

Development of Guidelines for Successfully Applying Video Journalism to Local and Regional Newsrooms

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1 Introduction

1.1 Preface

It was the first week of classes after the Christmas break. I was in my second exchange semester at the University of Miami and there was one class that I was both scared of and excited about: CBR 417 – Advanced Broadcast Journalism. Students are required to shoot, write and edit four news packages during the semester. I had interned as a reporter in a local station back in Germany and enjoyed it a lot, but I had never seriously shot with a camera. Students that attend CBR 417 have to have a prerequisite course in camera and editing techniques. Being on exchange, I did not have this, but did have some theoretical knowledge, so I managed to talk Professor Barton into giving me an override.

It felt awkward, when I realized that I was the only exchange student in this class. Barton was presenting the Sony PD 170: a small lightweight DV camera. He was reviewing the buttons and menu features and I felt a desire to simply vanish in the ground. I want to be a reporter, not a cameramen or an editor! How would I ever learn that? Four packages all by myself! Barton said that the best packages from every week would run on the school's newscast *Newsvision*. I decided at that point that my goal was to get one of my pieces on the air.

My first story was on recycling. The recycling dumpsters were positioned in quite a distance from the dorms, so students just threw their trash into the trash chute for convenience. I interviewed some of my friends and a school official. I completely forgot to switch on manual focus, when interviewing the official, but was fortunate that he stood still. My stand-up was horrible. I positioned myself in front of a recycle bin and it took more than 20 attempts to do it right. The result still looked awful and I remember the confused looks from people passing by. Editing in a linear editing suite was a marathon. After I wrote the script, it took me four hours to lay the voice track and the original sounds and to put the pictures for a piece that ran less than two minutes. I think that I had already done better pieces when I was working with a team and an editor back in Germany. But this one was different. This was all mine! When I watched *Newsvision* that week, they aired my package and I was very proud. Over time I got better and all four packages I turned in that semester made it on the air.

It seems to be possible for one person to do it all, but can a TV station consist of a group of individual persons doing it all? Even the small local station where I interned in Leipzig used to employ specialized persons for the different fields. Is video journalism only a smart way of

cost-cutting that ultimately leads to the exploitation of young people? Is this cheap television that accepts the downfall of all quality standards?

New York based consultant Michael Rosenblum would disagree. In his vision, video journalism stations can increase quality and cut costs at the same time. Rosenblum has pioneered his concept all over the world. Nevertheless, he does not claim to be the inventor of video journalism. “This is not because I came in with this idea. This is just the consequence of technology that is here and now.”¹ Rosenblum is more like the “godfather of video journalism.” He is an “agent of change” who has created a whole “instruction manual” for journalists to cover the news with new digital technology. Cameras like the Sony PD 170 that I operated in my broadcast journalism class might be the tools to save television companies from extinction.

1.2 Scientific Approach

The idea of this thesis is to look at the Rosenblum model from various perspectives. After considering the strengths and weaknesses, I want to suggest several possible implementation strategies. This study is focused on local and regional news. National news coverage and the possibility to shoot reality shows or movies are not examined.

The study is geographically concentrated on the German and the US broadcast news market. Unique experiences in countries like Switzerland or Great Britain will also be incorporated considering their longtime experiences with video journalism. Germany is a country with a long tradition in public television. Commercial television had only started in the 1980s while in the States, television has been commercial from the very beginning and public stations were never able to gain any real significance. Local and regional stations in Germany face little to no direct competition, whereas the competition in the States is fierce. By taking a look at both markets, I intend to find additional perspectives that result from the different journalistic thrusts. The goal is to increase the multiplicity of opinions and not to do an in-depth comparison of local and regional news in both countries.

My research method involved in-depth interviews with working professionals. This research method allows greater control, the incorporation of spontaneous follow up questions and better access to insider knowledge.² After some primary research, I derived the most important perspectives on the Rosenblum model. Quality is an aspect of major importance, but I found that this discussion was frequently held without sensible differentiation.

¹ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

² Schütte, G. (1994): 95.

Therefore, I decided to split quality into the three categories “technical quality,” “artistic quality,” and “journalistic quality.” Other aspects of the Rosenblum concept that I found to be frequent topics of discussion are “workload,” “recruitment and training,” “organization and implementation,” as well as “economic aspects.” I utilized this outline to create a questionnaire that covers the most significant sub-aspects and provides a rough guideline for the expert interviews.

This study tries to find a qualitative multiplicity of different professional perspectives on various aspects addressed. Exemplification in this case is considered more important than representativeness.³

When selecting a sample for the expert interviews, I decided to approach local and regional stations that were directly or indirectly influenced by the Rosenblum model. The advantage is that they are familiar with the aspects of the model and can state their experiences from professional practice. It must be mentioned that such a sampling bears the risk of a positive bias towards video journalism. The experts are, for example, less strictly opposed to the general idea of one-man bands covering the news, which highly contradicts with the way news is covered by most television stations. The Rosenblum model of video journalism exceeds the mere one-man band concept by adding special “instructions for use.” Given that the one-man band idea is not even new (see 2.1), an expert that qualifies for this study needs to have prior knowledge of the video journalism concept as a whole or be specialized on certain aspects of it. I eventually conducted thirteen in-depth interviews with an average length of about 45 minutes. While most of the experts were interviewed on the phone, I had the chance to meet four of them in person. The amount of participants is equally divided between Germany and the USA.

³ Schütte, G. (1994): 97.

2 Basics

2.1 The Term Video Journalism

Video is derived from the Latin expression for “I see.” It is a method to record images on a medium. Storage media evolved from big analogue tapes in the 1950s over the Digital Video format to Disc- or RAM-based recording (2.2). Technical progress and miniaturization in particular have started to alter the way broadcast equipment looks. Small, lightweight, so-called prosumer DV cameras create a picture quality that is similar to what huge heavyweight analogue Beta cameras can produce (4.1).

