



Improving standards and efficiency of broadcasting organizations through the development of human resources*

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This EBU TUTORIAL is addressed not so much to student engineers as to training managers and broadcast administrators. The emphasis is on the role of training in the rapidly-changing broadcast environment: increasingly competitive attitudes, evolving career expectations, the introduction of easier-to-use and more flexible programme-making hardware.

The conclusions favour consideration of training as a management tool, an incentive and an investment, contributing just like any other investment towards the achievement of the broadcaster's primary objectives.

1. Introduction

1.1. My point of view

My point of view is based on the European situation and is perhaps therefore different from what it would have been in another part of the world. Differences, if there are any, may be due to political, religious, geographical, sociological, or educational reasons.

However, many developments will ultimately take place everywhere - albeit not at the same time - in fundamentally the same direction.

My intention in mentioning these developments is to help people avoid re-inventing the wheel and benefit from the earlier mistakes and negative experiences of others.

My experience derives from my work as head of the Schule für Rundfunktechnik in Germany and as a member of EBU Working Party F, where "F" stands for the French word for training (*formation*) - and also for "future", the trainer's concern.

1.2. Looking back

Many broadcasting organizations in Europe and in other parts of the world were set up as a part of government, e.g. a ministry, or as a publicly-owned corporation. They were hence structured like public administrations. Some still are.

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“Quality” and “cost-effective” are not terms with which administrations are typically familiar. Broadcasters became aware of them when competition came along and financial resources no longer kept pace with costs. *Quality*, if thought of at all, had been understood as the highest possible quality (considering programme content, performance, technical quality, etc.), regardless of costs and audience figures. There were no criteria for measuring programme quality. The *cost-effectiveness* was that of a public administration: public budgeting systems are in contradiction with cost-consciousness. There are no intrinsic incentives to save money – on the contrary, anyone who saves money pays for those who haven’t done so. And there was no feedback from the market, owing to the fact that nobody had to pay for the programmes he or she had selected.

Most European broadcasting organizations reflected the status of the “technical media” by maintaining strong engineering departments – as at the time when broadcasting was invented.

Broadcasting training (in Europe, at least) started out as technical or engineering training. The reasons are easy to understand: highly specialized technical equipment was (and is) more often than not designed by engineers to be used and operated by engineers.

Future trends must be identified when it is intended to prepare young people for a career in broadcasting – and when further developing broadcasting staff to prepare for the future of broadcasting.

2. The situation of broadcasters is changing

2.1. Developments in society

Many authors have described the changes we are going through, focusing on various aspects – sociological, political, economic, and so on.

Most of us have experienced changes in the last few years, one of the most prominent being recent developments in eastern Europe. But there are other changes, perhaps not so easy to identify.

For example, young people have a different attitude to their jobs than their elders. They no longer “live for their jobs” or for their employers, as their fathers or grandfathers did. They rate personal freedom, family life, hobbies, etc. much higher, at least in the industrial countries. No doubt this tendency will spread to other parts of the globe with growing industrialization.

In former times, industry aimed to produce goods such as coal, steel, and machines. Today, services and information have become sources of affluence and power. Information counts – i.e. knowledge and the ability to acquire knowledge and produce new knowledge. In other words, there is a move from a “hardware age” to a “software age”.

Broadcasting organizations are good examples of the Information Age. They can be regarded basically as producers of software, of information, entertainment programmes, etc. They should basically see themselves as service companies, whatever their legal structure might be. Therefore, broadcasters should behave like service companies and produce like them.

How do broadcasting executives and trainers take these significant changes into account when producing software, and when selecting, training, and retraining their staff? What kinds of broadcasting personnel are needed in the Information Age?

2.2. Developments in broadcasting

Broadcasting organizations are gradually becoming commercial enterprises; at least, they now have to work internally like commercial companies, producing quality programmes cost-effectively. The development of human resources is the key to this process. Training is part of it.

2.2.1. Broadcasting jobs change

A few examples will remind us of the extent of the changes affecting broadcasting staff:



- editors, set designers, animators, amongst others, are now using computers more than their traditional tools and materials;
- the switching of continuity controls and distribution or transmitter networks is mainly performed by computers;
- many jobs which formerly needed technically-educated expert staff (engineers, technicians or technical operators) are now performed by suitably-trained production staff; equipment has become simpler to operate and at the same time more versatile and more reliable;
- outside operations such as ENG no longer need a van and a crew of three or more; in many countries the one-man crew has become a reality or is under consideration – even, perhaps, for satellite news-gathering;
- maintenance and repair have changed; the possibility of being able to repair faulty equipment on location is steadily decreasing; unless the fault is quite simple, one needs spare printed boards and sophisticated diagnostic tools.

