for.

The newspaper editors believed that narratives will stay in print as long as there is print and will move online as iPad subscriptions increase.

However, no editor was willing to speculate whether there would be more or less reporters working on long narratives in the future, and none expected to be able to hire more staff. On the contrary, recent history suggests that editors are lucky if they are able to maintain the staff that they now have, and those positions will become more and more precious.

“If you’re a long format writer, there aren’t so many places for you anymore. But that’s not only due to internet, that’s because newspapers are cutting long format pieces, and internet has only enhanced that”, says Georgina Henry of the Guardian.

“I think it’s a precious thing to hold onto and deeply appreciated by readers both in print and online. But it’s obviously not a majority of what you do.”

### 3. Literature review: Main points about leading creative employees

The literature on leading creative employees can be divided in two. First, there are lots of studies about leading and motivating creative people in general. Second, there are a few studies concerning media management and motivating journalists in particular.

This chapter aims to give a brief overview of the newest studies in both categories as far as they are relevant to this research.

This chapter describes who the creative people are, what they are like and why they are important to media companies. It also describes how the balance of power between management and creative people has changed in the digital age.

Finally, it gives a brief overview of what kind of advice earlier studies have given on motivating creative journalists and why traditional monetary rewards might sometimes be counterproductive.

#### 3.1 Why are creative people important?

According to a definition given by Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones, creative people are “individuals who make a disproportionate contribution to what the organization does”.<sup>7</sup>

In their words, creative people are crucial to the success of an organization, more valuable than their leaders and perhaps more valuable than the CEO – or editor in-chief – nowadays.

Why? Because in this millennium creativity, defined as the generation of new ideas and innovations, has become the key goal of many organizations.<sup>8</sup>

“Creativity is arguably even more important for media firms – they don’t need the odd great idea, but rather an ongoing supply”, writes Professor Lucy Küng.<sup>9</sup>

“Performance is strongly affected by the quality of the content they create, with ‘create’ being the operative word. The act of content generation is the sector’s fundamental activity and *raison d’être*, and thus the requirement for creativity is constant.”

This ongoing creativity is something that cannot be achieved by the traditional top-down organizational model of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Quite the contrary, the organizations have become dependent on the out-of-the-box thinking of their individual employees to the extent that a leader’s challenge is to make the organization valuable to creative people, not vice versa.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Mumford et al., *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Küng, *Strategic management in the media*, London, Sage, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid.*

This change in the balance of power within media organizations is well described by Christian S. Nissen, the former Director General of the Danish broadcasting company. According to Nissen, in the digital era creative program makers have gained power at the expense of managers.

This change in the balance of power has been caused by the replacement of a collective universe of flow channels by niche channels, individual offers or user generated content, where users are more demanding customers than a loyal congregation and always look for new, exciting content.<sup>11</sup>

Nissen predicts that in the future the creative culture will be freed of the tight handcuffs of commissioning channel controllers and standardized program formats “not as a compassionate response to the creative people... but as a necessary change to upgrade the creative and innovative capabilities of the whole public service media organization“.

The real challenge for management of tomorrow’s businesses will be “to establish and develop creative organizations which attract and nourish creative talents making them work together for a common cause”.

Obviously, this shift in the balance of power between management and employees has meant a major change in old, hierarchical attitudes about how to motivate people.

Author and journalist Daniel H. Pink argues that traditionally human beings were thought to be driven by biological needs like satiating their hunger or quenching their thirst, or by the rewards and punishments that the environment delivered for behaving in certain ways.<sup>12</sup> This concept, in turn, led to the idea practised by most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in factory work: humans should be led by punishment and rewards.

However, in late 1940s professor of psychology Harry Harlow from the University of Wisconsin discovered that monkeys liked to solve puzzles left for them even if there were no biological needs or rewards and punishments linked to them. Thus, Harlow developed a novel theory: “The performance of the task”, Harlow said, “provided an intrinsic reward. They monkeys solved the puzzles simply because they enjoyed them.” The joy of the task was understood to be its own reward.<sup>13</sup>

Later studies on humans produced similar results. Hence, Pink concludes that the secret of high performance isn’t our biological drive or our reward-and-punishment drive, but “our deep seated desire to direct our own lives, to extend and expand our abilities and to live a life of purpose”.

Pink calls this intrinsic motivation our “third drive”, something that is dominating in all creative work.

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<sup>11</sup> Nissen, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Pink, *Drive – The Surprising truth about what motivates us*, New York, Riverhead Books, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

Creative work can be characterized as any tasks involving complex, ill-defined problems where performance requires the generation of novel, useful solutions. It can be expected to be demanding and time consuming. It also involves persuasion and politics as well as uncertainty and risk, which means there needs to be tolerance of failure.<sup>14</sup>

This certainly sounds like the life in a newspaper or broadcasting features department, where much of what is done is not based on any clearly defined agenda but on free-flowing ideas about what is interesting, relevant, funny, exciting or maddening today.

### **3.2 What are the qualities of creative people?**

Goffee and Jones characterize clever people as highly talented individuals whose primary affiliation is not with their company but with the project or cause.<sup>15</sup> They want freedom and flexibility to do what they do best rather than be shackled by organizational constraints.

To a large extent, they take generous material rewards as given, but more important to them is the sense of fulfilment that they are able to achieve through the work itself and the recognition that accompanies it.

These creative people are also the most difficult to be led, because they do not expect to be told what to do. In fact, they don't always recognize they even need a leader. This may derive from the romantic conception of the creative act "where ideas and innovation are attributed to the heroic efforts of an individual".<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the professionalism, expertise and autonomy that characterize creative people act to neutralize the concept of leadership. Their very qualities support the confident exploration of alternatives under conditions of ambiguity.

Creative people are so highly committed to what they do that it is hard to differentiate between them and their labour. Indeed, they *are* their work. They are often obsessive perfectionists who do not want to rely on others – except on those in whom they recognize the same valued abilities.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, creative people are often more concerned about what their peers in another organization think of them than what their boss thinks. They care very little about titles, press their leaders with difficult questions and value them only if they can contribute to the project with good ideas.

Since creative people are their work, a workplace may act as their surrogate family or homeland.

This, again, has meant a major change to corporate culture.

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<sup>14</sup> Mumford et al., *ibid*.

<sup>15</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> Mumford et al., *Leading creative people: Orchestrating expertise and relationships*, The Leadership Quarterly, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid*.

In the 1970s the purpose of creating a corporate image was to show how the corporation fitted into a national community. As national cultures and nuclear families have dissolved, corporations can become even the main source and existential meaning to dedicated individuals – to the extent that the people live symbiotic lives with their company.<sup>18</sup>

According to Arvidsson, the identity of organization is not produced from above anymore, but employees create it themselves.

However, this does not mean that creative people would be happiest and most productive when left alone. They do benefit from leadership in two ways.

First, the right kind of leadership is related to creativity and innovation. Second, the influence tactics used by leaders apparently affect people's willingness to engage in and the likely success of creative ventures.<sup>19</sup>

### **3.3 How to lead creative people?**

In today's workplace leaders have to take the back seat. According to Goffee and Jones, leaders are “not the ones who lead the charge up the mountain. Rather, they must identify the clever people with the potential to reach the summit, connect them with others and help them get there”.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the leaders need to trust the creative people even though they would not always know what they are up to. Only if creative people get too far off the target, the leaders need to gently guide them back towards the goal.

What creative people want from their leader is for them to do their own job – to defend them from others in and outside the company and to guarantee the peace to do their own work. Leaders should seek to buffer creative individuals from off-task organizational demands.<sup>21</sup>

Obviously, this means that the leader has to keep up to date with what is going on in the organization and in the outside world so that his or her staff does not have to.

This requires a degree of humility in a leader that goes beyond that required in traditional organizations and actually starts to resemble the role of a parent in a family full of highly talented teenagers. As Lucy Küng writes, “the power, influence and responsibility (of a leader in a media company) make huge requirements in terms of self-knowledge and emotional maturity, yet

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<sup>18</sup> Arvidsson, *Brands: Meaning and value in media culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Mumford et al., *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Mumford et al., *ibid.*

individuals possessing such characteristics are unlikely to be able to stomach the temperamental, ego-driven, hard-nosed power-hungry individuals that populate the sector”.<sup>22</sup>

Because creative people are unwilling to recognize leadership, the leader should never expect to be thanked. According to Goffee and Jones, “you know you are a success when you hear them say you’re not getting in their way too much”.<sup>23</sup> A leader too visible and dominant may even inhibit innovation.

However, creative people need to know where the limits are, otherwise there will be anarchy that affects everyone. Clever people are clever also in office politics, and if they get involved in it in a malicious way, the results may be disastrous.

If the line is crossed, the leaders have to take swift action not for their own authority but for the best interests of the organization and other employees. That again requires that the leader has his or her own ego confidently in check.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, the relationship between the leader and the employees in a modern workplace seems to be the reverse of that in classic bureaucracy. Management does not provide rules or supply regulations; rather its main goal seems to have been to keep stable rules and regulations from forming, to “keep the dices rolling” and make sure there is a “vacuum” for new ideas be invented.<sup>25</sup>

In the media, consensus-based approaches are more appropriate than hierarchical authoritarian ones because journalists need editorial freedom and protection from managerial or owner influence.<sup>26</sup>

### **3.4 What are the skills and qualities needed in a leader of creative people?**

Obviously, creating a vacuum for new ideas may sound like quite an abstract goal for a leader. In practice, what is most important is a leader’s expertise.

Leading creative people is not about knowing more than those who you lead. It is about perspective and experiences that adds value. Leaders do not have to – and cannot – know more than the creative people they lead, but they have to have expertise that in some way contributes to creative people’s work.<sup>27</sup>

Also, a leader of creative people must be capable of providing direction and structure to work where there is no inherent direction. A leader’s expertise provides the basis for structuring an inherently

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<sup>22</sup> Küng, *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Arvidsson, *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Küng, *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid.*

ill-defined task and the credibility needed to exercise influence over creative people. Thus, expertise is the most powerful form of influence at the disposal of a leader.<sup>28</sup>

In a news organization, this expertise may take many forms. It may be knowledge about the background of the events, it may be access to important sources or it may be capability to define what is essential in fast evolving events. It may also be original ideas or the ability to turn a clumsy piece into well written language.