The term “journalism” refers to the responsibility of selecting and presenting topics that are new, relevant and factual.⁴ In broadcast journalism, the gathering and packaging is usually done by a group of people consisting of a reporter, a cameraman, a soundman and an editor. According to Michael Rosenblum do current techniques enable one person to do all four jobs.⁵

This idea is not new. So called “one-man bands” have been commonplace for years in smaller US markets.⁶ Rosenblum refers to them as a “cheap way to make bad television,” given that they are essentially “imitating what conventional news crews did.”⁷ He has created a whole vision around the one-man band idea (see 2.3). This thesis distinguishes between the two terms as follows:

A *one-man band* is a broadcast journalist that incorporates the tasks of a reporter, a cameraman, a soundman and an editor.

A *video journalist (VJ)* is trained in using state of the art prosumer video equipment to report news. He can work as a one-man band.

2.2 The DV Standard and Nonlinear Editing

In the 1980s, a collaborative effort among the equipment producers Sony, Phillips, Thomson and Panasonic developed a tape standard for digital consumer video. Initially named DVC for digital videocassette, this standard, which was especially suited for very compact camcorders, became known as DV. Compared to the huge Beta tapes, DV camcorders can use tapes smaller than a pack of cigarettes. The video on the tapes is compressed by a ratio of 5:1.

⁴ Weischenberg, S.; Kleinsteuber, H.; Pörsken, B. (2005): 132.

⁵ Rosenblum Associates (2005c).

⁶ White, T. (2001): 204f.

⁷ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

Including failure protection and audio data, the overall recorded data rate is 42 Mbit/s, which allows a quick file transfer with the editing systems. In order to make the DV standard usable for professional production, Sony and Panasonic further advanced it by creating their own proprietary standards. Sony invented DVCam, which enables a more robust way of signal saving by increasing tape speed and, therefore, also increasing the video track amplitude. That way, a 60 minute Mini DV tape will only record 40 Minutes when used with a DVCam camera. The Panasonic version DVCPPro comes with an even faster tape speed.⁸ Figure 1 compares the different standards. There are also some differences between DV for the NTSC system, which is e.g., used in the USA, and DV for the PAL system, which is e.g., used in Germany. By applying a different sampling ratio for the video signal, DV for PAL has a higher horizontal resolution, while DV for NTSC has a higher vertical resolution.⁹

	DV	DVCam	DVCPPro
sampling ratio PAL	4:2:0	4:2:0	4:2:0
recorded data rate	42 Mbit/s	42 Mbit/s	42 Mbit/s
audio channels	2/4	2/4	2
video track amplitude	10 µm	15 µm	18 µm
tape speed	1,88 cm/s	2,82 cm/s	3,38 cm/s
max. runtime (S,M,L)	60/- /270 minutes	40/ - /180 minutes	-/63/126 minutes

Figure 1: Overview of different DV standards.¹⁰

Digital cameras use a CCD (charged coupled device) chip to record images. In order to incorporate color information for consumer camcorders, filters are applied to the chip. Due to a reduced chrominance resolution, these cameras cannot produce high quality pictures. Professional camcorders split the incoming light with a dichroic beam splitter prism and save the information on three separate CCD chips.¹¹

Voßgätter states that three chip cameras are necessary to ensure quality. These compact-size camcorders are best suited for video journalists because they allow for the flexibility that is

⁸ Schmidt, U. (2003): 485 ff.

⁹ Schmidt, U. (2003): 485 ff.

¹⁰ Schmidt, U. (2003): 485.

¹¹ Schmidt, U. (2003): 286ff.

necessary to get closer to the subject and they are a lot easier to carry due to their light weight.¹² The Sony PD 170, the Sony VX 2000 and the Sony Z1 are examples of prosumer video cameras that are used by VJ stations that I examined.

Video journalists are supposed to edit their own footage as well. With high performance laptop computers it is possible to do the postproduction with prosumer nonlinear editing software. Newsrooms can use “Final Cut Pro” for Mac or “Avid Xpress DV” for PC.

The video data on DV tapes is compressed by the factor five and can easily be transferred to a laptop via IEEE1394, which is also known as Fire Wire or i.Link.¹³ Compared to linear editing, the ingest of the footage and the logging of the scenes take more time. Once the video is logged, a package can be created quickly via drag and drop and changes can be implemented easily.

2.3 The VJ Model According to Michael Rosenblum

Rosenblum considers lightweight DV cameras and laptop editing equipment the Gutenberg press of the 21st century. He sees the press as a tool that allows people to express their ideas in writing. Before that, only a “tiny priesthood” was able to do that. In his analogy present newsrooms can be compared with that “priesthood.” Today, only a small fraction of people are literate in the most powerful medium of our times, which he thinks is video.¹⁴ “In a typical newsroom, there may be 70 to 100 employees while fielding 5 to 6 Betacam. This is as insane as having a newspaper with 70 reporters but only owning 5 pencils.”¹⁵

Rosenblum sees the future newsroom as a place where reporters, cameramen and editors are all trained to be multi-skilled and more cameras are in use to cover the news (4.3.1). In such a newsroom, video journalists would get the “freedom to fail,” since not every package has to air (4.3.2). Rosenblum considers this an essential part for developing broadcast news to an art form (4.2.7). The VJ is supposed to get more time to craft and research his stories (4.3.6). Rosenblum wants VJ stations to implement a beat system where journalists can focus on their area of expertise, rather than working on general assignments (4.3.8). The VJ model is basically an adaption of the print workflow to a broadcast environment (4.6.2), which includes assignment policies and control mechanisms (4.3.10). In his “theory of authorship”

¹² Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 111ff.

¹³ Petrasch, T; Zinke, J. (2003): 212ff.

¹⁴ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 33ff.

¹⁵ Bergman, C. (2005b).

he claims that the best stories are those produced by just one person's vision (4.2.2 and 4.3.9). VJ packages are meant to be driven by the story rather than by the presenter. Stand-ups or interviews, in which the reporter appears on screen should, therefore, remain exceptions (4.2.6).