2.2.2. Broadcasting organizations develop, too

These days, public service broadcasters see themselves in an “audiovisual media environment” – competing for audiences, revenues, attractive stars, programmes, and even for skilled staff. They have to compete on the open market for radio and television experts, who begin by asking who offers more job satisfaction, higher salaries, better career development, and safer pensions.

Originally, the objectives and philosophies of broadcasters developed in different directions, and the job requirements within the organizations differed significantly. Let me mention just two opposite categories of a broadcasting organization’s objectives:

- to produce and transmit programmes of the highest quality (as regards both programme content and standards, technical quality, etc.), more or less without taking into account the audience figures (even including “minority” programmes) or “commercial efficiency”;
- to schedule programmes that attract large audiences for commercial success – i.e. with barely adequate or even minimum costs for programmes, programme presentation, and transmission.

No doubt these types of programme require staff having different attitudes, abilities, and knowledge to produce and present good programmes efficiently.

In such a situation it is necessary to activate all internal resources in order to increase quality and effectiveness. Training is one of the tools for doing this.

3. Training in broadcasting

Broadcasting training has two main objectives:

- to develop attitudes in accordance with the broadcaster’s objectives; generally speaking this involves both the day-to-day operations of the organization and the staff’s career development and motivation;
- to develop the knowledge and skills required for typical broadcasting jobs; this necessitates very careful analyses of job requirements and target groups for training schemes in order to avoid a waste of training resources or frustration on the part of the people trained.

If one looks at training in this way it becomes obvious that training is an investment in staff and should be regarded as an investment just like any other investment in production and transmission equipment. This is one of the standpoints from which training should be considered.

Surely the money spent on maintaining technical equipment should be compared with the money spent on training and retraining staff. Technical equipment must be kept up to date. Staff must be kept up to date as well – and motivated to give of their best.



Top managers might look on training in another way: if the aim is high quality and efficiency in a broadcasting organization, all staff members who are expected to contribute to this aim must be able and willing to do so – whatever the yardsticks for quality and efficiency might be. This includes all programme staff, operators, and management. From this standpoint, training is a management tool for activating and further developing human resources which may be latent in a broadcasting organization.

“ Staff must be kept up-to-date, and motivated to give of their best. ”

Of course, there are alternatives to be taken into consideration: whether to invest in equipment or in staff, for instance. For certain tasks it might be advisable to invest in more sophisticated and redundant equipment in order to be able to cope with critical situations in case of malfunctions, or to avoid having repair or maintenance staff on site during the night.

Making the appropriate decision requires competent managers who will take the human, technical, and commercial resources into account. This in turn requires the appropriate development training of broadcasting managers, which is not available everywhere.

3.1. Training and the development of human resources

The development of human resources is a broad, complex activity comprising training as one component.

Training on its own is not sufficient; it will not succeed unless it is embedded in a development concept which is often named Organization Development (OD). The individual employee, with all his or her motivations, emotions, thinking, and experience, should be seen at the core of such a system.

Thus, training should be understood as an interactive process which requires that certain conditions should pre-exist in the organization. For instance:

- a vision (or a statement of objectives) which might be regarded as a beacon, an aid to aligning one's own decisions and work towards the general objectives of the broadcasting organization concerned;
- a training strategy which guides line managers and trainers along general lines to be followed – albeit flexibly – in training: objectives, incentives, promotion, staff development, etc.;
- a training climate that fosters personal as well as job-related development;
- an awareness on the part of managers and staff members of the need for, and results of, permanent organizational development and training in order to adapt the organization to changing individuals, environments, and markets.

To earn a return on investment for both employees and broadcasting organizations, training needs to be incorporated in a flexible system of staff and organizational development. It is necessary to offer incentives for training results and innovations; as long as promotion is mainly based upon seniority, there will be no motivation. In particular, the traditional automatic salary increase (every year or every other year, as in public administrations all over the world) has proved to be not at all motivating; it is counterproductive as regards both learning and performance. It would be better to have a performance-based salary system, however difficult it might be to measure personal performance in broadcasting.

An organization's self-awareness, its efficiency and working climate can only be developed by its top management. Therefore, in my opinion, the training of broadcasting executives is a priority requirement.

