



## Top down, bottom up or sideways?

The key drivers in television broadcasting's evolution include the removal of past boundaries and constraints through enabling technologies and the demands of the consumer/viewer.

Significant change is inevitable.

More and more viewers are now opting for Video on Demand (VOD) and Pay Per View (PPV). Along with this pull technology is the use of Personal Video Recorders (PVRs). VOD and PPV were conceived and implemented by cable and satellite providers which now manage an inventory of content to enable these services.

Today, Internet providers have their own VOD content inventory.

Back in the mid 1990s, convergence seemed to be focused on content with some semblance to newer distribution channels. After many years of false starts and dabbling, the underlying technology platforms that will enable true convergence is now available.

Can we now assume a vision has or is appearing through the fog and are Canadian broadcasters ready?

To be sure, content is still king but two other key words must be added: free and on-demand.

How will broadcasters morph themselves to stay alive and thrive? With 2010's significant shift in leadership at several organizations, does this suggest a need for a different approach in leadership and visioning?

On another note, digital over-the-air (OTA) is a cost of staying in business but will it open up opportunities for expansion with the possibility of multiplexing (distributing digital specialty channels OTA)? Digital OTA signals will offer urban viewers superior quality with the use of an antenna. What about rural viewers? Will we see the new breed of Internet providers adopted as a viable alternative? What will happen to cable and satellite?

by Laurie Kennedy

## Top Down Approach

A shifting and re-engineering within organizations appears to be underway with much of the focus on a medley of inefficiencies and redundancies. While a common vision of the future amongst broadcasters would be ideal, many seem to be keeping thoughts close to their chests. Perhaps there may not even be a clear vision, but a hodge-podge of activities with no anchor.

For television to morph effectively, there will need to be many perspectives and activities woven together to enable a final transformation, e.g. ...

- Viewer trends and viewer demands (#1)
- Revenue models (advertising, subscription, pay per view)
- Multi-platform content distribution (OTA, over the Internet, wireless, cable, satellite)
- Scheduled playout (push) versus VOD (pull)
- Digital content creation and management (video, audio, text, graphics)
- Multi-platform advertising deals and performance analysis
- Relationship of the content provider, distribution platform and advertiser/ agency.

## Bottom Up Approach

In many organizations, what often happens is a more bottom-up approach to key change initiatives, usually driven by departmental visions and the need for operational efficiencies and cost reductions. This approach can have benefits but may also be disjointed with other departmental visions and workflows without a common top-line vision as the foundation.

Traditionally, Information Technology (IT) houses organizational data and supports business process workflows. In today's broadcast world, IT also hosts content media and supports content production and broadcast distribution workflows. Organizational data and content/media are shared by many departments and managed by process workflows which run horizontal through an organization crossing several vertical departments.

With technology solutions having an impact on virtually all departments and workflows, a more top down approach to design and implementation is more critical than ever.

Why?

Bottom up approaches don't look at nor understand all aspects required by a business transformation project and new workflows and systems are often designed and built from a narrow (fiefdom) perspective. Symptoms of this approach include . . .

- How do you measure success? No singular vision with clear operating assumptions and measurable objectives
- Inconsistencies in vision, priorities and business requirements between each department or line of business
- Design phases take far longer than expected—a lot of back and forth between departments
- Build phases take longer than needed—trying to accommodate all the disjointed business requirements

shifting  
transformation  
cost reduction  
perspective  
efficiencies

- Implementation takes longer than expected—low on the priority list; limited to no buy-in
- Implementation not received well—backlash from departments when they realize their world is going to change (and what the new operating rules are); why weren't they asked?
- Ongoing support inconsistent and not timely—not clear where the role of the vendor ends and the customer begins. Lack of internal skill sets to support the new technology.
- Angst among colleagues—IT technology solutions implemented within a traditional broadcast engineering environment with little understanding or a differing of opinion as to what is required to design, develop, implement and support new IT-based technology.

## A Sideways (Horizontal) Approach

I believe a new approach is needed to create the new go-forward Canadian business model. Perhaps a more synchronistic approach with core process teams (not departmental teams) working in conjunction with senior management to ensure all the benefits of a top down approach but with the depth of operational knowledge and familiarity with the new and emerging technologies. This will allow development of new business models and gain the biggest benefits in the quickest timeframes.

These teams need to focus on the new world in a dedicated and safe environment. For true success and innovation, they need to be lead in an unbiased fashion, focusing on what the organization needs first and foremost, prior to moving into the hows of implementation. Business Modeling and Process Re-engineering must come prior and then woven into the technology design and development.

Having said that, an upfront understanding of what the technology can enable is critical.

If the new convergence business models are to be implemented in the current culture, how long are we going to wait for something to be completed and, if past approaches are taken, how relevant will those models be when finally completed?

Strong unbiased leadership, with senior management participation and full support, using a horizontal (process) team approach, may be a first step.

*Laurie Kennedy, CMC is a consultant with Sapphire Leadership Inc. She may be reached at 416-918-4161 or [LSKennedy@sapphireleader.com](mailto:LSKennedy@sapphireleader.com).*