There are some artistic limitations a VJ faces compared to a conventional cameraman. He is, for instance, not supposed to use a tripod. Rosenblum thinks that a VJ can simply hold the camera still (4.2.3). The conventional paper-based note pad is also abolished, since the camera becomes the VJ's note pad (4.3.5). Rosenblum wants all camera features including white balance and focus to be set on automatic mode (4.2.4). VJs are recommended to use a wide-angle lens so that focus and shaky picture issues are de-emphasized (4.1.4). Available light is preferred over additional artificial lighting (4.1.3). On scene, the journalist is supposed to take twenty minutes before starting to record anything. In the meantime he is supposed to feel the atmosphere, get in touch with the people and understand the situation. After that he has to separate the action into a number of single events that he will shoot in sequence. Rosenblum defines five basic shots that enable a VJ to create a network quality piece.¹⁶

1. Close-up of the action
2. Close-up of the face
3. Wide shot of the whole scene
4. Over shoulder
5. Other perspective

Rosenblum Associates teaches the approach in an intensive three-week "boot camp" that requires no prior camera experience and quickly enables participants to create broadcast material (4.5.5). Stations complement this training with on the job training (4.5.6). At the bottom line Rosenblum promises his clients to cut costs by 60 to 70 percent (4.7).

2.4 Michael Rosenblum: The Man Behind the VJ Movement.

Michael Rosenblum knows what it takes to be a video journalist from the bottom up. In the 1980s, he worked as CBS producer for *Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt*. Back then he became increasingly unhappy with the way broadcast news was gathered. "No matter what the story, we would always fly out to some location for a day or two, be joined by the

¹⁶ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 73ff.

cameraman, soundman, and talent [...] we always ended up reporting on something we knew nothing about, spending not enough time doing it, and not really caring about either the people or the story.”¹⁷ As a result, he quit his job and went to the Gaza Strip, where he stayed with a family for a month. He shot two packages, which he sold for US\$50.000 to the *MacNeil/ Lehrer News Hour*. Rosenblum argues that a team could never have reached the same intimacy in pictures and that it would not be feasible to send out a team for such a long time anyway.¹⁸

His career as a trainer and consultant started, when the Swedish millionaire Jan Stenberg asked him for help in order to build the first private television network in Sweden in 1988.¹⁹ Since then, he has introduced his VJ model to stations around the world, including NY1 in the USA, TeleZüri in Switzerland and the Hessischer Rundfunk in Germany.²⁰

2.5 Operation Breakdown of Specialized Teams

This chapter, together with the next one, compares the workflow of specialized teams with the VJ workflow. The information is derived from my personal experience as a reporter during my internship at a local German TV station and from my experience as a one-man band at the University of Miami.

2.5.1 Preproduction

Before production can start, the reporter has to come up with a story idea. Traditional sources for news are wires, newspapers, radios, other stations newscasts, scanner reports (e.g., police calls), tip calls, news releases, news conferences and video news releases.²¹ More broadly, reporters can come up with story ideas on their way to work, when they see a poster or talk to their neighbors. Some journalists work on general assignment, while others work on a “beat” like health, business or local affairs. A good reporter has to be curious about the news and has to stay informed by constantly reading the papers and the wires. Once the story idea is approved, the reporters have to prepare for production. This includes informing the team, scheduling interviews, researching more information, thinking about interview questions or getting necessary filming permits. The better the story is preplanned, the more smoothly production will flow.

¹⁷ Rosenblum, M. (2000): 141.

¹⁸ Rosenblum, M. (2000): 141.

¹⁹ Foraci, F. (2004): 16.

²⁰ Rosenblum Associates (2005b).

²¹ Smith, D. (2002): 33ff.

In the meantime, the camera team has to make sure the equipment is ready for operation. Batteries have to be charged and tapes have to be provided. It also has to be determined what kind of lights, filters, lenses, tripods and audio equipment will be needed for the shooting and whether an extra sound person has to be around or not. The camera team usually drives the reporter to the scene so he can think about the interview questions and make necessary phone calls. Communication between team and reporter is essential in this stage to ensure later success.

2.5.2 Production

On scene, the reporter has to increase and verify the information he has gathered during preproduction. He also needs to be open for new impressions and input that might change his preplanned story. News stories are only predictable up to a certain degree. Depending on the occasion, the coverage of a new play in the theater might be easier to predict than a sudden fire in a warehouse. Nevertheless it is important to define a focus statement that can be translated into a visual language by the camera team.²² Communication is the key success factor in this stage. Only that way it can be assured that the reporter gets the pictures he needs for his script. The same holds true for the sound bites and original sounds from the scene that will help to create atmosphere. The cameraman will record a certain amount of wide shots, medium shots and close-ups of events that are emphasized by the journalist.

The roles during interviews are strictly separated between reporter and camera team. The team is in charge of the visual aspects as setting the right lights or framing and focusing the interviewee properly. Meanwhile, the interviewer tries to put the person in front of the camera at ease, asks questions and listens to the answers. The audio levels are monitored by the cameraman or by a sound assistant. This person is also in charge of wiring up the interviewee, making a sound check and holding a microphone if necessary.

Stand-ups are an essential part of a news package in the USA. They can also be seen in German news packages, especially when the reporter covers court stories or political developments that offer little or weak original footage. With the help of a team they can be realized quickly.

²² Schult, G.; Bucholz, A. (2002): 23.

2.5.3 Postproduction

The reporter has to look at the footage. Given that this is actually the first time he sees the pictures, he will find out whether the cameraman successfully translated his focus into a visual language. He will also see, if the amount of footage is sufficient and usable, or if the pictures are badly lit or shaky. If the newsroom works with digital non-linear editing software, he will then log the necessary shots and sound bites. Under deadline pressure, this step can be skipped and the complete footage will be ingested instead.

There are different theories of when to write the script. Some newsrooms prefer to see a finished script for approval before editing. Some reporters like to write the script after the pictures have been put, although most reporters write while the editor is operating the editing software. In any case, the journalist has to have a concept in his mind that needs to translate into a sequence of pictures.

If a newsroom also uses the cameramen as editors this brings the advantage that he already knows the footage. Otherwise the success of the edit mainly depends on how well the communication between reporter and editor works. The shot list, the logged footage or the script offers direction for the cutting. Reporters are advised to write the pictures first in order to make that transition easy.²³ The editor's tasks are to choose shots, cut sequences, balance the audio levels, put effects, electronically improve bad picture quality, and lay music tracks. A lot of the decisions made during the edit are team decisions that result from the dialogue between the conceptually thinking reporter and the technically and visually trained editor. Once the news director approves the package, the voiceover will be laid on top. In Germany, it is very common to use professionally trained announcers for this job. In most US markets, the reporter puts his own voiceover. In both cases, the editor will take over the technical parts. The layout on a tape or on a server for the show is also done by the editor.