3.2. Who should be trained – and in what?

Updating and motivation for staff is not merely a question of staff salaries and money available for training. As money is losing some of its importance for staff members, one has to consider carefully how effective broadcasting training can be achieved.



To put it simply, training should convey what each individual needs in order to perform his or her job according to the job requirements and the organization's expectations.

If one looks into this question in more detail one soon discovers that the old approach of focusing training solely on knowledge relevant to a person's everyday work is no longer sufficient. Well-informed employees familiar with their colleagues' work and problems and with the organization's intentions and objectives are needed when a complex entity like a broadcasting organization is aiming at high quality and efficiency. (Another prerequisite for the quality and efficiency of an organization is its structure. A large number of books have been written in recent years on efficient company structures; most of these would be applicable to broadcasting organizations.)

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It is not the money spent on training that counts but, from the point of view of the staff, it is the spirit behind the training - this might be called the organization's "training climate" - which depends on the management and the organization. Some authors claim, for instance, that:

- to a certain extent training is a duty of the employees; it is not advisable to let employees become accustomed to demanding all training from their employers and to have all new knowledge presented to them "on a platter";
- the organizational pyramid as normally presented is inappropriate; it should be looked at upside down: employees of what might be called the "production and sales base" are the most important; all others, management included, are there to enable them to produce and sell;
- one should "make people love change": it is the organization's permanent adaptation to the market, customers, etc., that enhances an organization's future existence.

3.3. Who are the trainers?

Broadcasting training might be provided in very different ways. For example, it will depend on:

- the education environment of the broadcasting organization concerned;
- the numbers of staff to be trained and subjects taught;
- the availability of appropriate training staff, within the organization or on an ad hoc basis (freelance trainers or training organizations).

In Europe a broad spectrum is found, ranging from large broadcast training institutes for one or for all national broadcasters, to very small in-house training departments organizing training with outside trainers.

It should not be forgotten that the people who know best what training is needed are those in charge of staff, i.e. the line managers. They should therefore not only feel responsible for their staff's training, but should themselves be able to provide some on-the-job training, or, at least, instruction.

They should:

- possess adequate communication skills - which they need anyway in their jobs;
- be fully committed to the objectives and philosophy of the broadcasting organization to which they belong;
- themselves be up-to-date in their respective areas of activity and concerning the functioning of the organization as a whole;



- be aware of their responsibility to initiate training whenever needed, using their organization's in-house training capacity or outside trainers.

No doubt it would be very useful to have one high-ranking person in a broadcasting organization responsible for training: a Training Manager. The EBU Training Code (document Tech. 3255) gives details on the role of managers and training structures within broadcasting organizations. The Training Manager's responsibilities should include:

- development of a training philosophy to be set into operation by the top management, specifying the main aims and responsibilities as regards training;
- stimulation and support of line managers to identify training needs and to conduct or organize the appropriate training for their staff;
- coordination and evaluation of all training measures in line with the training philosophy.

3.4. Management training

It has been said that management training may well be the most urgent area of training, especially in a period of change. At the Sixth World Conference of Broadcasting Unions, held in Washington in 1989, Sam Nilsson, the Managing Director of Swedish Television, presented a paper on training for organizational change, explaining how Swedish television used training to implement a new organizational structure and thus to increase efficiency [1].

Broadcasting organizations are very complex entities, with staff ranging from skilled workers to people with degrees in widely differing subjects, journalists, engineers, musicians, etc. Many line managers are promoted from among these employees, but most of them have not been sufficiently prepared for their function. There are no training institutes for equipping future managers with the necessary management skills. It will come as no surprise that this system involves certain risks and disadvantages. This management training for broadcasting executives is a priority matter. I think this is true worldwide - with some local variations.

Another field in which management training has been identified as crucial to new developments is the case of new members joining the EBU from the former OIRT countries. Managers of nearly all levels (and programme and production staff as well) need re-orientation:

“ Management training for broadcast executives is a priority ”

- from being civil servants to being managers in a competitive broadcasting environment;
- from being “the voice of government” to being “representatives of the public”;
- from disseminating government reports to becoming investigative journalists.

The above is illustrative of the change in job requirements.

