POWER TO THE PIXEL
THINK TANK

Hosted by BBH Labs

BBH **Labs**

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

POWER TO THE PIXEL'S annual London Forum has become an unmissable event for anyone looking to develop film and media projects in tune with the way that audiences behave in a transformed digital economy.

In just four years, the four-day Cross-Media Forum has developed a pioneering programme that has helped bring cross-media ideas to mainstream thinking. The Forum took place 12-15 October 2010 and comprised a conference, a new cross-media market and project competition, and a Think Tank. The event showcases the leading innovative creators, entrepreneurs and financiers who are changing the way that stories are created, financed and reach audiences in a multi-platform world.

The event attracts some of the sharpest thinkers and media business innovators in the world, whose expertise has been captured in an annual Think Tank that takes place on the final day of the Forum.

This collective brainpower is turned to some of the fundamental issues that must be addressed to make progress and to offer a sense of direction for financiers, content creators, rights holders and distributors. It also offers a set of clear ideas for public policy-makers on a regional, national and international level.

The 2010 panel set out with a plan to look beyond the difficulties of digital transition, which dominate the general industry discourse, and to focus on a set of practical steps to support the development and financing of cross-media projects.

This report uses the term "cross-media" rather than "transmedia" to describe projects which take stories to audiences across a range of media platforms. The differences in the two terms are a minor semantic side issue and the two terms are used interchangeably by advocates without any confusion.

More important than the terminology is that these trends are beginning to attract serious creative talent and significant business interest, evidenced by The Pixel Pitch sessions, the inaugural Pixel Market which showcased 18 international cross-media projects and The Pixel Lab, where a total of 35 international cross-media projects were presented to leading funders, financiers and commissioners from across the media industries - 53 projects in all.

The Think Tank panel looked at cross-media storytelling and business models as a rapidly emerging trend to be addressed in practical terms rather than as a topic for future gazing.

This emphasis on accelerated evolution exposed some differences of focus in tactics among the distinguished panel drawn from the cutting-edge of the advertising, games and broadcast industries through to feature film production.

But clear commonalities drove the discussion towards the kind of positive conclusions that are rare in media debates today.

The panel was strongly driven by the idea that industry needed to look beyond fast-evolving technologies and to focus on the impact they had on audiences. The real significance of the digital revolution in film and media is the way that it transforms consumer/ audience behaviour.

The Think Tank took the view that the key to the future lay in understanding these changes, taking advantage of new networks and tools to meet the needs and expectations of audiences in a digital age.

As a result, it offered a set of fresh perspectives and, in the Power to the Pixel tradition, unfettered by siloed or narrow industry interests.

These conclusions are intended to inform other future debates from which practical ideas and working strategies will emerge.

The Think Tank then consciously aimed to avoid paralysis by analysis. Most of all, it was set up as a catalyst for action and this report aims to help achieve that goal by opening up the debate to a wider audience.

CHAPTER TWO: CROSS-MEDIA DEFINITIONS

THE IMMEDIATE challenge for any cross-media project is to clearly explain what it is to financiers and commissioners. Cross-media, transmedia and multimedia are seen as buzz words or a FAD throughout the media industries. Clearly describing a cross-media idea is a necessary precursor to selling a specific piece of work, the panel suggested.

That clarity, however, has not been helped in recent months by the way that so many in the film and media industries have latched on to the terminology in an attempt to make their projects sound more innovative.

Michel Reilhac, Executive Director of ARTE France Cinéma, warned of "fake" cross-media projects, which merely took elements of interactivity, a dash of social media, garnished with a fragment of multimedia marketing. "Just using the Internet does not in itself make something transmedia," he said.

Grabbing hold of every passing neologism has become a bad habit for the media industries which is why cross-media advocates need to be clear in definitions, suggested Reilhac.

At heart, he said, we were talking about an art form built on a new relationship between story and audience, enabled by social media and Internet technologies. It used media platforms to "optimise immersion" and to encourage forms of "communal ownership."