2.6 Operation Breakdown of Multi-Skilled Video Journalists

2.6.1 Preproduction

In this stage, the VJ basically does the preplanning for the reporter and the camera team, as described in 2.5.1. The VJ is now also responsible for the status of the equipment. However, stations can easily assign a clerk to do the maintenance work, so that the VJ only needs to pick up his gear. Since he does not have to organize a team, the journalist is more flexible and might save some time. Figure 2 emphasizes the differences between using VJs and specialized

²³ Shook, F. (2005): 6f.

teams. Rectangles with dotted lines symbolize tasks that cannot or do not have to be performed by a VJ.

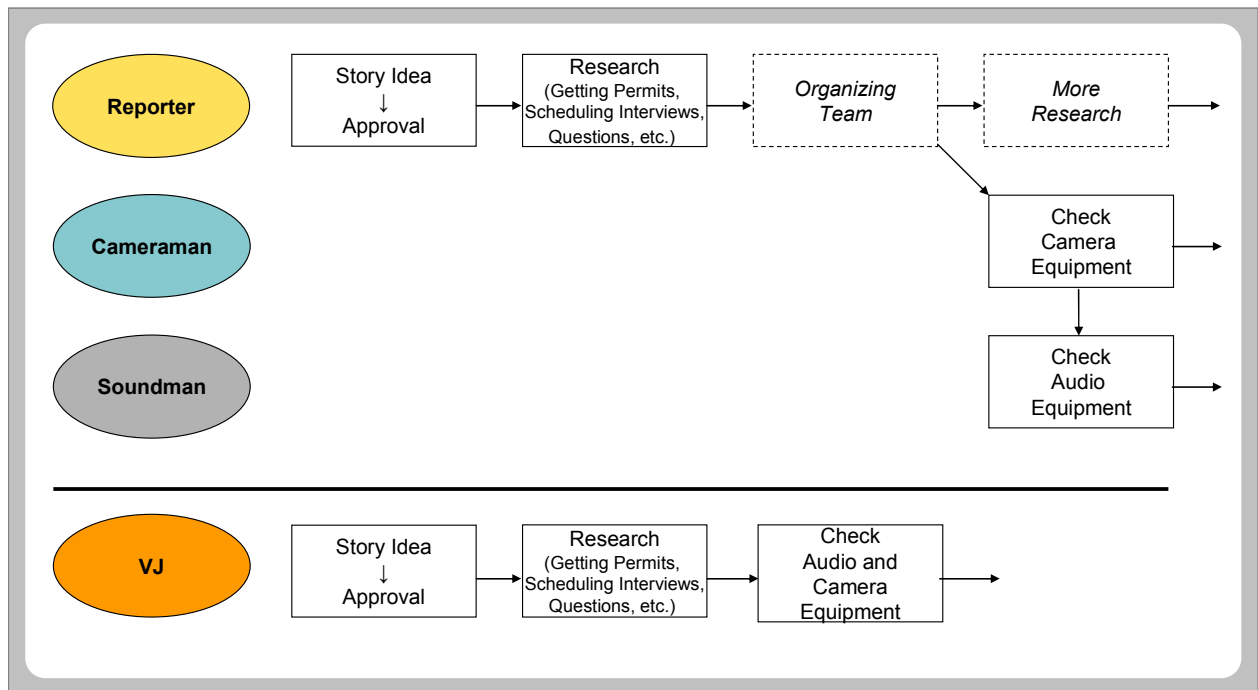


Figure 2: VJs and specialized teams during preproduction.

2.6.2 Production

A VJ drives to the scene himself. Though he might still take the time to think about the topic he will not be able to write down notes or to do phone calls for research. The process of information gathering, recording and getting wild sounds can be passed in sequence or simultaneously. In order to do interviews, the VJ has to be well trained with the equipment and confident enough to use it. Otherwise he will not get the cooperation of the interviewee. The VJ either wires up his dialog partner, or makes him hold the microphone slightly out of the frame. Then he checks sound levels and frames and focuses the interviewee properly. While asking questions and listening to the answers, the VJ also has to reframe, refocus and keep checking the sound levels.²⁴ There are other ways to shoot stand-ups (4.2.6), however, it would take considerably more time, so most VJ stations avoid them. Production can take about the same time, if the VJ is good in multitasking (4.4.2). The workflow differences are visualized in Figure 3 Light pink rectangles mark a low level of multitasking, while the dark pink represents a high level of multitasking.

²⁴ Griffiths, R. (1998): 89ff.

