

Executive Summary

The Situation

Like all other media, CBS Observer is challenged by digitalization and new audience habits. On the surface CBS Observer is doing well. Traffic is modest, but stable. However, structurally, CBS Observer is an anachronism. And the medium is out of sync with the role of journalists as active community builders and new audience news consumption habits.

Concept

We believe that CBS Observer should shift from a classic watchdog ideal (which was never fully realized) to a community building ideal. We believe that CBS Observer's content should focus less on conflict and more on shared interest. A shift to English will enable and reinforce this change in focus. CBS Observer articles, for example, will now let students and researchers interact with global niche audiences. In English there is a greater incentive for students and researchers to improve their own CVs by volunteering content. We believe that CBS Observer should supplement its use of traditional distribution channels, to using more targeted niche social media (Twitter and Instagram) to engage and empower audiences in the story making process, upvoting, sourcing and finding stories.

Organisation

The classic watchdog role has been the argument for editorial independence and has driven an organization that now see a relative decrease in resources and impact. We believe in a better future with more synergies by integrating CBS Observer into the CBS Communications office. We still believe in the notion of editorial independence. It is important, and if nothing else, then at a symbolic level. But we also want to optimize resources in terms of financing, channels and manpower. Therefore integrate the two functions to one stronger and more resourceful. This move will also support a move to an alternative mindset, where the journalism is less about creating products ('articles') but more about processes ('themes' and 'news life cycles') – something that CBS can benefit from as a whole.

We strongly believe in a future where CBS keeps editorial integrity in a format like CBS Observer, but in an integrated organizational set-up. The current organization is too small, too marginalised, and lacks sufficient competence to both drive the needed change and to produce in english. However, the benefits of the synergies and this forced change will benefit the current personnel and enable optimized use of resources.

Of two possible organizational alternatives: An AS-IS where nothing significant changes, and RADICAL, where structural changes are forced through, we can not see any alternative to RADICAL. Keeping the current organization will prolong the pain, the frustration, the marginalization. And is not a professional management of an important strategic decision.

Also in the organizational context, the appointment of a student as editor-in-chief/social media editor with high status, privileges and a high degree of visibility. This involves hiring and appointing two students to be editor-in- chief and social media editor, respectively, hiring five to ten students who refer to the two editors and

establishing a student editorial team with a high degree of autonomy backed up with coaching from two experienced journalists focused on visual expression and the students' own areas of interest.

Media

Today, a typical CBS Observer story ends on the front page of CBS Observer. We would like to see more of the opposite. Any given story starts its life on the front page of CBS Observer and other relevant media or feed. It is a call-out, an invitation to audiences to debate and co-create in an iterative process. We want a more varied content output, and not just news. Not a mass media that comes to life every now and then, but a multitude of dynamic interfaces in a constant flow of engagement.

Editorial formats

There is one editorial format today. It is a news article, sometimes it is long, sometimes it is medium, sometimes it is short. We suggest instead a plethora of standardized editorial formats to engage and activate audiences.

Workflow/resources

As it is now, the permanent staff and student assistants produce all the content. But we believe that the permanent staff and student reporters should also enable and coach other content producers.