" An active audience requires an active industry response "

In other words, the audience is an active part of the process and cross-media thinking is based on finding ways to incorporate that engagement into the storytelling process.

Some of the panel felt that these changes were much more profoundly challenging to traditional media formats than is always understood.

Maureen McHugh, writer and partner at No Mimes Media said that new technologies played a key role in "rewiring our brains" and changing our expectations of entertainment. We can see evidence of this change in the ways we all now consume media where and when we want it; in attitudes to ownership and authorship of content; and in a growing expectation of some kind of interaction.

The extent and nature of this interaction was varied, it was suggested. Only a limited percentage would be active participants in projects, as co-creators or crowd-funders for example, but consumers to some extent were all part of an active audience, choosing if, how and when they became engaged with a story – and using their social networks to judge a project, share thoughts and so on. These were, or should, exert an influence on content creation, it was suggested.

For Mike Monello, the co-creator of the 1999 cult classic *The Blair Witch Project* – often seen as one of the progenitors of cross-media thinking – we already live in a de facto cross-media world, because a considerable part of the potential audience had already settled into new patterns of consumption.

The trick was to embrace this reality and breaking free of the shackles of the linear producer-consumer relationship was liberating, he argued.

Cross-media storytelling was an intuitive form that was not tied down by our received notions of media or by the restrictions of industrial organisation and format restrictions, said Monello, as a result considerably more interesting than conventional film storytelling.

Jean-Paul Edwards, Executive Director Futures at Manning Gottlieb OMD said definitions worked best when they were simple.

Cross-media should perhaps equally focus on the fundamentals rather than expecting anyone to buy into a bigger picture. "It is a new means to tell stories and a different, more powerful relationship with audiences."

Liz Rosenthal, founder of Power to the Pixel, suggested that at the moment there was understandably a focus on the complexity of transition, and definitions such as cross-media or transmedia are necessary to define a form of storytelling that is not confined to one single format.

"But maybe there will be a time in the not-so-distant future when it becomes irrelevant to define a project as cross-media, as it will be universally expected that a story should be experienced across multiple platforms and we will simply focus once more on storytelling."

CHAPTER THREE: ORGANIC STORYTELLING

AMONG THE MOST exciting elements of cross-media storytelling is that it is not tied down by the conventions of a single media. The story leads the way, bending the media to its own ends.

Panel members used terms such as "organic storytelling" or "native cross-media work" to show that individual media platforms were the tools of the story rather than the driver.

This is an important distinction and one not widely understood in industry and policy circles. There is no rejection of "old media" such as cinema: for cross-media developers, audience engagement design - deciding on entry points into a story - is the basis for decisions on how a story is told and where it is distributed.

And audiences can take the narrative in unexpected directions.

"On television, content is limited by time, the hour-long drama etc but online projects can take many different shapes… from five minutes to two years," said Femke Wolting of Amsterdam-based production company Submarine, which specialises in documentary, games and animation.

Although cross-media projects have often been associated with gaming culture, there is no reason why any particular medium is used. "Not everyone experiencing a cross-media story is going to go to every platform," said Marc Goodchild, Editorial Lead at BBC IPTV. "I'm not sure that everyone will want every piece of the story on every platform."

It was important to remember, he suggested, that people wanted to engage with the story, not because they were interested in the delivery technology, or wanted to be part of a cross-media movement. "It should be invisible," he suggested.

For Joel Ronez, Head of Internet at ARTE France, this balance between story and technology was essential to master: "It's not a question of using all the features that technology has, you have to find the balance of what technology offers."

The successful project had to avoid becoming just a checklist of new-media elements – Twitter, Facebook, website etc.

In cross-media, as in all other forms of entertainment, the story remained king. The change was how audiences found their way into the narrative.

Reilhac talked about creating gateways between the real and virtual world that offered appealing ways to engage with a story, not because of an interest in the platforms themselves but because they offered a variety of different "layers of interpretation and involvement."

"A lot of projects don't have that natural connection or that respect of the natural logic." People will not be herded across platforms, there needs to be a compelling reason, an unconscious compulsion as natural as turning the page of a book.