Does this expertise mean that leaders themselves need to be creative as well? Lucy Küng thinks that today they do. “Once associated with writers, producers and designers, creativity is now mentioned as an essential quality for managers and executives as well.”

“Partly because some content producers are medium-centric and have little experience across platforms, business executives are increasingly asked to think creatively about integrating content, marketing strategies and audience data beyond decades old distribution channels as they seek new formats and communicative styles”.<sup>29</sup>

However, Küng does not mean that leaders need to be bohemians. Creativity can take many forms and one of them is good organizational skills – to which little attention is paid to in other studies, perhaps because “organizing” may sound opposite to “creating”.

“Creativity can be improved, not through expensive interventions by consultants and creativity experts, but by the carefully judged handling of relatively mundane aspects of projects – aspects such as deadlines, financial resources, team composition and goal-setting”.<sup>30</sup>

Küng also reminds us that leadership skills are no longer thought to be something that you are either born with or not. The modern, democratic approach is that leadership skills can be learnt.

However, what is also needed is a new vision. A vision, whatever it is, should encourage individuals to question assumptions that might hold back the change process, and to find new solutions and new courses of action. A vision should appeal to followers’ higher order needs and link with their own values and ideals.<sup>31</sup>

In the new anti-authoritarian leadership style good social skills are crucial. Social skills include direct and indirect persuasion skills, social perceptiveness and appraisal skills.<sup>32</sup> These help to assure the creative people about their own worth and the worth of their work, which are both important motivating factors.

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<sup>28</sup> Mumford et al., *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Küng, *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Küng, *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Küng, *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Mumford et al., *ibid.*

Küng stresses ability to work with different colleagues, sensitivity to their needs and motivations, and capability to build great teams.<sup>33</sup> Recognizing people's unique insights and allowing them the autonomy to pursue them is also crucial. Too specific a goal may inhibit creation. Thus, leaders should set the general goals but allow a lot of freedom in the process and means of reaching them.<sup>34</sup> This, however much required from a leader, is not enough. Atmosphere, however abstract is might sound, is important at the workplace. Crises and failures have to be dealt with openly so people won't be afraid of mistakes, which would inhibit creativeness.

“Leaders should use stories about crises and achievements as a vehicle for defining a climate and culture likely to encourage creativity and innovation“.<sup>35</sup>

The right atmosphere and the right leadership may help the whole organization become creative. Küng identifies four obvious links between leadership and organizational creativity.

The first is intrinsic motivation in both the leader and the followers. The second is vision: a leader's vision drives strategic action. And the third is an environmental context conducive to creativity. This includes allocating resources and providing autonomy for teams required to be creative. A fourth point concerns emotions: Emotional commitment – demonstrating desire, enjoyment, interests – by the leader and emotional engagement on the part of the followers are fundamental in enhancing motivation and organizational creativity.<sup>36</sup>

### **3.5 How to reward and not to reward?**

Why doesn't anyone mention money anymore?, an editor may ask. Isn't that one way to further motivate ambitious people?

This is where leading creative people gets very interesting. According to Daniel H. Pink, money may even be demotivating for creative people. Pink argues that creative people may not be very interested in monetary rewards because that is not what motivates them: They work for intrinsic, not extrinsic motivations.<sup>37</sup>

Remember how Professor Harry Harlow noticed how the monkeys liked to solve puzzles just for fun, as described in chapter 3.1? Pink explains how Harlow's theory was later tested on humans by other scientists. For example Edward Deci conducted a series of tests on how people react to solving puzzles if they are rewarded for it and if they are not.

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<sup>33</sup> Küng, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Mumford et al., *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Mumford et al., *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Küng, *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

What was surprising was that a group that was not paid for solving a puzzle would continue working on it even during breaks, whereas another group whose performance and eagerness was initially enhanced by a monetary reward promised, eventually lost their interest in the puzzle during a break.

For them, rewards had made them forfeit some of their authority. Thus, the play had started to resemble work.

Hence, Edward Deci concluded that “when money is used as an external reward for some activity, the subjects lose intrinsic interest for the activity”. Rewards can deliver a short-term boost like a jolt of caffeine, but the effect wears off. Even worse, the reward can even reduce a person’s longer-term motivation to continue the project.<sup>38</sup>

Deci’s findings were echoed by Teresa Amabile of Harvard Business School, who came up with “the intrinsic motivation principle of creativity”. It holds, in part: “Intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity; controlling extrinsic motivation is detrimental to creativity”.<sup>39</sup>

This might sound unrealistic if there were not so many examples of creative people working for intrinsic motivations rather than money. One great example is the open source Wikipedia whose activists are willing to dedicate time and skills for free.

Pink also gives examples of studies conducted on hundreds of open-source developers, whose intrinsic motivation to work was found to be “enjoyment based”; namely, “how creative a person feels when working on the project is the strongest and the most pervasive drive.”

Thus, Pink concluded that creative people are not profit or wealth maximisers; rather, they are purpose maximisers.<sup>40</sup>

This purpose maximization was echoed in an interview given by the Finnish mobile company Nokia’s former CEO, Jorma Ollila.<sup>41</sup> Ollila was the CEO at the time of Nokia’s rapid rise to become the world’s biggest mobile company. As he was listing the reasons for the company’s success, he said that prior to the 1990s extremely talented people had not been led in the right way. “A long term success can never be built on hiring different experts from outside and putting them together. A leader must build motivation and come up – together – with a bigger purpose to a common goal”, Ollila says.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Sajari, *Entinen suuruus*, Helsingin Sanomat Kuukausiliite, Helsinki, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Sajari, *ibid.*

However, it must be remembered that intrinsic motivation does not apply to any tasks, only creative ones. If there is a simple routine task, rewarding people with money or other things might work, Pink argues.

That is because completing a routine task is not a challenge or a prize in itself. Still, it is best done by offering a rationale for doing it, acknowledging that the task is boring and allowing the people to complete it in their own way.

How, then, to reward creative work if not by money?

First, Pink argues that the basics for a motivating environment must be in order. Although conditional rewards do not work, the baseline rewards must be fair and sufficient compared with people doing similar work for similar organizations.

“One reason fair and adequate pay is so essential is that it takes the issue of money off the table so they (the employees) can focus on the work itself”, Pink writes.<sup>43</sup>

Employees must also have autonomy and opportunity to pursue mastery, and their daily duties must relate to a larger purpose.

“If these elements are in place, the best strategy is to provide a sense of urgency and significance – and then get out of the talent’s way”, Pink writes.

Secondly, Pink argues that you may still be able to boost performance by rewards but only if they are unexpected and offered only after the task is complete. In this way people will not come focused on the reward rather than the problem, and the rewards are less likely to be experienced as the reason for doing the task.

Thirdly, Pink also stresses non-tangible rewards: Praise, positive feedback and thanking. People appreciate useful information, the more detailed the better, about the work they do.

Instead of the demotivating “if-then” rewarding of “if you succeed, then you’ll get the money”, Pink calls the better way of motivation “now that”-rewarding: “Now that you have completed the task, let’s go out to lunch to celebrate”.<sup>44</sup>

What is very demotivating is to remove the rewards that already exist, however small or symbolic they are. Goffee and Jones describe how surgeons in a hospital were provided free sandwiches after an operation. It was a small gesture of appreciation towards the demanding and stressful work they did. When the sandwiches were deemed too expensive, surgeons found being sent to a hospital cafeteria queue very demotivating – even if the sandwiches are not something they would have originally expected.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid.*

Like Goffee, Jones, Mumford and others before him, Pink stresses employees' autonomy. The employees are no longer a resource, they are partners. And the management style suited for partners requires resisting the temptation to control people and reawakening employees' deep rooted sense of autonomy.

But autonomy doesn't mean being left on your own, it means acting with choice and receiving support from the leader when needed.

"This era does not call for better management. It calls for a renaissance of self-direction", Pink argues.<sup>46</sup>

For a leader, this means providing employees with what Pink calls the "Goldilocks tasks": challenges that are a notch or two beyond his or her current abilities, which stretch the body and mind in a way that the effort itself is the most delicious reward.

Goffee and Jones go even further by instructing leaders to give creative employees "hard, almost impossible goals" that "get their juices flowing".<sup>47</sup>

This means that a leader should not set performance goals, but rather learning goals: if the employees' goal is to learn or get better, they don't have to prove that they already are smart or can do everything. Mastery is an asymptote – you can never quite reach it.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the joy and the goal should be the pursuit more than the realization, for both the employer and the employee.

In addition to autonomy and mastery, an employer should provide employees with a purpose larger than company profit to motivate them. According to Pink, the traditional goals of management, such as efficiency, advantage, value, superiority and focus lack the power of rousing human hearts. People would be more motivated when pursuing honour, truth, love, justice and beauty. Of these, journalists pursue truth and justice.

If leaders succeed in truly addressing the employees, they will pass "the pronoun test", as Pink calls it: when talking about the company, the employees talk about "us" instead of "them".

"They" companies and "we" companies are very different places.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Goffee and Jones, *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Pink, *ibid.*

## **4. Methodology: Who was interviewed in Britain and in Finland**

This research is based on interviews conducted by email, by phone and in person in London and Helsinki in the autumn of 2011 and in the spring of 2012. Some of the material is from Oxford University lectures organized by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

In the autumn of 2011, I conducted five interviews in London about the future of feature journalism in the digital age. The features editors were Giles Wilson from the BBC, Emma Tucker from The Times, head of guardian.co.uk Georgina Henry from The Guardian, and the Weekend editor Caroline Daniel and Magazine editor Sue Matthias from the Financial Times. The Economist digital editor Tom Standage gave a talk touching on the same issues in Oxford in November 2011.

The interviews with the editors led me to refocus my study on managing journalists at the time of digital transformation and economic difficulties affecting editors' work. Thus, I sent further questions on managing journalists by email to the British editors that I had already interviewed.

Two agreed to be interviewed again on managing the digital change, but others referred me to their colleagues in charge of digitalization in their publications.