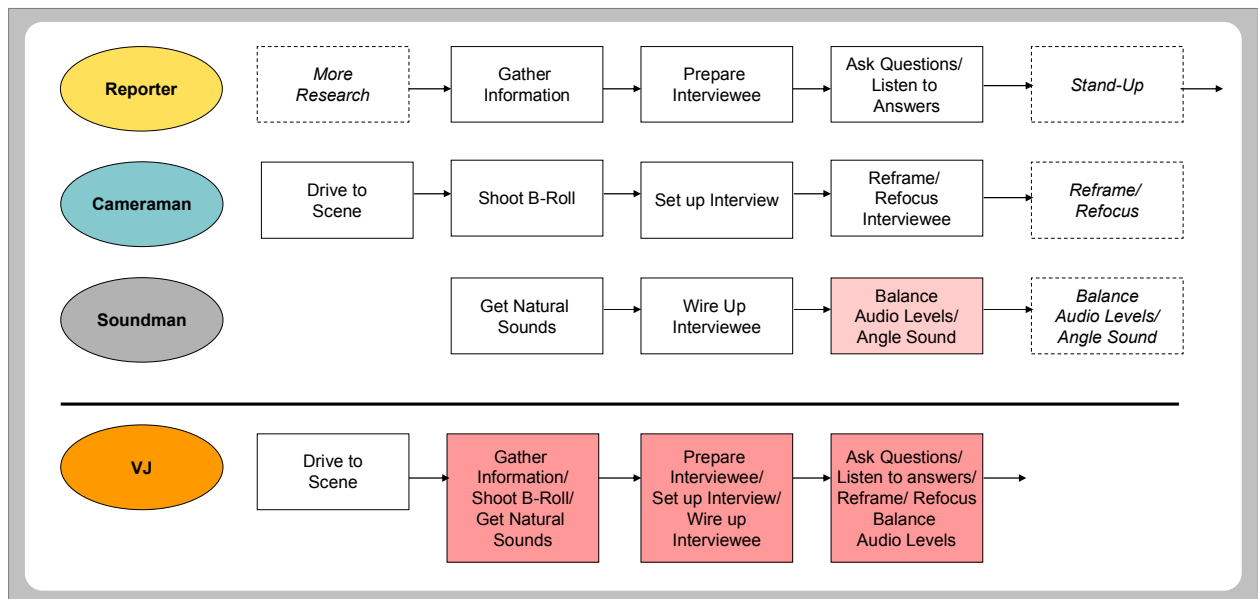


Figure 3: VJs and specialized teams during production.

2.6.3 Postproduction

As opposed to the work of a specialized team, the dialog between the two specialized persons does not exist and the VJ has to do the exact same steps as described in 2.5.3 all by himself. Since he is not seeing the footage for the first time, he might save time by finding shots and logging the scenes. The actual editing and the writing of the script are two steps that cannot be conducted simultaneously. This might increase the expenditure of time for postproduction as visualized in Figure 4.

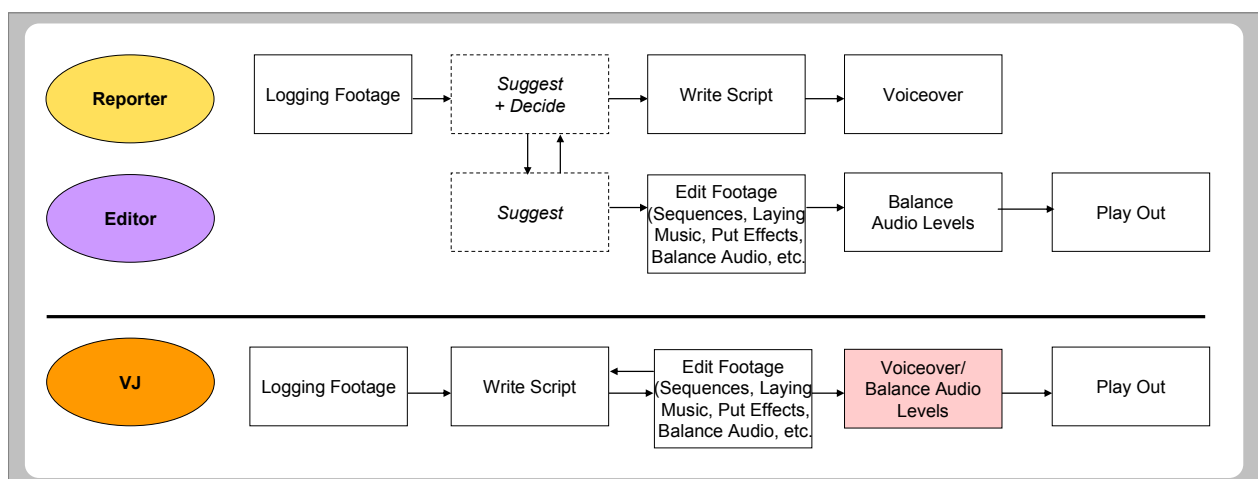


Figure 4: VJs and specialized teams during postproduction.

3 Video Journalism in American and German Broadcast News

The American broadcast market can be considered a role model for German commercial TV. Television in the US has always been shaped by market needs and ratings rather than by state imposed educational and programmatic laws.²⁵ This chapter compares the two markets with a focus on local news content and the application of the Rosenblum model.

3.1 *The American Broadcast News Market*

3.1.1 Market Overview

The US television market is built on three major columns: networks, local stations and cable channels. All of them carry news. The **networks** are the dinosaurs in the business. CBS and NBC pioneered televised newscasts in the late 1940s.²⁶ ABC, which was created from the former NBC Blue network, became the third player in the national news market and started to gain popularity during the coverage of the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis.²⁷ Till this day, more networks like FOX or the soon to be united CW²⁸ have been created. However, these focus on entertainment rather than information. The three major newscasts are the *CBS Evening News*, the *NBC Nightly News* and the *ABC World News Tonight*. While Television in Germany or in Great Britain started as a public model, television in the states was commercial from the beginning. Since some cultural, informational and educational needs fell short with a mass appeal, the public television network PBS was launched in 1970. Public Broadcasting, however, plays a minor role compared to most European countries.²⁹

The second column of the broadcast market is **cable** TV. Unlike the traditional networks, cable channels usually have a narrower appeal to audiences. They come in bouquets offered by the cable companies and draw their revenue from a mix of commercials and subscription fees.³⁰ Cable offers a variety of 24-hour news channels on a national level, like CNN, MSNBC or Fox News. There are also local 24-hour news channels like Bay News 9 in Tampa, Florida.

²⁵ Karstens, E.; Schütte, J. (1999): 135.

²⁶ Barkin, S. (2003): 28.

²⁷ Head, S.; Sterling, C.; Shofield L. (1994): 51.

²⁸ Formerly UPN and WB.

²⁹ Head, S.; Sterling, C.; Shofield L. (1994): 264ff.

³⁰ Albarran, A. (2002): 12f.