Get that balance wrong and the audience will be turned off.

Get it right though and cross-media has a huge advantage, because it goes with the grain of audience experience and expectation rather than trying to impose an industrial process.

Panelists saw the ability of cross-media storytelling to adapt to audience as a fundamental advantage. Cross-media does not require a huge shift in consumer behaviour, which was the problem that caused the death of so many dotcom projects in the late-1990s and first few years of this decade.

Michelle Kass of film and literary agency Michelle Kass Associates, goes further, suggesting that we are returning to some of the basics of the way that human-beings tell stories – de-industrialising the process. "Before formats created stories, storytellers created stories."

The key, she argued, was "non-linearity." The producer provides the story and invites the audience to find their own way into it.

This adaptability should also be a major benefit to filmmakers and storytellers. Stories can develop "organically" with a wide range of combinations and approaches, said Nuno Bernardo of beActive, whose productions include the Emmy-winning online series *Sofia's Diary*.

This change has certainly been powered by the Internet and social networking, which allows a more direct engagement between story and audience – much more like historic oral traditions.

What the Internet also does, beyond creating the basis for this personal experience, is to vastly extend the reach of content and the extent of this interaction to a global scale. National boundaries are simply irrelevant online and communities of interest can be created around a story, although Rosenthal explained that social networks did not work as simple add-ons to marketing plans but needed to be a key part of the development stage.

STORY WORLD

The creation of a "story world or story universe" is essential to cross-media, because it needs to keep a coherent sense of narrative across potentially many platforms.

For further information on building storyworlds please see presentation by Lance Weiler at Power to the Pixel's Cross-Media Forum 2010 on The Pixel Report.

Experienced commissioner of cross-media content, Rob McLaughlin, Head of Digital and Interactive Production and Strategy at National Film Board of Canada, suggested the same emphasis on story and engagement. Cross-media projects were often in danger of over-defining concept and under-defining story, he said. "You need to be able to describe the user experience in one page."

If cross-media storytelling really is tapping into long-established oral traditions, freed from the limitations of industrial structure, content creators may need to unlearn the conventions of existing media. However in tandem, cross-media storytelling needs complex and careful planning and design that at the same time allows room for the audience to organically enter into the story. Using multiple platforms, tools and devices to tell stories demands a whole new set of skills, collaborators and a new approach to authorship and ownership.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONNECTING WITH AUDIENCES

A NEW INTERACTIVE relationship with the audience is the credo of the cross-media movement. The audience is not the passive recipient of work and not an enemy to be conquered. Cross-media producers are not frightened of interactivity in any form.

Yet talking to the audience remains more a challenge to the mindset of most filmmakers.

The idea of the "auteur", the genius director, the sole visionary, is heavily ingrained into film culture, particularly in Europe. The panel suggested that this idea of the creative product emerging from a single mind was a myth. Film has always been a collaborative process.

Rather than a problem to be overcome, interaction was about opportunities to be seized.

"What's so great is that the participatory part can really create surprise," said Eleanor Coleman, Head of Children's New Media at TF1 France. "Things can happen that you had no idea could happen."

Ian Ginn, Producer of Hubbub Media in Holland suggested that a generation was emerging for whom this form of collaborative working was second nature. They have come to expect a say.

These new kinds of creative relationships with audiences required fresh thinking for content creators suggested Saneel Radia, of BBH Labs. "Storytelling has been all about output but the fundamental change is that we now have to accept inputs. Audiences are right outside the door and banging on it – the challenge is to open the door."

The interaction does not stop there, suggested Ben Grass, MD and producer at Pure Grass Films: "I think a profoundly new feature of the media landscape is the ability of audiences to interact with stories, not just in a two-way manner, but in a multi-party manner."

Filmmakers talk to audiences but those audiences speak to each other. Social networks offer unprecedented means to talk to audiences and for that interaction to take on a life of its own. Tapping into the potential of the viral spread of information and ideas - as many in today's film industry have discovered - is much simpler in theory than practice.

"It is becoming a way to have a conversation with the audience and that creates new possibilities," said Grass.