Thus, I interviewed The Guardian digital editor Joanna Geary and the FT.com executive editor Bede McCarthy by phone. To get a yet broader perspective, I contacted the digital editor Tom Standage from the Economist, editor-in-chief Gill Hudson from Reader's Digest and the former executive editor Kevin Marsh from the BBC and interviewed them in London in the spring of 2012. Hudson had given a talk in Oxford earlier in the spring about the changes in magazine business, and some of her quotes are from that talk.

The news and deployments editor of languages and the former multimedia editor at BBC World Service Olexiy Solohubenko was interviewed by phone after I had met him at the BBC headquarters in London on a visit organized by the Reuters Institute.

The Finnish part of the research was conducted in the spring of 2012. I initially contacted twenty Finnish editors about managing issues. Of them, I later selected 12 to whom I sent a more detailed set of questions about motivating and managing at the time of digital change.

In the end, 15 Finnish editors' replies were included in this study. They were the news editor and former Sunday features editor Edith Andersson from Aamulehti, managing editor Jari Lindholm from the Suomen Kuvalehti Magazine, documentary editor Pentti Väliahdet from the Yleisradio public broadcasting, the editor of Yle Asia current affairs program Ilkka Lehtinen of Yleisradio, editor-in-chief of the Image Magazine Mikko Numminen, the former editor-in-chief of Gloria Magazine Sami Sykkö, the editor-in-chief of MeNaiset Magazine Marjo Vuorinen, the editor-in-

chief of Olivia Magazine Mari Paalosalo-Jussinmäki, the political editor Johanna Vesikallio of the STT news agency, the Helsingin Sanomat arts and culture editor Jaakko Lyytinen, the Helsingin Sanomat Monthly Magazine Kuukausiliite editor Lauri Malkavaara, the Helsingin Sanomat Weekly Magazine editor Ville Blåfield, the Helsingin Sanomat managing editor Reetta Rätty, the former Helsingin Sanomat foreign news and Sunday editor Kari Huhta and the former Helsingin Sanomat editor-in-chief Reetta Meriläinen.

From the academic side, I got in touch with the former Director General of the Danish Broadcasting company, now the adjunct professor at the Copenhagen business school Christian Nissen and the professor of media management at the University of Jönköping Lucy Küng.

From the media consulting side, I interviewed Innovation Media Consulting partner Juan Senor and digital strategist, former head of product development for the BBC News Nic Newman. Newman was also my supervisor for this study.

In sum, 15 Finnish editors and 11 British editors, two academics and two media consultants participated in this research bringing the total number of interviews to 30. A full list can be found in the appendix.

Most agreed to the use of their name but most asked anonymity in some answers, especially the ones concerning financial difficulties and relations with top management. Therefore in chapter 5.3 which deals with these issues, everybody's identities are concealed.

## **5. Results: Managing journalists “is like herding the cats – or monkeys”**

The research results are divided into the following three separate chapters: how to motivate journalists, how to manage digital change and how to manage difficulties and survive yourself.

### **5.1 How to motivate creative journalists**

In this section British and Finnish editors describe what they think are the most important qualities in an editor and how they motivate creative employees.

#### **Editor Lauri Malkavaara, the Helsingin Sanomat Magazine Kuukausiliite**

There are different kinds of journalists, says the Helsingin Sanomat Magazine Kuukausiliite editor Lauri Malkavaara. Most of Malkavaara’s experience is on leading the cream of the crop, the superstars of features journalism in Finland– although they are not used to being called superstars. “On the surface they are intelligent and well mannered but deep down there resides an omnipotent narcissist. Without that kind of a personality you don’t become a superstar”, Malkavaara says.

“My job is like that of the U.S. tennis team coach at the time of Sampras and Agassi: ‘Maybe you could use more of your sliced backhand stroke, like we talked before the game...’”

But as the game continues, the superstar strikes just as he likes.

According to Malkavaara, the most important quality of an editor of creative people is to recognize quality and improve it. That includes recognizing poor quality and rejecting it, however unpleasant saying no would be.

Taking good care of the publication and the department is best achieved when journalists are competent, enjoy their work and feel that their creativity is not confined, Malkavaara says.

“In practice, you should let the best people to do basically what they please and then try to fill in the gaps by other means. In other words, if a reportage and a profile are needed in the next issue and the superstar is inspired to do the reportage, you don’t force him to write the profile but ask for it from someone else.”

Of course an editor still needs to be an editor. If the power does not lie with him, it soon lies with the superstars, Malkavaara says. If all power is given away, a magazine becomes writers’ paper, a chaos without order. A magazine needs to be readers’ paper. This is guaranteed by an editor.

“In an ideal situation the interests of the superstars and the interests of the paper meet. Then the editor does not have much else to do than sit in the audience and clap his hands.”

### **Features Editor Giles Wilson, BBC News website**

Leading journalists is a balancing act between inspiring people to think creatively and tempering them with delivery and deadlines, says features editor Giles Wilson of the BBC News website. According to Wilson, it is not enough for an editor to show enthusiasm for ideas; he or she also has to make sure that journalists see their ideas become real.

Secondly, an editor needs to have a focus on delivery even if he or she does not constantly want to interfere in journalists' work by reminding them of technological or financial constraints. “There comes a time when you have to decide what is practical to deliver with the time and resources available”, Wilson says.

Thirdly, an editor and a journalist need to be aware of what their competitors are doing, but they should not forget that their audience may not be as technologically savvy as their peers in the media industry. “Indulge in creativity to impress your audience, not your peers”, Wilson says.

Fourthly, an editor needs to remember that a leader gets what he or she measures.

“If the editors are praising and rewarding collaboration, they will get collaboration”, he says.

Competition may be invigorating, but destructive competition is not, Wilson says. Collaboration works well against that.

### **Kevin Marsh, the former editor of BBC College of journalism and the BBC Today program**

Pretty much every individual in a team may be creative, but the challenge for an editor is to find a way to bind that creativity together, says the former head of the BBC Today program Kevin Marsh who has a 33-year experience at the BBC now behind him.

“It is easy for an editor to think that he has a star reporter or a star presenter and that is where the creativity resides. It is a mistake that many BBC editors have made because a lot of money is paid for the top talent and they become the focus of the program”, Marsh says.

However, by focusing on the stars an editor builds up resentment in the team. Therefore an editor needs to recognize and praise everyone individually, for example the junior researcher who never takes no for an answer when trying to set up an interview. “That to me is just as creative as being the great performer”, Marsh says.

In order to bind the creativity together an editor needs a vision that he or she keeps repeating. It can be a complex vision, but the key is to have one.

“If you work with creatives, it is easy to say ‘Let’s just carry on doing what we have been doing’.”

However, if an editor makes changes, he or she needs to understand what kind of effects the new vision will have on the various members of the team. Different people react differently.

“That again can be difficult with top talent. I have had many top talents say to me ‘hey, I do what I do’. You can always respond ‘that is great but now you have to do something more or better’.”

According to Marsh, an editor needs to be a bit of a psychologist to understand different motivations and different obstacles to people’s performance.

“It’s about noticing small achievements and making them into a big thing. Journalism is a very cruel profession: it’s easy to give into the idea that if you’re not all the time successful with everything, you’re nothing. So recognizing small steps is crucial.”

Also, a leader has to say every now and then “this is what great looks like” and give grounds for it: “this is good because”, “this is how it could have been better”.

“There is always a lot of talk about rewards but I think recognition is just as important at least in the BBC, where no one comes to work for the money”, Marsh says.

### **Documentary editor Pentti Väliähdet, The Finnish Broadcasting Company Yleisradio**

What distinguishes a good boss from a bad boss is that a good one never makes any decisions based on his or her feelings, says the head of the Yleisradio documentary programs Pentti Väliähdet.

“You always have to give a reason. Always. An editor’s authority alone is not sufficient”, he says.

In a difficult situation it helps to present alternative solutions to a problem at hand, Väliähdet says.

The aim is to get journalists to think, to understand and to solve problems themselves, not to offer ready solutions. Therefore an editor needs give space to an employee.

“The best motivator in this job is the job itself: to be allowed and able to do it”, Väliähdet says.

“New equipment, a new phone, money – those are secondary motivators. Creative people need the creative work itself.”

### **Managing editor Jari Lindholm, The Suomen Kuvalehti Magazine**

The most important quality in an editor is his or her journalistic experience, says the managing editor of Suomen Kuvalehti magazine Jari Lindholm.

“It is about leading by the example: What you ask of your employees you have done or are capable of doing yourself”, Lindholm says.

By this Lindholm does not mean that an editor needs to be a better journalist than employees; on the contrary, a good editor hires people more talented than himself or herself. However, it is crucial to have realistic expectations on how much time and effort stories require.

“When sending reporters to conflict zones it is essential that I have been to conflict zones myself”, Lindholm says. “Thus, I can ask for a lot, but not ask for stupid things.”

How does Lindholm motivate?

- By giving space and autonomy and by expressing respect and admiration.
- By showing people that he knows that they know what they are doing.
- By giving a hand in difficult situations.
- And by sharing information so that people feel appreciated and in control.

### **News editor and former Sunday features editor Edith Andersson, The Aamulehti newspaper**

Creative people are very competitive, so they are motivated by the feeling that everyone else shares their view that their subject is important, says the news editor Edith Andersson of the Aamulehti newspaper.

“Often it would be easy for me to say whatever, just do it, we need this many words for the front page or we need the leading photo, but I have learnt that demonstrating genuine interest works best. A journalist has to notice that I believe in his or her story so much that I stop twiddling with my mobile or writing emails and call up a managing editor, a photographer or a graphic designer.” Also, showing interest towards a story while it is developing – its content, its angle, the people interviewed – is motivating, Andersson says. Rushing is demotivating.

### **Managing editor of features content Reetta Rätty, the Helsingin Sanomat newspaper**

Most journalists have a journalistic identity and a strong will to put it into practice. An editor must feed that will in a way that journalists put their energy into the work itself, not into avoiding it or doing barely enough – even in those cases when it is not about the journalist’s own major story carrying his or her byline, says the Helsingin Sanomat managing editor for features Reetta Rätty.

So, first: an editor needs to create an atmosphere where journalists could at the same time express themselves (we are, after all, in the profession of narcissists, Rätty says), and to operate smoothly without always taking the leading role (we are, after all, a part of a big machinery, Rätty says).