The United States are divided into 210 different **local** Nielsen DMAs (Designated Market Areas), which differ in size from over seven million TV homes in New York to about five thousand TV homes in Glendive, Montana. Each market has its own set of local stations. Most of the stations are affiliated with one of the major networks and receive compensation for the carriage of the network programming. The rest of the airtime is usually programmed with syndicated shows and local production, with local news being the predominant source for in house created content.³¹

3.1.2 Content of Local News

Local news shows in America face a fierce competition within their markets. Given that network programming is delivered by the local affiliate, it is necessary to have a local station for every network. The TV show *Friends* or the *NBC Nightly News*, for example, would be shown on the station affiliated with NBC. All of them carry news, but although the competition is fierce, the local newscasts hardly differ in look and feature a greater similarity in the type of content than their German counterparts.³²

Crime is the predominant source of topics. About 50 percent of the stories reported on local stations are either crime or accident related. The ratio is lower in smaller markets like Bend, Oregon. In fact, only about 14 percent were devoted to other local issues like the plans for a new public building. Those are mostly just covered with a brief anchor reader in the middle of the newscast. Figure 5 shows the average share of the different topics in local US news in 2005.³³

³¹ Albarran, A. (2002): 192f.

³² Project for Excellence in Journalism (2005).

³³ Project for Excellence in Journalism (2005).

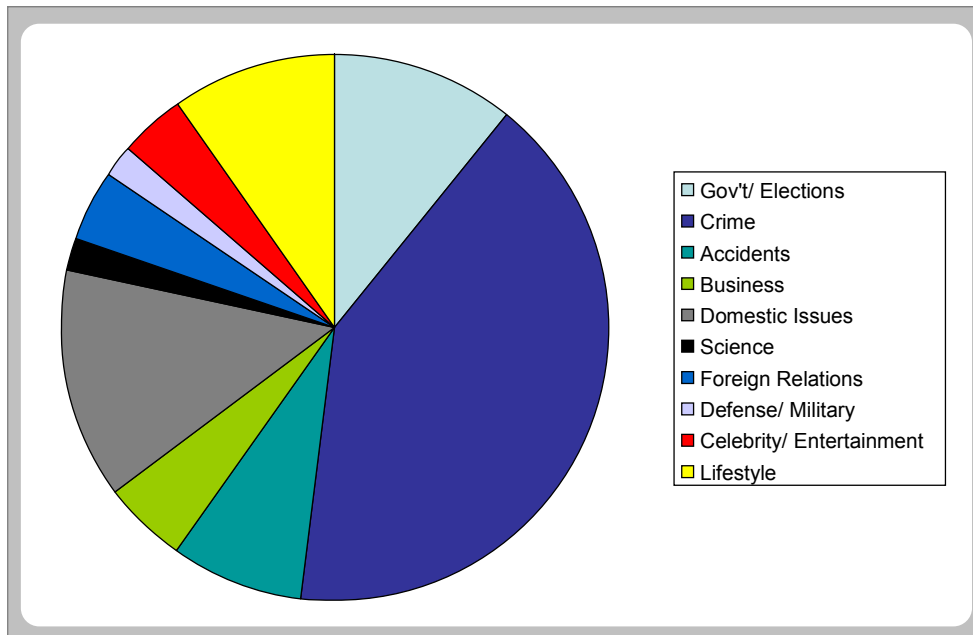


Figure 5: Covered topics in American local news in 2005. ³⁴

Local news is still popular for the mere fact that it is local. Sound bites are more likely to feature everyday people, rather than government officials, which makes them more applicable to the audience. The local focus is even stronger in the early evening and the late news, where the audience will also find more packages compared to the morning news. ³⁵

3.1.3 The Rosenblum Model in Local Newsrooms

Assuming that the term “video journalism” can basically be attributed to Michael Rosenblum, the first milestone for VJs in local newsrooms was the foundation of NY1 - a New York based 24-hour cable news channel that works entirely with VJs. The station signed on in 1992. It covers the city’s five boroughs with more than 25 VJs. ³⁶ A lot of local and regional 24-hour cable news channels were built after the model of NY1. Stations like *Bay News 9* in Florida or *News 12 The Bronx* in New York all employ video journalists to a different degree.

In June 2005, the TV station group Young Broadcasting Inc. announced that WKRN-TV in Nashville, Tennessee and KRON-TV in San Francisco, California would transit to the VJ model. Both stations received an eight-week intensive training program conducted by Rosenblum. ³⁷ KRON's move to video journalism especially led to a controversial debate among working professionals, given that the station runs in the Nation’s 6th largest market.

³⁴ Project for Excellence in Journalism (2005).

³⁵ Project for Excellence in Journalism (2005).

³⁶ NY1 News (1999).

³⁷ Business Wire (2005).

3.2 The German Broadcast News Market

3.2.1 Market Overview

The German television market is shaped by a dual broadcast system that consists of public and private TV stations.

After World War Two, the British occupying forces decided to create in their zone a **public cooperation model** that was similar to the BBC in Great Britain, and founded the NWDR. The Americans preferred a more federal solution and created a broadcast station for each of their occupied territories: the HR for Hesse, the BR for Bavaria, the SDR for Baden-Wuerttemberg and the RB for Bremen. The French founded the SWF in their zone.³⁸

The original six stations decided to form a loose corporation known as the ARD, which eventually became the first nationwide German TV station with the rise of television. Each regional station was responsible for producing a set amount of programming for the ARD.³⁹ The number of contributing stations was increased after the German reunion. Today, ten public broadcasting corporations are joined together to form the ARD.⁴⁰ In the 1960s a second nationwide station was launched. The ZDF was supposed to complement the original programming of the ARD. Although it was basically another public station, it was more strictly dominated by the political parties. The 1960s also saw the rise of regional television when the German federal states issued a TV license for the different ARD stations. Those “third programs” were supposed to focus on regional aspects as well as on informational and educational content.⁴¹

While the public television stations are funded almost entirely by monthly viewer fees, private stations are financed through commercials. It was not until the 1980s that the German government allowed the foundation of **commercial stations**. RTL Plus and SAT.1 used the first mover advantage and quickly increased their reach via antenna and cable. Both stations feature regional windows. This airtime is usually given to production companies that produce half an hour of regional news. The news formats are called *17:30* (SAT.1) and *Guten Abend RTL* (RTL).⁴²

With new distribution technologies like satellite or DVB-T, a lot of new commercial stations have been founded. On the national level, there are stations with a broad appeal, like RTL 2,

³⁸ Stuißer, H. (1998): 188ff.

³⁹ Stuißer, H. (1998): 211ff.

⁴⁰ Halefeldt, H; Augustin, G. (2006).