"It only becomes difficult when looking for an economic model to underpin these opportunities" – a problem addressed in the next chapter.

But any viable business models will be based on understanding the audience for a product. Cross-media projects existed in a media world that was moving away from numbers towards relationships, suggested Radia – from "eyeballs" to engagement.

Monello has been a pioneer in this field with award-winning work for Audi and, more recently, an innovative cross-media campaign and Alternate Reality Game for HBO's *True Blood*. [See Case Study of True Blood at The Pixel Report.] "200,000 people who deeply understand a product and brand are more valuable than 2 million lightly engaged," he said. The importance of creating core fans, advocates or ambassadors is essential to the commercial prospects for cross-media work.

The problem here – which directly impacts on the financial prospects of a project – is how to credibly measure engagement.

Box office data and television ratings can show historic information – who watched what – and try to draw retrospective conclusions.

The studios spend big money trying to extrapolate trends from such data and, of course, market research data can add insight to spreadsheets. However, such work is beyond the means of most independent film and media businesses and yet it is difficult to escape the tyranny of numbers.

Rosenthal again suggested the key was to build audience engagement and measurement in at the development stage of the project, making the data a key part of the success of a project, rather than trying to retrospectively decide what worked.

"We have little knowledge of how people want to engage. Why don't we spend money when we're developing projects, a kind of R & D stage for story development."

There are, of course, intangible elements to any media project. Data does not guarantee success and Radia says it is difficult to measure such things as "buzz and cool."

Equally, knowing what audiences have wanted is one thing, but tastes change and audiences may not know themselves what they want or enjoy being surprised with something new.

Cross-media is not based on some alchemistic search for a magic formula to what consumers want and yet there are few other businesses so reliant on intuition and guesswork as the film industry.

Collection and analysis of data now played a vital role in other industries seeking to prosper in a digital age, said Rosenthal – having data was not a simple solution but remained a key advantage.

SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT

By Seize The Media
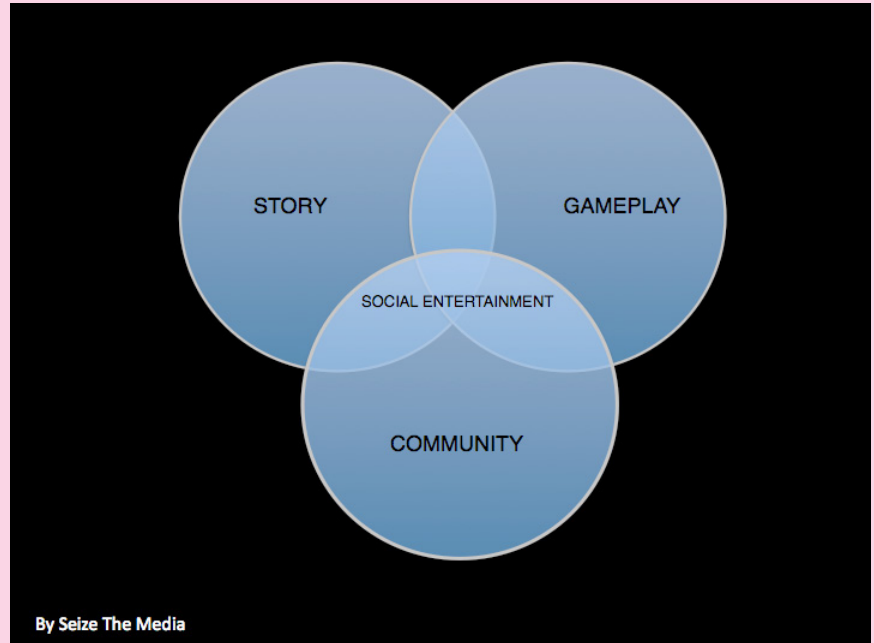
The relationship between social connections and storytelling is growing increasingly important.

Digitisation of content has resulted in a decrease in its traditional value but we're moving into a different value system where social connections between people will be key.