“I think journalists talk a bit too much about the end of journalism without taking responsibility for it themselves. By this I do not mean putting in more hours but demonstrating the power of journalism and taking advantage of the opportunities that the Helsingin Sanomat has to offer”, Rätty says.

Thus, secondly: an editor has to deal with all kinds of constraining bureaucratic and economic details of which he or she has to keep the staff informed – and yet, an editor should make sure that the staff is free to concentrate on the work.

Thirdly: the editor needs to be endlessly alert, in other words a journalist at heart. This enables him or her to lead by example and “demonstrate why this change is good for us, believe it or not”.

Fourthly: “It is important for any editor to find and to learn a leader’s identity. We are not here to please, we are here to lead. This makes saying ‘no’ and tolerating all kinds of shit much easier. It is not an end in itself, it is a job.”

And how is motivating done in practice? According to Rätty, editors should take advantage of the fact that journalists *want* to work.

This is achieved by helping journalists to do their creative work independently and not fussing about routines, bureaucracy or ready concepts. So, helping them to think and giving them time to do what each of them does best.

And making them to realize that with their power comes the responsibility to spend time wisely.

“The time spent complaining that there is no chance to read or to dig deeper is better spent on reading and digging deeper”, Rätty says.

### **Director Ilkka Lehtinen, Yle Asia current affairs department of the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yleisradio**

The most important qualities of a good boss are the same in journalism as in other fields: trusting employees, providing encouragement, giving regular feedback, having a direct and fair attitude, being supportive and listening. Being there. So says the director of Yle Asia programs Ilkka Lehtinen.

“The journalists’ job is creative and sometimes they need to be treated like a flower: gently and carefully. A creative ego gets easily hurt”, he says.

“On the other hand you have to have the courage to give honest feedback. Journalists are intelligent, thoughtful and analytical people so you cannot get away with fake talk or false arguments.”

Lehtinen notes that journalists are experts in their respective fields and experts cannot be led by barking orders. Experts value expertise so it is very helpful if an editor has been a journalist, too.

Moreover, Lehtinen thinks that editors’ formal education is highly valued.

“Traditionally you could become a journalist without a formal education. Nowadays it is hard to make it without a degree in journalism or in another field. The competition is so intense.”

However, an editor does not need to know all or be able to do all what journalists do, Lehtinen says. He or she can always restructure the organization in a way that supports journalists’ work or arrange further education according to employees’ needs.

Furthermore, it is important to create an open and respectful working environment where people are trusted, Lehtinen says. You have to be positive, give people space and encourage them. You need to be open in both words and deeds. You have to be there for the journalists and be genuinely interested in what they do. People need to be included.

And if there are problems, they should be dealt with immediately.

“Humour always helps. But it is a difficult craft to master. If you think you are very funny, others may think you are an idiot. And you know what comes of that”, Lehtinen says.

### **Christian Nissen, the former Director General of the Danish broadcasting company and Adjunct professor at the Copenhagen Business School**

Future leaders have to concentrate less on rules and more on values. Instead of rules, leaders have to try to instil some kind of ethical compass in the hearts and minds of journalists, says the former Director General of the Danish broadcasting company Christian Nissen.

Nissen suggests that journalists and editors could get together every now and then to discuss difficult situations. They can play different roles and later talk whether the course of action taken was a wrong or a right one. That helps everyone involved understand the complexities of decision making.

The leaders must also understand that they cannot appeal only to the minds of employees.

“In the beginning I tried to influence journalists by rational arguments that were supported by Powerpoint slides. It didn’t work very well. Then I started to tell stories and appeal to their hearts and stomachs to reach their brains”, Nissen says.

So how to motivate creative people? Nissen gives two examples: Spice girls and the imperial German army.

Nissen refers to a British academic and author Stephen Bungay who has talked about Spice Girls in his leadership strategy. The Spice girls sing “Tell me what you want / what you really really want”. According to Bungay, leaders of creative people should ask this of their employees, then provide them with resources – and shut up.

In other words: leaders should set creative people goals and necessary constraints, such as time limits, qualitative requirements, ethics and budget, but not go into too much detail about how the goals are to be reached.

Nissen argues that this Spice girls’ principle was put successfully into practice by the imperial German army in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The German army had a decentralized power structure in which troops in the front were not guided by specific commands from the officers, but were encouraged to take the initiative and make decisions themselves.

This resulted in many victories, among others Germans beating Nissen’s countrymen, the Danes, in 1864.

## **5.2 How to manage digital change**

In this chapter, editors, consultants, and academics give advice on how to manage a digital change in practice.

### **Juan Senor, partner in Innovation Media Consulting and a Co-editor of Innovations in Newspapers and Innovations in Magazines World Reports**

Consultant Juan Senor lists four practical ways to make the digital change happen in a newspaper. First, you need a new physical space, in other words a new newsroom. According to Senor, an open space is a metaphor of how the web works: you take journalists “out of their monk cells where they hide behind their desks” and create an open area of collaboration between print, web, video etc. Then you divide the newsroom between speed and depth: you have “digital natives” running for breaking news and a team of experienced journalists doing the in-depth reporting that sells the publication in the end. In this open space the management is done by “walking about”, helping the collaboration of different professionals and encouraging new ideas.

Secondly, you need a new, fully digital content management system, says Senor. This means that your content is available to Google spiders and spreads easily around the net. This makes a big difference in how much your content is read, followed and shared online.

Thirdly, Senor believes that you need an editor-in-chief that believes in digital first. “If the editor-in-chief does not believe in it, he or she has to be changed”, Senor says.

According to Senor, digital is the new *lingua franca* that reaches more readers online than ever before; the problem is in how to turn those new readers into revenue. The editor-in-chief is very important in setting an example. He or she should be a journalist that is respected within the profession, someone who is able to lead with example.

However, “digital first doesn’t mean digital only”, Senor says. He believes that print may survive – and bring in money – for a long time. Moreover, Senor does not believe in replacing experienced journalists with digital natives. “I don’t believe in digital natives, I believe in good journalist natives”, he says.

Senor claims that a digital native may know how to use all the gadgets, but if he or she does not have the expertise of the trade, he or she lacks independent judgement, may feel overwhelmed in front of interviewees and cannot challenge their claims. Breaking the news in Twitter or in Facebook is not enough; you have to be able to explain whether it is true and what it means.

Good journalism is still about good storytelling, as it has always been, Senor says.

“A digital native may just be holding a microphone in front of someone who says they are going to build a new paper factory in the Jyväskylä region. He may get the statement delivered on different platforms, but did he ever go and talk to the people in the region?” Senor asks.

Fourthly, Senor believes that in the digital age good editors are needed more than ever before.

“User generated content is a big myth. Anyone can write a blog, but not everyone’s blog is worth reading”, he says.

Thus, good editors are needed to “clear the blog fog”, distinguish between the important and less important subjects and help the writers to dig deeper into their subjects to create better, more in-depth and more distinct analysis that the viewers and readers are ready to pay for.

“Part of the mission is: do not believe all the collective noise but break from the collective thinking. No matter how much fuss and buzz there is for example around a Oscar winning movie, you have to be able to say I am independent, I can tell you it is rubbish, and this is why”, Senor says.

### **Digital editor Joanna Geary, The Guardian**

Digital editor Joanna Geary of the Guardian newspaper describes digital transition in British newspapers in the following way: earlier, the online model in newspapers was “print plus” meaning print plus something extra for the web. Then it was “integration”: print plus web side by side. Now it is “online plus” meaning web first plus something extra to the print.

“In the Guardian, the paper has become a secondary product”, she says. Facing massive losses (£40 million last year), there is gossip that “the world’s leading liberal voice” with a readership of 30–40 million people might be turned into a digital only operation. Geary does not see this happening in the near future. However, the Guardian’s strategy is “digital first”, and it has changed both the content and the process in the paper.

First of all, all content goes online first. There is a “slow stream editor”, whose job is to plan which of the online pieces fit to the print and in which form: for example thoughtful, longer pieces may read better in the print.

Secondly, Geary thinks that a strong leadership vision helps a lot. Journalism is quite a hierarchical profession, although she admits that Guardian journalists themselves might not agree with this.

Thus, you need an editor that is very committed to digital first, as the Guardian editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger is. “There is still massive respect for an editor, a slight cult of personality”, she says.

Thirdly, creating peer competition at the grassroots level is very useful. There are always journalists who are willing to embrace change and start using for example Twitter very actively. They become the advocates for change, and when others see the benefits of their behaviour – for example, the increasing numbers of followers and comments about their colleague’s article – they follow suit.

“All these tools have a direct benefit for becoming a better journalist”, Geary says.

However, she recognizes a downside in Twitter that editors haven’t so far been able to solve. In early days and among the early adopters of technology crowd, Twitter had a strong community element: people asked for help and were given advice. Geary hasn’t seen that community element used in journalism between journalists and their audience as it could be.

On the contrary, Twitter has helped to create journalist superstars that can then ask for bigger pay or benefits based on the number of their followers.

“We would need people who would use these tools like community managers: putting readers first, acknowledging their point of view and accepting significant level of criticism. Lots of journalists are comfortable with their public image, but there is an element of humility lacking”, Gehry says.

### **Digital editor Tom Standage, The Economist**

The Economist enjoys the prestigious status of the only truly global weekly magazine, read by international elite. How to turn that into digital?

“We wanted to maintain the approach and experience of reading the Economist and apply it to digital channels”, explains the Economist’s digital editor Tom Standage.

It would have been odd in the digital age if a weekly news magazine would be updated only once a week. Before 2010, the Economist had a team of news reporters updating news online, whereas specialists on each field were working on the more in-depth analysis published in print. The results were unsatisfactory, because news reporters never had as much insight and expertise on the subjects that they wrote about as the specialist. However, the specialist did not have time to do both the online news during the week and the analysis for the print magazine.

In 2010 Standage introduced the new digital strategy and decided to do away with the online news reporters. From then on, the Economist has not had separate news stories online, but all the staff is expected to blog. Thus, the specialists are able to break the news in their blogs during the week and still have time to write a longer analysis for the print version.