⁴¹ Stuißer, H. (1998): 225ff.

⁴² Stuißer, H. (1998): 591ff.

Pro 7, Kabel 1 or VOX, which also feature national news. With N-24 and NTV there are two all news channels that offer national coverage to their viewers.⁴³

The first **local station** was founded in Munich in the early 1990s. Since then, more stations in metropolitan areas like Hamburg or Nuremberg have been founded.⁴⁴ Depending on the market size, some local stations offer only limited programming, usually a local news show. The rest of the airtime is often used by other national channels that intend to increase their reach.

3.2.2 Content of Local and Regional News

Regional public stations in Germany face little to no direct competition from other stations. Their major newscast competes for audience with the regional windows of Sat.1 and RTL. The commercial stations have occupied earlier time slots to avoid direct confrontation. The situation at the local level is very different from the situation in the US. Stations have to work independently and are not supported by “hit” programming that runs on the commercial channels. RTL or SAT.1 on the one side, as well as ARD or ZDF on the other side offer, unlike their American counterparts ABC, NBC or CBS, full programming that airs nationwide. Though there are only a small number of stations on the local level, those stations embrace different content strategies.

Uwe Günzler, former journalist at the Hessischer Rundfunk, believes that regional stations cannot succeed in airing game shows or movies, but by developing their own regional identity. He considers regional politics, business, culture, sports and entertainment as an important tool to achieve audience interest. Günzler believes in the importance of up-to-dateness, since people want to see what happened in the daily news flash, and adds that the shows have to center on the lives of everyday people.⁴⁵

Packages in newscasts on local stations feature a share of currentness that ranges from 76.9 percent at RNF Mannheim to 93.9 percent at TV Südbaden. The content focus of such programming is localized. The regional windows on Sat.1 and RTL tend to focus on entertainment and service information rather than on currentness.⁴⁶

⁴³ Stuißer, H. (1998): 591ff.

⁴⁴ Stuißer, H. (1998): 597ff.

⁴⁵ Blaes, R.; Heussen, G. (1997): 195f.

⁴⁶ Stuber, A. (2006): 26.

The choice of topics is very selective and differs within the individual local news markets. In Hamburg, the commercial local station HH1 tends to cover regional politics and business while in the windows on RTL and SAT.1 crime was the predominant topic.⁴⁷

3.2.3 The Rosenblum Model in Local and Regional Newsrooms

Compared to other European countries, Germany is a late adopter of the VJ concept. TV-3 in Sweden and TeleZüri in Switzerland already pioneered video journalism with HI 8 cameras in the early 1990s.⁴⁸ Andre Zalbertus, the CEO of AZ Media, was the first to introduce the Rosenblum model in Germany. He was convinced by the quality of the material and started to train 14 VJs.⁴⁹ Today, Zalbertus heads center.tv: a local TV chain that is manned by VJs and that currently offers programming in Cologne and in Düsseldorf. AZ Media has also trained VJs for RTL Nord, which produces some of the regional windows for RTL.⁵⁰

In 2003, the Hessischer Rundfunk launched a pilot project that led into a systematic introduction of video journalism as additional production tool for the station's various newsrooms. So far, 62 VJs have been trained. Thirty of them were trained during the initial Rosenblum boot camp.⁵¹ Other regional public stations like the SWR or the RBB followed this role model and launched their own projects. In 2004, the MDR also started to systematically apply VJs.⁵²

Nik Niethammer, who created TeleZüri with Roger Schawinski and Michael Rosenblum, is in charge of the Sat.1 news programs as well as some of the regional windows. In the last one and a half years, 78 VJs, that are extensively used for foreign and local stories have been trained.⁵³

Smaller local stations all over Germany have also taken on the one-man band idea to cut costs and to eventually ensure profitability.

⁴⁷ Stuber, A. (2006): 27.

⁴⁸ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

⁴⁹ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 14.

⁵⁰ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

⁵¹ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

⁵² Böhnisch, M. (2005): 20.

⁵³ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

4 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Rosenblum Model

This chapter analyzes the different aspects of the Rosenblum model and examines the advantages and disadvantages that occur in professional practice. The information is largely based on in-depth interviews that I conducted during May and June 2006. The following working professionals contributed to the project:

- **Michael Rosenblum** is often referred to as the godfather of video journalism. He believes that VJs will eventually replace conventional production.
- **Todd Dunn** used to work as a photographer at WKRN in Nashville, Tennessee, for eleven years. When the station announced the transition to video journalism in the summer of 2005 he decided to embrace this change. Today, he is a successful VJ and a valuable asset to the station.
- **Terry Heaton** has consulted for WKRN. He believes that video journalism is a method to put the tools of the “personal media revolution” in the hands of professionals. Heaton is also a passionate blogger and has helped to create “Nashville Is Talking” which is an aggregator of the local blogosphere.
- **Mark Antonitis** is the General Manager of KRON in San Francisco, California. His station started VJ training in September 2005. He considers the concept a way to differentiate his brand while creating a “company of individuals.” Antonitis originally started his career as photographer at the age of 18.
- **Efrem Sanchez** is the chief photographer of Bay News 9 in Florida. The station was built after the role model of NY1, the first 24 hour VJ cable news channel in New York, New York. Today, only a few VJs are left. The station switched to teams since the quality was generally considered to be inferior.
- Professor **Edward Wasserman** teaches journalism ethics at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. Though he values some of the possible creative implications of video journalism, he is concerned about other aspects of the Rosenblum model.
- **Ernest Bujok** is the CEO of TV Limburg in Belgium, the local VJ station. He is one of the truest followers of the Rosenblum vision and a believer in its economic potential. Bujok is also responsible for the Concentra Award. Each year, €10,000 are given to the most successful VJ piece in Europe.