Three important things coming together - story, the importance of gameplay and social networks to create a new era of social entertainment

Storytelling has been restricted for a large period of time by traditional gatekeepers, formats, running times and release windows

We're now moving back to a 'campfire' approach where audiences share and embellish stories as they go along. A lot of the value that will drive social networks in the future is the desire for stories.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CROSS-MEDIA FINANCIERS

CROSS-MEDIA IS challenging to conventional financing mechanisms.

"The economic models are not here yet because it is too early: the financial system only comes in place when the risk is eliminated. Now is the time for risk takers and explorers, they will pave the way for the financiers." Michel Reilhac

Financiers generally take the 'devil you know' position and it is difficult to avoid watering down the cross-media elements of a project for a more conventional approach, even given the well-documented current problems for independent filmmakers and the huge drop in value of traditional media through digitsation of content.

"It's very hard to resist the temptation to just pitch primarily a TV series or a movie and say we'll do digital stuff around that," said Grass. "There are just not enough forward-thinking commissioners to put up the money."

Cross-media producers find that they are expected to fit within the tight parameters set by previous media.

"Quite often you are getting help from a distributor who wants to control access and at the same time you're bringing on an advertiser who wants wide distribution," said Grass. "It's hard to blend them in the same deal."

"The other gap is there is an absence of clear financial success stories. Because of that there is a huge category of potential investor who is unsure," said Grass.

Despite the success of many projects in terms of audience engagement, there is no specific way to measure this in terms of ROI that traditional investors understand.

Given that cross-media projects are not limited by a single format, there has been a tendency for over-ambitious projects. The broader canvas on which cross-media projects work inevitably led to some projects overstretching themselves.

Discipline was an important part of cross-media work, suggested Monello who warned that ambition had to be grounded in reality: "We all see the potential and we all want to go to the moon."

Unrealistic project budgets had little chance of attracting finance but they could also damage the reputation of the emerging cross-media field in the minds of funding bodies and financiers.

"I would like creatives to ask for lower budgets… and I would like funders to fund lower budget transmedia projects in the hope of learning from them."

The cross-media producer needed to understand economic realities. Financiers wanted to see the price tag match the lack of clear business models and case studies at this early stage of development.

Creating cross-media work necessitates collaboration with new partners and potential financiers from across the media and tech industries. It also needs partners and collaborators who are willing to

take a risk.

The panel also identified a number of financiers and organisations who have begun to fund cross-media work. Representatives of two of the important financiers of cross-media projects took part on the panel:

1. **ARTE** in France who have financed award-winning documentaries *Gaza-Sderot* and *Prison Valley* and recently announced finance for its first cross-media film project *Rosa*.

2. **The National Film Board of Canada**

Others mentioned who were financing devolopment or production of cross-media projects:

Bell Broadcast and New Media Fund (Canada), ABCTV Australia, CNC (France), Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg (Germany), Paramount Digital, The Media Fund (Canada), Nordisk Film & TV Fund, EU Media Programme.

At the moment the reality of financing a cross-media project means piecing together finance and public subsidy from an array of broadcasters, digital content and innovation funds.

Liz Rosenthal suggested that an important step would be to build a lexicon of funders who can finance either whole projects or specific elements of cross-media projects.

In the long run, the panel believed there were two elements of the cross-media offer that would create the basis for breaking through commercial resistance: data and visibility.

As previously mentioned, the commercial prospects for cross-media projects may be based on a fundamentally different model than film or other media forms. Brand collaboration and partnership for example may become important.

The close relationship that a successful cross-media project creates with its audience is attractive to some commercial brands without the compromise that comes with product placement. That is because product placement is essentially a numbers business, like newspaper advertising, hoping that a percentage of "eyeballs' will deliver customers.

The new offer suggests that brands may want to associate themselves with the emotional engagement of a story with which audiences have established a relationship,

There are obvious pitfalls here. At what point is the project driven by the commercial demands of a third-party brand and is it driven by a creative dynamic which brands want to tap into? It is an issue, particularly where public funding is concerned.

True cross-media projects, however, begin with the relationship with the audience and it is the success of this engagement that determines the interest of other brands. No trusted relationship, no commercial value.