“Most people were very happy to blog but others said ‘what is that you want us to do less of?’ And the same about Twitter. Well, did anyone say that about telephones when they first came? That’s *how* you do your job nowadays”, Standage says.

This blog-and-print approach has two advantages. First, it allows the Economist to respond to or break the news during the week in a way it could not do before. Secondly, since there is enormous competition about space in the print Economist, blogging allows reporters to publish without space constraints. The Economist journalists also regularly attend Twitter chats with the audience.

How did Standage manage to push through this change?

First of all, he organized a ‘town hall’ meeting attended by all staff where he explained the new strategy and its benefits.

Secondly, the Economist editor-in-chief John Micklethwait made it known that he was going to count the blog posts of each reporter. The number of blog posts is included in the reporters’ performance reports that are sent to all department heads.

Thirdly, peer example was helping a lot. Standage recalls how the Economist Paris correspondent became a convert after a big scandal in France was breaking at the time when the print Economist had gone to press. She was able to share her gossip on the scandal in her blog and got immediate feedback that in turn helped her to write the print story days later.

“If you have already blogged about a subject, it makes you feel you have done half the week’s work on the story already. It’s like warm-up for the print”, Standage says.

Fourthly, The Economist has the conviction that the ‘finishability’ of the magazine is just as important experience on iPad as it is in print. The Economist does not want to add pages to the print magazine, because if readers don’t have time to finish the magazine, they feel guilty and cancel the subscription (our readers are cash rich, time poor, Standage says).

The same applies to iPad. Standage calls reading news at a computer an active and participatory “lean forward” experience, whereas reading news on an iPad is a “lean back” experience 2.0, resembling that of reading the print issue. That is why the Economist layout on iPad resembles that of the Economist in print.

Standage’s views are supported by company studies confirming that readers already spend more time reading the Economist on iPad than the Economist in print.

“When we surveyed our readers, 70 percent of them said they preferred to read the Economist in print. However, 70 percent expected to prefer tablet version in 2 years”, Standage says.

### **Editor-in-chief Mari Paalosalo-Jussinmäki, The Olivia Magazine**

In early 2012, the Finnish women’s magazine Olivia created a crowdsourcing platform called Oma Olivia (My own Olivia) that integrated readers into magazine making for one issue that was published in January 2012. Readers were encouraged to come up with ideas for articles that journalists then wrote. Readers were also given points and small prizes according to the intensity of their involvement.

The idea was not hard to push through, although the technological difficulties did cause some complaints, says the editor-in-chief Mari Paalosalo-Jussinmäki. As journalists learnt to use the platform, swearing lessened.

“The staff was motivated to create something new and get feedback and comments from readers in real time”, Paalosalo-Jussinmäki says. “If there was time, the journalists wanted to do even more things for the web. In allocating the working hours, print is still the priority.”

Now a couple of journalists in Olivia are committed to tweeting and Facebook on days previously agreed, and one managing editor writes a fashion blog. Others have finished blogging because of lack of time. The journalist who updates Pinterest account came forward voluntarily.

Paalosalo-Jussinmäki says that in adopting new ways of working it was important to give concrete reasons for the change. She argued that the change would benefit both the magazine and the employees themselves.

“It is self-evident to the Olivia staff that a strong presence on the web and strong relationship to the readers are essential in the success of a magazine”, she says.

“I also think that everyone understands that this will develop their own professional competence: any future employer would value expertise on crowdsourcing, social media and web.”

The second important thing is the feedback. Paalosalo-Jussinmäki gives just as much feedback on the web material as on the print material. Thus, the web is not something secondary to be easily ignored.

“The Bonnier Publications is a relatively small company (in Finland) so prospects for advancement are quite restricted. Experience on web, crowdsourcing and social media give opportunities to vertical advancement, in other words developing your own expertise further”, Paalosalo-Jussinmäki says.

### **Olexiy Solohubenko, news and deployments editor of languages and the former multimedia editor at the BBC World Service**

The former multimedia editor Olexiy Solohubenko of the BBC World Service has been managing a transition towards digital journalism at the World Service involving hundreds of journalists over the past two years.

His advice is to first set the objectives of the digital transition, then show the best practice: this is what others inside and outside the company have done and this is why it delivers. That will change attitudes and practices.

“I don’t think we have to convince anyone at the BBC anymore that the future is digital like we still had to do 3–4 years ago. The evidence is just so overwhelming. In the analogue time all audience research was 6–24 months delayed; now the feedback is instant. Everyone sees that there is just much more competition for attention than before.”

Next, staff has to be told that they are helped all the way and that they will get the tools and training.

“You show best websites, you show how to drive traffic and get referrals, this is how picture galleries work, this is how videos can work, this is how you share them”, Solohubenko says.

“We also compare the front pages of the BBC websites with our big competitors and see what kind of enriched content is available everywhere.”

Also, the BBC journalists learn search engine optimization: how the headlines are written in a way that attracts most traffic through searches. For example a headline “Egyptian court rules that parliament is illegal” may get less hits than “Muslim brotherhood angry over court ruling on parliament”, because audiences may search news on Egypt with “Muslim Brotherhood”.

Next change is digital storytelling. In addition to its own talent, the BBC has also used specialists from the Guardian, The Slate and The New York Times for seminars and digital conferences. Desk

editors at the World Service went through a five-day training on the tools of digital storytelling, for example audio and video.

According to Solohubenko, training has fed into better digital journalism, which in turn had an impact: number of unique users at many BBC languages website has grown over 20 per cent in a year. It is also useful for journalists to be able to see the effects daily: journalists can see on their computer screens in different newsrooms the most read and most shared stories of each moment. “Sometimes the most read story is not the main news but about a cat using a parachute. It doesn’t mean that we change our news agenda according to the audience preferences, but we cannot ignore them either”, Solohubenko says.

Solohubenko stresses that in the BBC you need a lot of intelligence to cater to very different audiences in 27 different languages.

“In some countries, blogs are very popular, in some others, picture galleries. For some reason Spanish speaking world loves videos of small animals. They call them *animalitos*.”

### **Professor of media management Lucy Küng, Jönköping University**

Professor Lucy Küng believes that feedback can act as a powerful tool to drive digital change in media organizations, particularly feedback from the audience. Once journalists see how much their stories are read, shared and commented, they will use it.

“Journalists want to be heard”, Küng says.

According to Küng, also the editors need to understand how the social media works even if they did not spend all their time on Facebook themselves. They need to understand the overall development trajectory of technology and how new and social media can be incorporated into existing products and business models to drive engagement with audiences.

However, Küng notes that the technological investments that need to be made are a new and a complex challenge for top management. Very significant amounts need to be invested in digital production and distribution systems, and equally significant expertise is required in understanding the strategic implications of these purchases.

“Traditionally, editors have come up through ‘content route’ meaning that they have been journalists themselves, and often are not particularly interested or specialized in technology”, Küng says. “However, it is becoming critical that those at the top of media organizations synthesise content and technological competencies.”

Increasingly, critical knowledge is located in the fringes of organizations, and this represents a power shift within media organizations.

Küng says that those at the top of the organization need to recognize that some very valuable insights concerning content, audience behaviour and where the industry is going now resides lower down and in the periphery of media organizations and that the knowledge held by those at the top may not be as valid as it once was.

Smart media organizations will ensure they find ways for information to flow from the fringes of the organization towards the top, and flatten their hierarchy and tone down bureaucratic processes that slow down or inhibit the free flow of ideas or experimentation.

On the other hand, more digitally savvy journalists will take advantage of creating a strong personal brands on the net, Küng says. Personal brands become shortcuts to power like media organizations were before.

### **Executive Editor Bede McCarthy, The Financial Times**

The Financial Times strives to be the premium product in the market of business newspapers – a distinct commodity with distinct personalities. Its digital strategy is to sell its customers a single product irrespective of the platform they read it on.

It hasn't been hard to drive through digitalization in the Financial Times, says executive editor Bede McCarthy of the FT.com: all journalists, whether they are early or late adopters, are interested in how to do it.

“If you work on this field, it is a matter of self-preservation”, McCarthy says.

McCarthy lists a few things that are important in the process: First, a constant reorganization of the newsroom to fit the web ready workflow.

“Newsrooms were traditionally very structured for either print or broadcasting. Now everything goes first and foremost online, and then the best stories go to the newspaper. However, everything has to be filed so it is also ready for the web, even if it is for the print”, he says.

Secondly, the editor needs to win over the key people – the best and most respected journalists – to adopt new practices, such as using social media or data mining. Others will follow their example. Thirdly, the editor needs to explain what the direct benefits of digitalization are. “Journalists want to be read, so when they realize that it brings them new readers, it is not difficult to get them onboard.”

Fourthly, maintaining a strong publication brand is important in the digital age, when the most followed writers are more and more in charge of their own visibility in the social media. According to McCarthy, the FT has not had a problem with its most famous writers leaving and taking their followers with them because the FT is such a strong brand itself.

“Even if someone left and a reader would keep following him, I am sure the readers would still keep reading the FT as well. So I don’t think it is so different situation from before. A writer’s good social media following is good for the publication, too.”

### **Nic Newman, digital strategist and former head of product development for the BBC News**

Nic Newman divides making the digital change in a news publication into five categories.

First is the strategic change.

“The first thing is to articulate why you need to make the change. This needs to be done in ways that respect the traditions that you have, whilst making clear that new skills are required.”

According to Newman, this strategic view needs to be shared by all the top people in the company.

This can be done in different ways.

One alternative is to take editorial leaders or other bright people in the company away from their day jobs to work on the strategic challenges and expose them to new ideas. Then they have to present the results back to the board. This was done for example in the BBC.

Another very effective idea is to bring the audience to meet the editors: to find way of listening and learning from the way in which media is nowadays consumed.

“Get young people in and describe to older ones their media habits. It will genuinely change the way you think”, Newman says.

Secondly there is the structural change.

“You need to move from a brand centric approach to an audience and content centric one. That won’t happen if you keep the brand based structures”, Newman says.

By this Newman means that the brand of the publication is not as important anymore. More important are the different needs of an audience. Thus, an editor needs to spend less time thinking the contents of a newspaper on any given day and more time on how to deliver a certain story across multiple platforms.