Experience gained with management training has shown that:

- problems are different in different organizations and cannot therefore be solved by more or less general training. Management training must be much more individualized than “classroom training”; it must be carefully tailored to specific needs;
- a more promising type of management training is by “flying visitors” - experts who come to assist an organization or a manager for the space of a few days in order to find solutions to problems identified in advance. It requires a clearing-house through which suitable experts can be provided; in the case of the merger of the EBU and OIRT, this role has been assumed by the EBU Permanent Services;



- good results can be achieved in workshops in which executives from different broadcasting organizations tackle problems they are confronted with, supported by one or two experts on the subject, playing the role of “activator”. This type of problem-solving workshop generates experience that can be taken home and put into practice immediately; the experience gained by the participants can also be passed on to colleagues.

Such methods are not at all new, but they are often disregarded when training activities are being researched or planned. I should therefore like to ask whether closer cooperation in training matters between broadcasting unions might not be useful - as, for instance:

- in setting up a clearing-house having contacts with broadcasting experts prepared to act as workshop activators or “flying visitors” in their special field of experience; some retired broadcasting executives might even like to make their expertise and communication skills available to colleagues in other organizations;
- in inviting broadcasters and broadcasting executives to make their requests to this clearing-house, which would then try to find an expert or two and organize the first contact and, if necessary, continue to arrange and, perhaps, finance the activity;
- in finding a system of financing this mutual assistance and having it supported by international organizations.

Management training has been identified as a most urgent need, even in well-established public service broadcasting corporations which are now being forced to convert to some extent into business operations, as is presently the case in many European countries. Therefore a joint European training Programme for management (and, in particular, strategic decision-making), especially designed for the upper and middle managements of broadcasting organizations, has been developed under the aegis of EBU Working Party F. This MANTRA project is aiming at a throughput of at least 300 managers in 12 courses over the next three years. A pilot seminar for some 25 executives is scheduled to start in the second half of 1992. To put it simply, each course consists of five or six seminar days together with practical work at home on selected subjects of relevance to the participants concerned.

In my opinion, this concentrated system might constitute a model for management training for broadcasters with different training requirements.

3.5. Training for HDTV and the 16x9 format

Training for high-definition television and the 16x9 format would appear to be good examples of how to provide future-oriented and effective broadcasting training.

First of all we should investigate what training has already been given in those countries that are most advanced in these two fields; we should then carefully analyse the training, its costs, and results.

From this we could learn what training might be needed for the different target groups of television personnel. It seems that some training will be required in order to be able to use the new format (16x9) correctly and take advantage of the amount of information presented in HDTV pictures. Both of these are more or less programme production aspects. Experience gained in Sweden seems to confirm this conclusion, while those of us who had the opportunity of watching HDTV pictures from the Winter Olympics in Albertville may have gained the same impression. This presumably means that training production staff (in the widest sense of the word) will be one of the more urgent needs, compared with technical or engineering training, for instance.

And we could draw another conclusion. Owing to the fact that HDTV will gradually be introduced into television studios all over the world, it would seem advisable for broadcasters' training institutes to cooperate in the development and production of training concepts and training materials.



“Broadcast training is an interactive process which builds on a vision, a training strategy, a training climate and an awareness of the need for permanent training and organizational development.”

4. Conclusions

Future trends must be identified when it is intended to prepare young people for a career in broadcasting, and when providing refresher courses for broadcasting staff in line with future job requirements.

Broadcasting organizations and broadcasting jobs have changed in recent years, and in the present situation, even public broadcasters should produce and behave like service companies. “Think commercially” is the watchword.

Hence it is necessary to activate internal resources to increase quality and efficiency. Training is one of the tools for doing this.

In summary, therefore, broadcasting training

- is a management tool for activating and further developing human resources which may be latent in a broadcasting organization;
- is an investment in staff (like other investments);
- has to develop motivation, attitudes, knowledge, and skills;
- should convey what each individual needs in order to perform his or her job;
- should be understood as an interactive process which builds on certain conditions pre-existing in the organization; these include:
 - a vision;
 - a training strategy;
 - a training climate, e.g. incentives, career development;
 - an awareness of the need for permanent training and organizational development.

To support this training strategy, line managers require communication skills and commitment, and they must themselves be up-to-date and aware of their responsibility to initiate training.

Training must be tailored to the needs of the organization concerned and of its staff: “flying visitors” and problem-solving workshops have proved to be more effective than general seminars.

The broadcasting unions should look into the possibility of organizing management training and seminars on new technology when necessary in many parts of the world. Examples are HDTV or the 16x9 format.

Within the EBU a management training cooperation system known as MANTRA has been developed which might provide a model for broadcasting management training on an international scale.

Bibliography

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