The other factor here for brands and indeed financiers is how the value of engagement is assessed and measured – and how that data is presented.

Lack of transparency has always been an issue for film but at least part of the potential appeal for financiers of cross-media projects will be based on detailed data about audience behaviour. The shift

from eyeballs to engagement is an opportunity but one, as Rosenthal pointed out, that requires attention from the earliest stage of a project.

While data is a big part of the appeal to funders, it is not just any old facts and figures. She suggested that how to use data to create and demonstrate value was a new and essential skill.

Of course, in the early stages of cross-media development, the number of hugely successful projects remains relatively small.

Some of the panel believed that the breakthrough for more traditional media, including film and television, has tended to come through a specific piece of content or event.

Most of the panel agreed that waiting for the breakthrough hit before committing to cross-media project financing is irresponsible. We have many smaller success stories on which to build from. There will not be one model that will come along – we are in a permanent state of flux that will not settle until the huge growth in technology, processing power, new devices slows down which is not in the foreseeable future. During this time it is important to experiment with new models not to wait for a single one to emerge.

New partnerships may open up to increase visibility. Ginn points to magazine and newspaper publishers, who have large and often loyal audiences, but who are looking to find new ways to energise their online offering.

The next chapter addresses a big problem in terms of finance: while it is fair to point out the often conservatism of traditional financiers, there is also a lack of experience, skills gaps and sometimes a lack of realism in the emerging cross-media field.

CHAPTER SIX: NEW SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

THE DEVELOPMENT of cross-media narrative represents a huge culture shift for many media professionals. The panel noted that traditional screenwriters in particular struggled with cross-media storytelling. The most obvious challenge is one of format – understanding what works beyond a single-media format.

The problems are exacerbated by the inability of funding bodies to see beyond the traditional media silos.

This chapter highlights just a few of the key issues that need to be addressed for those entering the cross-media field.

CREATIVE ORIGINALITY

The potential that comes with new technology breakthroughs and changed consumer behaviour does not alter a basic reality, that great storytelling and creative talent are always in short supply.

Joel Ronez complained that there were "too many copycat projects" and a lack of creative ambition. The revolutionary means of distribution and marketing offered great things, but it means little to the end audience, who want what they always want from stories: to be surprised, amused, scared etc..

Cross-media needed to attract the right kind of talent with the great storytelling talent needed by all media, coupled with an understanding of how audiences interacted with different media.

GETTING REAL

As mentioned in the previous chapter, given that cross-media projects are not limited by a single format, there has been a tendency for over-ambitious projects or unnecessary use of multiple media. Often producers and creators feel obliged to complete a checklist of social and interactive elements to convince potential investors that their project is innovative, instead of carefully analysing how the project can be enhanced by a cross-media approach.

SKILLS

Those who have grasped the potential and acquired the appropriate skills are thin on the ground. "Projects need to deliver on an artistic, social or innovative level," said Rob McLaughlin. "But it's hard to make things happen with people who don't know how to do it."

Working across more than one media, of course, requires new skills sets. Most obviously, there is technical knowledge to be acquired in unfamiliar fields.

Given the rapid evolution in digital technologies, this is an area of permanent investment in time and money. But this online technical work is only one part of the equation. The development of new business models and an understanding of legal and rights issues are also challenges.

The biggest hurdles may, however, be in creating stories that work across multi-media platforms and creating relationships with audiences.

McHugh said finding writers with cross-media ability was particularly difficult. She suggested that traditional film screenwriters often proved to be the worst choices in the cross-media environment. Involving audiences was also a tough change of mindset for film, where the idea of the "auteur" was

strongly ingrained, as previously discussed (See Chapter Three).

In terms of story and audience, some of the panel believed that we were beginning to see the emergence of native cross-media skills. An important part of the acquisition skills was the sharing of knowledge between practitioners.

Some formal development of skills should be a focus for public sector intervention, the panel agreed.