According to Newman, you’ll also need some “evangelists”, people who (for a period of a year or two) act as digital champions, social media champions or mobile champions. Ultimately it will be everyone’s job but these people are important catalysts for change.

Thirdly, you need to change the reward structures.

“You need to genuinely reward the new behaviours that you wish to see and that will mean recalibrating”, Newman says. In the past journalists may have been rewarded for the best 2,000 word article or the best cover, but what are the achievements worth rewarding in the future?

Newman gives an example: the Guardian editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger started to quote the success of his online technology team in embracing Twitter. This annoyed traditional journalists who were making all the money on the print edition, but got them mad enough to try the new ways. “Hold up the role models (preferably old journalists who have embraced new tools) to tell stories about the change and how this helped meet new targets”, Newman says.

Fourthly, leaders have to provide support and training.

“Get outside speakers in to inspire and evangelise. Train people in social media tools or video recording. Get an in-house evangelist to work with people for the first bit.”

Also, it is important to provide instant feedback on metrics that matter to journalists: for example statistics on how people are reacting to their stories.

Fifthly, you have to take away the fear. Newman believes that for most people digital change should be exciting and enabling because they can rediscover the excitement in telling stories with new tools – and yet, most have enormous fears that they will be on the scrapheap.

“Some won’t adapt, but 90 percent of people should be happier and more fulfilled and less worried about the future if the process is run correctly”, Newman says.

### **Editor-in-chief Gill Hudson, Readers’ Digest UK**

Don’t make the product you like, like the product you make, says Editor-in-chief of the Reader’s Digest Gill Hudson. By this she means that editors should put their own preferences to one side and keep putting themselves in their readers’ shoes, staying close to what kind of content people really are interested in and on what kind of platforms they want to read it.

Hudson gives two examples of what can go wrong if you don’t, firstly with the practical, homes-based women’s magazine Prima, established in 1986. Many female journalists did not believe in it at the time because they thought British women were far too modern to take an interest in knitting patterns anymore. Yet, Prima became the best selling women’s monthly magazine in the UK.

A current example comes from Hudson’s own publication, the Reader’s Digest. It has a circulation of 370,000 in the UK and 20 million worldwide. Although the industry is hoping that the iPad will help reverse the decline in print circulations, the reality is that early iPad sales have been tiny – in the first six months Reader’s Digest iPad app sales were 286. For the moment the real money is still in print.

It’s also important not to make assumptions, says Hudson. For instance, you would think that most people would want to read their magazines digitally on an iPad rather than on a smartphone – yet, Future Publishing reported that their downloads were split around 50-50 between the two platforms.

Hudson believes it's because "people tend to carry their phones with them everywhere, which is not always the case with iPads. You have to keep looking at what consumers are actually doing, not what you just think they are doing".

Hudson adds that, with the publishing industry in the middle of profound change, it's too easy to get distracted by the platform rather than focusing on the content.

"An editor's job is still about bringing clarity and focus. You still need to ask the basic questions: why this subject? Why this publication? Why now?"

Part of the distraction comes from the idea that digital content is somehow superior to print content – as long as it is tweeted, shared and blogged on. In reality, a blog may have many followers and yet not be very good.

Indeed, Hudson is worried that journalism starts to resemble quasi-marketing and PR. There are no gatekeepers anymore, so anyone can start a blog and start tweeting, as different companies are doing already: Burberry and Net-a-porter are publishing their own blogs. Companies and individuals are using social media as a promotional tool: there is a great event here, don't miss out on this competition. Thus, the line between journalism and promotional content becomes blurred. There are also a lot more financial partnerships between media companies and other companies. Sponsored journalism is on the rise.

"This may be not so much of an issue if you write about nice soft lifestyle things. But how can you write harder investigative stories when your independence might be compromised on many levels? Pure journalism will be much harder to sustain in the future."

Hudson envisions a future world where people walking down the street will become individual broadcasters or publishers in their own right, with chips inserted under their skin, sending and receiving messages all the time. In the big crowd only the most individual, most talented and most knowledgeable voices are listened to.

If Hudson was to start journalism all over again, she would choose an area of expertise that she would become a specialist in. As the population in the West ages, Hudson predicts that there will be much more need for health journalism in the near future.

Expertise can be built into a brand and works as a personal insurance in an insecure field.

### **5.3 How to survive yourself**

In this chapter editors describe the most common challenges in their work – and how they manage them. Many of British and Finnish editors interviewed on this issue requested anonymity in answering this question, thus all identities are concealed.

The challenges are divided into three categories. These include general leadership challenges, such as managing journalists' big egos, and more current challenges, such as financial austerity and digital transition. The third category is the clash between the two cultures of creative journalists and top management.

### **5.3.1 Big egos**

It's like herding the cats, said an editor when asked what managing journalists is like. Or monkeys, added another (monkeys being perhaps even smarter and more agile than the cats).

Among the editors interviewed for this study, most often mentioned challenges at their work were those related to employees' big egos and fluctuating sense of self worth. Especially in British publications, a well known star reporter or a presenter may not only be much better known but also much better paid than their editors, underlining journalists' feeling of superiority and independence. This demands a lot of any leader.

Big egos often belong to ambitious and talented journalists who don't necessarily think they need an editor. However, among the best there are also those who demand and need a lot more attention and self assurance from an editor than an average journalist.

Thus, the problem in a creative workplace lies with the level of interference on both sides. What is the right level of interference by an editor compared to downsides caused by it? And how constantly available needs an editor be?

“One problem about leading feature writers is their use of time. Feature writers come in two groups: some are too independent, work hard by themselves and write themselves into a corner. Others steal the editor's time: they want to talk to their boss all the time, report every phone call and ask advice on everything. Both types need to be steered towards middle ground. An editor has to get involved with lonely people's process early enough and throw the babblers out of the room”, says one Finnish editor.

For many talented journalists the job is their personality. To avoid a clash of egos an editor needs to build some distance between himself or herself and the role he or she has as an editor. Remember: it's not about the editor.

“You have to convince yourself that you are more mature than your employee even if you are not”, says one experienced British editor.

“You have to be yourself, just a little more zen”, says a Finnish editor.

She suggests that an editor should always concentrate more on an employee and his or her development opportunities than on building editor's own authority or wondering about his or her survival.

"You also have to get enough sleep and take care of doing other things than work – lest you lose perspective, which does not benefit anyone", she says.

There are other practical things: an editor can concentrate on dedicating his or her expertise to the end product, as discussed in the chapter 5.1.

"The mutual respect is achieved by being respected in the field yourself. Becoming an editor is a matter of choice: you have to accept that your respect is not based on authority but on everyone working towards the same goal, a good story", says one Finnish editor.

"If you have a career like mine where you have gone from a journalist to an editor-in-chief to another editor, it is not about the length of your dick. The only focus should be the good end product."

Criticism and competitiveness of creative people can be turned into advantages.

"Critical employees are demanding but crucial in developing the publication. Too often editors discard employees' comments as unnecessary critique", says one Finnish editor.

"A competitive nature is a good thing because if everyone is trying to beat others and themselves, the results are better. But competition should not be allowed to poison the atmosphere. An editor should not give the impression that he or she allows gossip to have an impact on decisions", he adds.

It may also be useful for an editor to have a confidante outside, someone he or she can talk to. It can be the editor's own editor or a colleague – as long as the confidante is frank and able to give honest feedback.

What about the different needs of creative people?

One British editor compared leading journalists to leading a successful cricket team. After retiring from sports, a famous English cricket captain Mike Brearley educated himself to a psychoanalyst.

An editor needs some understanding of people's psychology because one size does not fit all.

"I had a young woman working for me who had an incredibly low self esteem. She had great organizational skills and was very persistent in everything. Once we run out of printer ink in the middle of rural Romania, and she was able to arrange some more in the matter of hours. It was noticing these skills that had nothing to do with journalism that made a difference", says a British editor.

A Finnish editor also reminds that people are not necessarily at all what they seem. A good editor tries to differentiate between the public and private roles of an employee.

“I was at loss with a key employee because he was such a great team player among his colleagues, yet agonizing in my company. It wasn’t until I realized that he had two completely opposite roles, one in front of me and one in front of the colleagues (and the one in front of me enabled the other in front of the colleagues) that I was able to support him”, the editor says.

Sometimes it is hard to differentiate between the role of an editor and a role of a psychologist. If an employee needs constant reassurance, attention and support, an editor has to ask if the problems at hand are something that he or she has any power over or if they have anything to do with the roles of an editor and a journalist – or are they problems concerning an employee’s personal life.

It may be a fine line.

“A mature editor understands that an employee’s criticism may have reasons beyond work”, says a Finnish editor.

“Some people are quite difficult and some are only difficult. You also have to know when not to interfere.”

Leading may be a balancing act between what an editor wants to contribute and what he or she estimates to be the consequences of interference. A British editor remembers coaching a star reporter, being famous for doing conversational interviews and interrupting politician, into being less pushy and more analytical next time so that a politician would not gain the upper hand by calming the reporter down on air. The star “was irritated like hell” about the advice but in the end did what the editor asked him to do. The result was a catastrophe: the reporter lost all his enthusiasm and the interview was dull.

“I thought I had given good advice but I had not thought what kind of an effect giving the advice would have on the reporter”, the editor says.

In reading different people, it is very useful that most editors have been successful journalists themselves. They understand the nature and the importance of the work. As one Finnish editor put it, editors “know better than to present the newest company bonus model to them (journalists) thinking that they would take it seriously for a second”.

Similarly, a couple of Finnish editors believed that they should not be supersensitive to employees’ needs but could adopt some of their attitudes to survive.

“You survive (journalists being critical, anti-authoritarian and competitive) by being critical, anti-authoritarian and competitive yourself. I made it clear that I value all opinions and also the people expressing them, but I am the boss”, says one Finnish editor.

One thing is to lower your expectations of what a perfect editor should be like. Editors are human and make mistakes. A British editor says that there are people he would hate to lead because they are just notoriously difficult personalities. An editor cannot change people.

Instead, an editor can think of ways to use a star's negative sides, for example arrogance and egoism, to a common good. The British editor encouraged the star to teach his skills and techniques to young journalists that would benefit from them – and in front of whom the star could enjoy being admired.

When real difficulties arise, they should be handled swiftly because often time doesn't make difficulties to disappear but escalate.

One editor remembers a case of a star developing a case of bad alcoholism over years. The star denied the problem himself and promised to seek help, but the problem repeated itself. After several warnings he was forced to submit his resignation.

“In a perfect world he would have admitted he had a problem, sought help and found motivation to get better. In a perfect world colleagues would not have covered for him for so long. In a perfect world an editor, me, would have been tougher the first time around. Maybe things would have turned for the better. Maybe not. At least I would have felt a bit better about it all.”

### **5.3.2 Digital transition and economic difficulties**

“I would never allow my kids get into journalism. No way”, said one British editor on the condition of anonymity. The outlook for the British newspapers does look bleak, bleaker than for Finnish papers, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Current challenges of digitalization and declining audiences affect the balance of power in a newsroom in opposite ways. Especially in British print media, but also in Finnish papers austerity measures have made jobs in journalism much less secure: employees have to work harder for the same or less amount of money. Reporters are made redundant or given retirement packages, and nobody or fewer numbers are hired to replace them. This makes motivation a more difficult task than before.

However, the digital revolution has also given new opportunities for well known journalists to be active in the social media, especially in the U.S.A. and Britain. They may attract a larger number of followers through Facebook and Twitter than through their employers' publication. Thus, they can become strong individual brands independent of their publisher.

A good example of this kind of a journalist is a former Sky news digital news editor Neal Mann who had 100,000 mentions and retweets from his Twitter account in a three month period surveyed by the Tweetminster news website and PR agency Portland last year. Mann left Sky in the spring of 2012 after the company tightened its retweeting policies.

Even if the brand journalist stays in house, this popularity obviously gives them more power at the expense of their managers at the time when they can attract a lot of traffic and drive subscriptions to the publication. “It is very hard to have her do anything extra, anything else that she wants to do”, says one editor of a star journalist.

On the other hand, the less well known journalists are at the mercy of financial austerity facing media companies. The same applies to nameless subeditors who “are a dying breed”, as one British editor puts it. Subeditors are more easily replaceable at the time when especially young people trying to get into journalism are willing to work for very little money. This is a problem especially in Britain where the way into journalism goes through unpaid internships.

“If you want an internship in many London papers, you need someone to support you and pay your rent for what might be months. That excludes a lot of people right at the start and works against diversity. I am almost afraid that journalism will become a profession that only children of a so called landed gentry can enter”, said one British editor. She recommends that unpaid internships should not extend beyond four weeks.

At the same time, the prospects for middle aged staff look bleak, too. They have permanent positions, good salaries but no skills necessary in the digital age. Thus, a British editor says she desperately needs the skills of young journalism students fresh out of university but cannot hire them because old journalists are holding on to their jobs as long as they can.

“If you look at it from employer’s perspective, there are a lot of expensive employees with limited skills, and then there are few skilled people who are cheap”, says one British editor.

“People in their 40s to 50s are at risk of being isolated. They would need to update their skills but there is not a lot of training going on.”

This need of digital skills has flattened the hierarchy within media. An experienced British editor remembers how as an intern herself, an editor-in-chief was a distant authority. Now any editor-in-chief needs the technical skills of an intern or a journalism student.

This leads to the difficult question of equality at the workplace: what is it and how should an editor exercise it?

“We all know that some people are more talented, better, faster, more important and more valuable than others”, says a Finnish editor.

“What should an editor think about this if he or she has decided to be just? How do you maintain necessary craziness and freakishness in a newsroom if you are fair at all times? And how do you measure equality if you have to? Dedication versus creativity, craziness versus trustworthiness...”

She gives an example of a situation where cuts have to be made. Temporary staff won’t have their contracts renewed, even if the quality of the publication suffered.

“I think the employer should be ruthless and touch the untouchable. Fire permanent staff? Even though the sympathy would freeze the newsroom? In our company the solution has been early retirement. Should it have been something else, in the name of journalism? Yes. But who would do the bad deeds and yet maintain the motivation of the rest?” She has no answer.

Economic difficulties may force some publications into the kinds of collaborations with customers and advertisers that journalists don’t necessarily approve of. One of the qualities of a good journalist is integrity which is often seen as opposite of financial reasoning. This is especially so in Finland where newspapers still make a profit.

“Journalists find it hard to understand and accept the realities of the capital world: the money in the media companies does not just appear from somewhere. It comes from paying customers that have their own justified hopes and expectations. For a journalist, acknowledging the needs and expectations of customers is very difficult, completely alien or even repulsive”, describes a Finnish editor.

So what can an editor do? He or she cannot change the economic realities, yet has to keep the staff content. That in itself is a formidable challenge at the time when “there is a sense of finality in the air”, as one British newspaper editor described it.

Lead from the front and embrace the change yourself, advises a British editor. It reduces the fear. Concentrate on the good aspects of the change, says another. A young journalist will need much broader range of skills than the older ones: he or she needs to be able to do writing, editing, audio and video in all platforms. It will be a richer career to build on.

Develop the skill of stepping outside and looking at the situation from there.

Forget the noise around you and get back to the basics, suggests one. During the dot.com bubble at the beginning of the millennium many investors got lost in the hype. The same is happening now in journalism even if print products still bring in most of the money. An editor still needs to ask the same question: why this subject? Why this publication? Why now?

After all, brand journalists leaving publications is not a new phenomenon. It is no more of a problem in the digital age than before if the publication has a strong brand as well.

“What is the downside for a magazine if someone contributing to it is a recognizable voice or an opinion leader?” asks a Finnish editor.

“I believe that in the future a media brand greatly benefits from its connections to well known journalists who are visible in other media, too.”

Perhaps the most profound change has already happened in the minds of editors: they stress humility. Editors interviewed for this research are no autocrats that assume to dictate what is done,

but their attitudes reflect the flattened hierarchy of the digital age. They recognize that the quality of content is far more important than the powers of an editor.

After all, it is not only editors but all journalists have lost power due to the net and the social media: as one Finnish editor puts it, a journalist can never be an expert on everything, yet the net is full of individual experts on anything. Thus, all journalists have to be more humble than before in front of audiences because the feedback about mistakes is instant and competing information much more easily available than before.

Last but not the least, at a time of a fierce competition with a cheap young workforce, the rise of individual brands and continuous cutbacks, an editor needs to think about his or her brand as well. An editor is wise if he or she is comfortable in a digital world but also maintains his or her expertise as a journalist. In that way an editor has more options to fall back on if resources dedicated to editing continue to be cut in the future.

Remember what made you go into journalism in the first place. The intrinsic motivation brings comfort and clarity in the most difficult of situations.

“I feel like saying to young people who come here to do work experience that there will be journalism in the future, but I don’t know what it looks like. So if you can wait a bit, see how this turns out and keep other options open... that would be wise”, says one British editor.

That is a relevant advice to all editors as well.

### **5.3.3 Conciliation between creative journalists and top management**

The professionalization of top management has created two cultures within many media organization, as discussed in chapters 1 and 3. The goals of top management are often numerical even if they take quality into account, whereas journalists are most interested in their freedom to create and may ignore financial arguments.

Editors fall somewhere in between these two very different cultures. How do they conciliate between the needs of creative journalists and the goals of top management?

Some editors interviewed for this research understand “top management” as publishers and CEOs of their media companies, while others count editors-in-chief as top management as well. In practice the conflicts arise from either editorial or financial disagreements.

“The goals of the top management and a journalist come into conflict when both have a strong but opposite vision of something. In principle and in practice I fall in between. It has led into editing articles to a more current or more opinionated form”, describes one Finnish editor.

“Sometimes I have had to remind people that this is a work place, we all are here at work and have our own editors.”

As far as the financial goals are concerned, many editors say they don't feel too conflicted because they expect top management to have more interest towards business than content.

“I don't see it as a problem that our CEO doesn't have a background in journalism, and he is a good CEO in not pretending to be an expert in that field. We do need someone to take care of political relations”, says a Finnish editor.

“CEOs have to understand that they are not captains of a ship, but admirals of a flotilla”, said a British editor. “They can't be involved in everything.”

However, not all journalists understand the different roles that top management and editors play.

“You have to try to explain the goals of top management in a way that they do not face immediate resistance”, says one Finnish editor.

“Many reporters are still quite critical towards commercial aspects. They don't understand the viewpoint of top management or even accept that the money has to be made somewhere.”

In these conflicts editors have a crucial bridging role to play. In that role an editor's own journalistic experience is again useful. After all, journalism for journalists is not about making a profit but telling stories and revealing truth.

“I feel like a mediator or an interpreter. Often creative employees long for “a big picture” and purpose beyond the next article. I see that creating this purpose and keeping it up is an integral part of my job. My job is to add meaning into the goals of top management”, says one Finnish editor.

What he means by this purpose is that a successful article contributes to the publication brand, but may also provide readers with information and insights that affect their behaviour. In the best case an article may renew journalistic conventions and therefore serve the whole profession.

“Even though publishers and creative professionals don't always understand each other, both are after the very same thing: added value that can be financially measured, yet creative by nature.”

However, not all editors are willing to accept the bridging role or even try to conciliate between the needs of journalists and top management. If sides have to be taken, editors identify themselves more on the side of the creative culture, especially on financial austerity measures.

A couple of editors even mentioned that dealing with their own editors or senior management was the single most difficult aspect of their job.

“I think that the top management of media companies has taken away the power of editor-in-chiefs. Editor-in-chiefs are like puppets that have to constantly fear for their jobs because the visionless and insecure top managers change their views as often as their stockings. How could one be a supportive and productive editor in these circumstances?” asks one editor.

“It is ridiculous for top management to assume that editors should get more out of their employees than ever – yet with less money and in shorter time. It is an impossible job, but hey, someone’s got to do it.”

One editor says that he does not conciliate but talks straight to top management, consequences notwithstanding. Not long ago his open criticism almost had him sacked.

“If the goals of the top management are idiotic, I let it be known. I say fuck off and refuse to bow to stupidity. Quality is the key to making money and I see it as my duty to take care of quality so that money keeps coming in.”