RIGHTS

Control of digital rights was an essential element of cross-media work – the "heart and soul" of content creation, suggested Peter Buckingham. Unless the creator or producer retained control of rights there was no chance of creating workable platform strategies and little hope of international audience networks envisaged by cross-media advocates.

This changed relationship is one of the key differences between the analogue and digital eras. In film, for example, rights have been sold on, normally to a third-party distributor, usually for a single territory. The cross-media world is by definition multi-platform and global. And given that the content creator takes a story in multiple formats, it makes sense that they retain control over the rights.

This represents a challenge to distributors and broadcasters, who, suggested Monello, "have to get used to the idea of being a cog in the machine that is controlled by the storyteller."

Nuno Bernardo agreed that this was a period of unprecedented opportunity: "Until now, film and television producers were work for hire. Transmedia is the opposite, which means producers have to take risks but for the first time they are in control."

In effect, the producer controls the IP as Master of the Story Universe, with the overarching vision that can be exploited in different ways in different media. The IP follows the vision, rather than being the slave of industrial processes.

The irony is that control is not really what many producers want: a bigger slice of revenues, easier access to funds, sure… but not the responsibility of control and of managing relationships with audiences.

"Many traditional producers have little experience of controlling the destiny of their IP," warned Rosenthal.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ACTION POINTS

THE THINK TANK was asked to identify a number of action points that could help in the development of cross-media finance, production and distribution - and to establish its place as a key part of the film and media world. These steps are intended for filmmakers, content owners, financiers, commissioners and public policy makers.

EXPLAIN AND EDUCATE

- **Cross-media industry needs to build its profile through educating media business and policy-makers**
- **Cross-media industry needs to agree on formal sharing of information with each other**
- **National and international policy-makers should support platforms for sharing data and knowledge**
- **Cross-media advocates should lobby for a big role in European media literacy programmes**

Cross-media thinking requires a different mindset from both producers and those financing and commissioning content.

As mentioned earlier in this report, these new forms of art bring with them a credibility issue. This is a challenge for all those involved in cross-media work and an area where collective promotion of new creative forms and business models was essential.

The public sector at regional, national and international level should be a target for some of this attention, not only as potential funders but because cross-media work can support their own role in education.

Increasing 'media literacy' has become an important economic and cultural goal in Europe in particular. The panel felt that there was a role here for public-sector bodies with support for training and development which would educate existing talent and, importantly, bring in new talent.

The challenge for those involved in cross-media projects was to identify talent with skills in these new fields. Because existing single media formats, such as television and film, are currently seen as a safer bet by financiers, cross-media work can rarely match the rewards for talent.

So attracting new talent has a number of challenges. For cross-media producers, the challenge is to continue to promote the potential of these new storytelling forms, to inspire talent and to create the success stories that will attract more traditional commissioning bodies and financiers.

Suggested reading at:
www.powertothepixel.com
www.thepixelreport.org
The Workbook Project

BRIDGE THE SKILLS GAP

- **Public bodies should support specific cross-media training**
- **Cross-media pioneers need to continue building mechanisms for sharing know-how**
- **Public support is needed for specific cross-media support in its own right**
- **Cross-media advocates need to educate financiers**

As discussed in this report, cross-media development requires new sets of skills that are quite distinct from many of the traditional film and media disciplines.

Given the difficulties of models in the established media, and particularly film, there will be an increasing demand for cross-media skills.

At present, however, where training is supported at all, it is as a marginal add-on to existing business. The panel suggested that this approach stifled potential developments in new areas. Skills that might be necessary included:

- Cross-Media producing and project management skills
- Cross-media storytelling techniques
- Cross-media experience design
- Rights and legal issues
- Data collection and analysis
- Effective pitching
- User Design
- Use of new media tools

Each of these areas represented a serious obstacle for growth in the current environment. Each also represents high value even for those working in the conventional media, who will be increasingly confronted with how to deal with a demand-driven digital economy.

Cross-media experts should be leading the drive to modernise the skills base of creative industries.