Sometimes disagreements between editors and senior management become irreconcilable. One disappointed editor gives practical advice for dire straits.

“An editor or an editor-in-chief should ask for all requirements, goals and objectives set for him/her in writing. An editor should also be told, in writing, what will happen if these goals are not met – which goals are the most important and should be reached in which time”, he says.

“Also, if an editor does not reply to questions presented in writing but chooses to call back, he or she should always make notes of the call. This may not change anything but at least the editor’s back is covered.”

What many editors complain about is the unprofessionalism and lack of vision of top management. The answers reflected how little trust there was in the vision of top management in changing times: management and editors-in-chief were seen to be as lost as everyone else.

Naturally, part of this criticism stems from the anti-authoritarian attitudes of journalists that the editors themselves used to be. Thus, it may be very useful for an editor to reflect on his or her management style in comparison to that of an editor’s own superiors, for example editors-in-chief. If an editor-in-chief uses language that does not convince the editor, that style should be avoided when the editor talks to journalists.

Also, there may be a lack of understanding on both sides about the new role of the editor-in-chief: in many publications he or she does not deal with editorial decisions anymore but concentrates on the business. Therefore his or her journalistic visions are not as crucial as before – and both editors-in-chief and editors would have to acknowledge this.

The higher up an editor is, the bigger decisions she or he has to make with incomplete information, observes a Finnish editor.

“I wish big bosses would remember that they are not experts on everything. They cannot be.”

A British editor argues that the rapid pace of change has caught senior management off the guard. According to her, often senior management people are not digital natives and lack the essential leadership quality of having a vision.

“We go through an exceptional pace of change in the media. Yet, most journalists and editors have to focus on the next 24 hours because that’s our job. We don’t have senior managers dedicated to long term planning, no people thinking beyond the 24 hours. Hence, when they start implementing a new strategic vision, they don’t have a broader picture of the field. That is making things very difficult for us all.”

Despite all these complaints, a few editors also pointed out that the differences between editors and management are sometimes exaggerated. An editor does not always have to choose sides.

Wandering in both worlds and conveying ideas and worries may be also be – fun.

“Not always is the top management so out of it as the creatives in the cafe think they are. And it is not time wasted to lecture top management what journalism according to journalists is all about”, she says.

“On the other hand: there are people among journalists, too, who like strategy and the business side of it all. We are not always on such opposite sides than it seems.”

## **6. Conclusions: Editor's handbook**

The core question of this research is how to lead creative journalists at the time of digital transition and economic difficulties. The opinions of British and Finnish editors were discussed in length in Chapter 5. The main points of their advice are presented here in a handbook form.

### **6.1 Twenty tips on motivating journalists**

1. Say clearly what you want and keep repeating it.
2. Always give well grounded reasons, never hide behind your job title.
3. Learn to say no and say it as early as possible, if it is needed to be said.
4. Show, don't just tell.
5. Recognize that praise is often just as important a motivating factor as money.
6. Treat people equally and share praise equally, however different roles people in a team may play.
7. Make small achievements into a big thing.
8. Remember that you get what you measure. Reward behaviour you want to see more of.
9. Impress your audience first, your peers second.
10. Demonstrate genuine interest in people and their work.
11. Set broad goals and a timetable, but don't interfere in the details.
12. Share expertise and information liberally.
13. Show your trust by giving space and autonomy.

14. Encourage and reward collaboration to stop destructive competition.
15. Keep in mind that one size never fits all: make an effort to understand the different motivations and obstacles in people's performance.
16. Protect your employees from unnecessary bureaucracy.
17. Remember that people need to be included and their ownership of their work recognized. Work is not something that creative people do only to earn money, they need the work itself.
18. Nurture unique talents that may become valuable brands. Diversity works towards diverse content.
19. Concentrate less on rules and more on values.
20. Appeal to hearts, not only to minds.

## **6.2. Twenty tips on managing digital change**

1. Like the product you make, don't make the product you like. Update your information on your audience and their needs in the digital age.
2. Explain the direct benefits of the digital change to the publication and individual journalists.
3. Create an open space in the newsroom to encourage collaboration, constant reorganization and web ready workflow.
4. Create a work process where all content is planned for digital even if it was published in print. Think digital first and then what extra should be added to the print version.
5. Move from a brand centric approach to a content centric one. An editor needs to spend less time thinking horizontally about the contents of a newspaper on any given day and more time thinking vertically how to deliver a certain story across multiple platforms.

6. Remember that the story is not the end of the process anymore, but the beginning. Put readers first and take advantage of the community element of the social media in planning the stories: crowdsourcing, instant feedback, data mining, tweeting etc.
7. Make sure that the editor-in-chief is committed to change. Ideally, someone at the senior management level should be capable of synthesising content and technology competencies.
8. Turn best and most respected journalists into advocates for change. When others see the benefits of using new tools, they will follow.
9. Create peer competition at the grass roots level. Change your reward structures by introducing for example prizes or bonuses for best digital innovation.
10. Give feedback about digital content first.
11. Remember that the more noise there is, the more there is need for a filter. It is all about your publication becoming the most valued filter for your audience.
12. Don't get too wrapped around platforms but trust the editors to clear the blog fog. Remember that an editor's work is still about the basics: why this story, why this publication and why now.
13. Embrace the idea that you need your interns. Remember that old hierarchies have crumbled and some of the most valuable talent may be found at the fringes of your organization.
14. Nurture journalist brands because they can drive subscriptions in the digital age, but don't forget your publication's brand either. Remember that following a person or a publication is a way to build an identity: I am clever because I am reading this clever content.
15. In the time-poor age the 'finishability' of an issue may be important, irrespective of the platform.

16. Remember how different platforms produce different user experience. Print is lean back experience, web is a lean forward experience, iPad is lean back experience 2.0. Ipad is for longer and mobile for shorter reads.
17. Remember that transparency is the new objectivity in the digital age. You can argue for one opinion as long as you make your position clear.
18. Make sure you have the best possible digital content management system for your publication. It makes a big difference in how much your online content is read and shared.
19. Show best practice and keep learning from it. Provide ongoing training to take away the fear.
20. Lead from the front and embrace the change yourself. Make sure you are able to understand how new media can be used in journalism. That is your own life insurance.

### **6.3. Twenty tips on surviving yourself**

1. Keep in mind that editor's job is not about you, the editor. It is what the editor can do to improve the quality of other people's work.
2. Create a purpose bigger than the next task or the success of a company for the employees. Journalism is about truth and the truth can change the way people think and act.
3. Remember that an editor serves journalists, but also the audience. Acknowledging who you represent makes saying no to journalists and demanding more of them easier.
4. Build an editor's identity. Realizing that it is a job, not the meaning in life makes displeasing people easier.
5. Keep up your expertise as a journalist. Expertise is your most important contribution to a journalist, and it is also your insurance for the future.
6. Try to turn critique into advantage and put useful feedback into practice.

7. Confide in someone trustworthy and capable of honest feedback outside your department.
8. Differentiate between professional problems you are able to solve from personal issues you cannot solve. This applies to your employees as much as to yourself.
9. Consider not only the right actions needed, but also the effects they have on the person or the team in question.
10. Hold on to your own journalistic identity and don't give in to management talk because it doesn't work with journalists.
11. Accept that you won't like everyone you work with and that previously nice colleagues may turn sour once you become an editor.
12. You can show emotions lest you appear inhuman, but act on them very selectively.
13. Be sure you know what is expected of you and in which time.
14. When difficulties arise, deal with them immediately because time does not make them disappear but escalate.
15. Manage your time by concentrating fully on one thing at a time. A journalist is less impressed by your general efficiency and more impressed by the attention given to his or her problems.
16. Learn from the best and the worst practices of your own superiors.
17. Don't lose sight of the reasons that made you go into journalism in the first place. If you expect that money and other benefits are secondary to journalists, they should be secondary to you, too.
18. Expect results, not miracles of yourself.
19. Take good care of having a life outside work, lest you lose perspective.
20. Know when to quit. It is a job, not a life.

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## 8. Appendix: List of interviewees

Titles refer to the positions that interviewees held at the time of the interview.

In Britain:

Caroline Daniel, weekend editor, the Financial Times

Joanna Geary, digital editor, the Guardian

Georgina Henry, head of guardian.co.uk, the Guardian

Gill Hudson, editor-in-chief, The Reader's Digest

Kevin Marsh, the former editor of BBC College of journalism and the BBC Today program

Sue Matthias, magazine editor, the Financial Times

Bede McCarthy, executive editor, the FT.com

Nic Newman, digital strategist and former head of product development for the BBC News

Juan Senor, partner at Innovation Media Consulting

Olexiy Solohubenko, the news and deployments editor of languages and the former multimedia editor at BBC World Service

Tom Standage, digital editor, the Economist

Emma Tucker, editor of Times 2, the Times

Giles Wilson, features editor, the BBC News website

In Finland:

Edith Andersson, news editor and former Sunday features editor, the Aamulehti newspaper

Ville Blåfield, editor of the Nyt Weekly Magazine, the Helsingin Sanomat

Kari Huhta, the former foreign news and Sunday features editor, the Helsingin Sanomat

Ilkka Lehtinen, editor of Yle Asia current affairs program, Yleisradio public broadcasting

Jari Lindholm, managing editor, the Suomen Kuvalehti Magazine

Jaakko Lyytinen, arts and culture editor, the Helsingin Sanomat newspaper

Lauri Malkavaara, the editor of the Monthly Magazine Kuukausiliite, the Helsingin Sanomat

Reetta Meriläinen, the former editor-in-chief, the Helsingin Sanomat

Mikko Numminen, editor-in-chief, the Image Magazine

Mari Paalosalo-Jussinmäki, the editor-in-chief, the Olivia Magazine

Reetta Rätty, managing editor for features, the Helsingin Sanomat

Sami Sykkö, former editor-in-chief, the Gloria Magazine

Johanna Vesikallio, political editor, the STT news agency

Marjo Vuorinen, editor-in-chief, MeNaiset Ladies' Magazine

Pentti Väliahdet, documentary editor, Yleisradio public broadcasting

Elsewhere:

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Christian Nissen, adjunct professor at the Copenhagen business school and the former Director General of the Danish Broadcasting Company