INNOVATION FUNDING

- **Creation of R & D and seed funding projects for cross-media developments at national and international level**
- **Creation of mechanism for sharing findings from seed-funded projects**
- **Need to identify areas of future innovation as basis for funding policy**
- **Need to focus on development and distribution as well as production**
- **Need to develop ways to co-finance projects across different industries and borders**
- **Need to set up a network and directory of cross-media and innovation financiers**

Because cross-media projects are an exploration of new creative possibilities, they require a high degree of risk.

Those attracted to the field are often, of course, natural risk-takers and, as discussed elsewhere in this report, sharing ideas is a major part of the philosophy of this new wave of pioneers.

Nonetheless, support from public bodies could play a vital role and there is a strong argument that there is a wider social and business benefit to this early-adopter work, testing new ground in the interests of the wider media.

For all the recognition of the need to innovate, funding support rarely extends beyond a single media. What financial support there is for cross-media projects still largely comes from funds allocated to other media – film, television, games etc.

And tax breaks and other subsidies in much of the world, are massively skewed towards single format production, even where the result is over-production and under-distribution.

The solution, suggested the panel, was a seed fund for creative and business innovation. Ben Grass, of Pure Grass Films, said that cross media needed a "birthing partner". The real commercial potential will be realised when a business could look beyond single-media short-termism.

Liz Rosenthal suggested there was a clear need for R & D "seed money". A seed fund for ideas – it may be about designing prototypes demonstrating the user journey through a project that would be incredibly helpful for presenting often complex projects to potential financiers and investors.

The free sharing of ideas and information has already established itself in the cross-media world. With so much new technology and so many new means to engage audiences arriving in the current period of digital transition, there is much more to be gained by mutual exchange of knowledge than putting up barriers.

There are clearly areas of commercial sensitivity but the basic building blocks of cross-media creation were largely a matter of open exchange. This was particularly essential given the scarcity of some skills.

Sharing of tools and working practice needs to continue, suggested the panel.

DIGITAL RIGHTS

- **Retaining control over digital rights was fundamental to cross media**
- **Restrictions on existing rights such as windows and territorial rights could not work**
- **Policy makers could help by supporting innovators with rights**

Intellectual property law and restrictive practices over release windows could seriously stifle growth.

In the short term, the market will not be able to resolve these issues, particularly as the different sectors of existing industries are desperately fighting to defend their struggling rights and windows-based business models.

This is an area where public policy intervention may play a part. Some of that support may come from the innovation funds suggested earlier but there is also a strong case for a thorough review of rights policy.

These action points are intended as a rallying point for those seeking to develop cross-media projects. They are the start of what should be an essential debate.

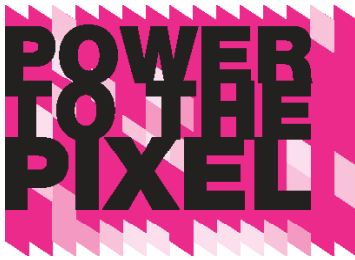Power to the Pixel, London
March 2011

ABOUT POWER TO THE PIXEL

Power to the Pixel supports the film and media industries in their transition to a digital age. Headed by Founder & CEO Liz Rosenthal, and COO & Producer Tishna Molla, the company's London team has a wealth of experience and expertise across film and cross-media development, production and finance, and is linked to a unique network of the leading thinkers, practitioners and innovators who are developing new business and creative opportunities around the world.

Specialising in new ways for content creators and businesses to create and finance stories and engage with audiences across multiple platforms, Power to the Pixel's core activities are:

- Providing consultancy to international media organisations, content creators and companies
- Designing innovative in-house company training programmes and bespoke initiatives
- Producing international forums, events and labs centred around cross-media IP and business
- Facilitating the exchange of ideas and the building of international partnerships between media professionals and between industries

The company's understanding of the challenges and opportunities of digital change means Power to the Pixel is an essential bridge between the visionary, the pioneering and the practical.

Power to the Pixel's clients and partners include: ARTE; BAFTA; BBH; Berlin Film Festival; BFI; Cannes Film Festival (Marché du Film); EAVE; IFP; Nordisk Film & TV Fond; UK Film Council.

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