- **Bernd Kliebhan** works as VJ coordinator at the Hessischer Rundfunk in Frankfurt, Germany. He is a former reporter who taught himself how to shoot and edit long ago. He is fascinated by the journalistic opportunities of the new production technology.
- **Andre Zalbertus** is the CEO of the German production company AZ Media that has pioneered the Rosenblum model in Germany. The company is specialized on building broadcasting stations with digital workflows around the world. Zalbertus considers VJs an important aspect of the digital newsroom. He recently founded center.tv, which has a station in both Cologne and Düsseldorf.
- **Nik Niethammer** and Roger Schawinski created *TeleZüri* with the help of Michael Rosenblum. This first private local station of Switzerland is based on VJs. Today, Schawinski is the CEO of SAT.1 while Niethammer is, besides other shows in charge of the Sat.1 news department, where he observed the VJ training. He considers VJs a valuable production asset.
- Former cameraman **Carsten Meincke** is the founder of the public local station *Tide* in Hamburg, Germany. The station is a tryout area for students from the Hamburg Media School, who frequently switch between team and VJ productions. Meincke used to work as a one-man band when the big Betas were still state of the art. He sees video journalism as an interesting bridge to citizen journalism.
- **Kolja Hoock** is a trainee at Tide who recently took a one-week video journalism class at AZ Media. He has mixed thoughts on video journalism and would prefer to become a traditional photographer.
- **Michael Neubauer** is the manager of the German Society of Cinematographers. He believes that news quality will suffer due to workload issues and pronounces the value of artistic quality in news.

Figure 6 shows how the examined aspects relate to each other. Quality is spliced into three separate segments, which enables a differentiated analysis of the topic. If the term “visual quality” is used, it refers to a conjunction of artistic and technical quality.

It was not always possible to clearly put each bullet point under only one category. Audio quality, for example, is influenced by the technical quality of the camera and the artistic ability of the VJ. In such cases, I decided to put it in the category where the issue is either first mentioned or of greater significance. Numbers that are put in brackets provide links to other sub aspects.

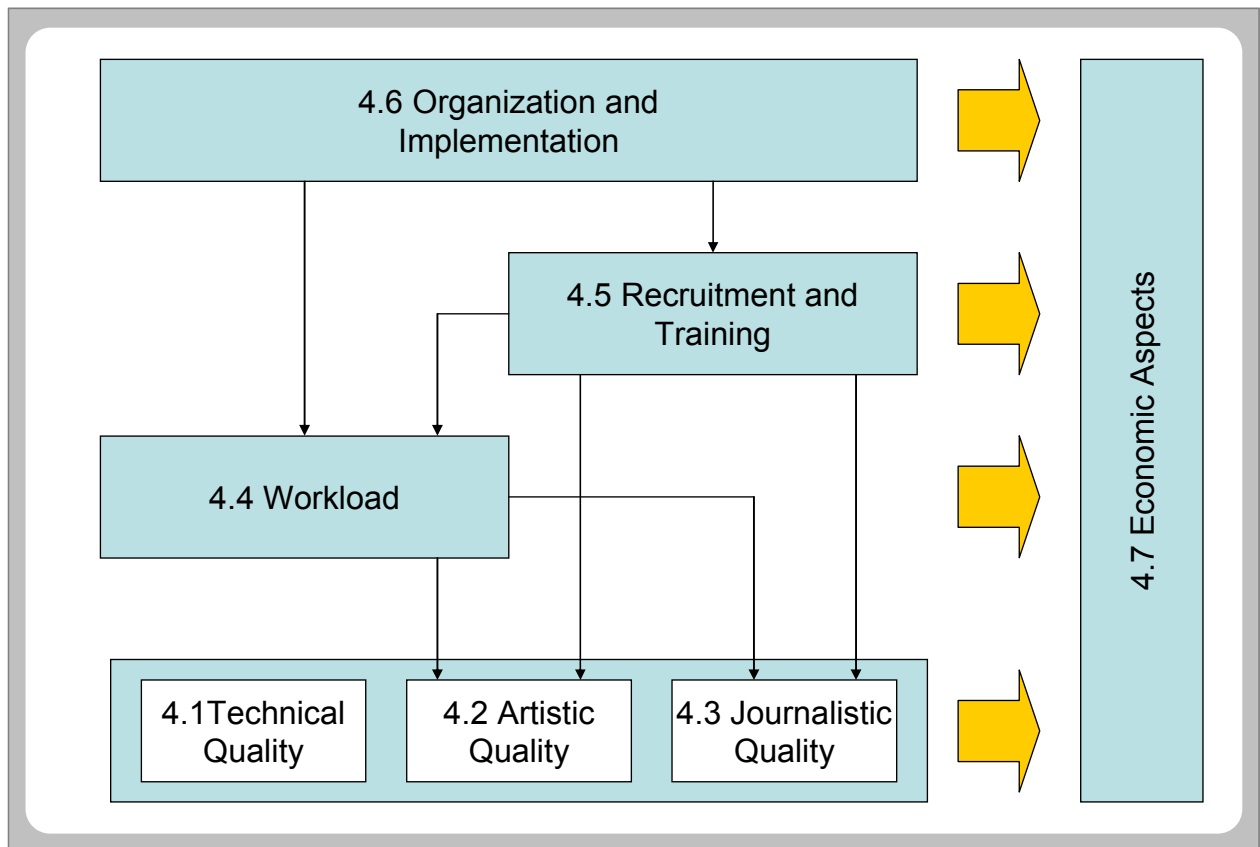


Figure 6: Examined aspects of the Rosenblum model and their relation.

4.1 Technical Quality

4.1.1 Mini DV

The decision to adopt VJs is also a decision in favor of using consumer DV tapes. In the late 1990s in Germany, this technology was still considered unprofessional, since it has pioneered in the consumer market. Especially some of the public stations felt uncomfortable with acknowledging the use of supposedly inferior material. A gray area had developed. Some freelancers were shooting on DV, editing it on a laptop and dubbing it back on Beta or Digital Beta. Most of the producers never noticed the difference.⁵⁴ As a preparation for the VJ project, the Hessischer Rundfunk examined the Quality of the DV standard. The analysis concluded that the format is suited for professional broadcasting.⁵⁵

Mini DV is considered a suitable storage medium for broadcast news gathering in local and regional markets.

⁵⁴ Zuber, M. (2005): 46.

⁵⁵ Metzger, J. (2004): 4.

4.1.2 Audio Quality

Television is an audiovisual medium. While a lot of concern is devoted to perfect pictures, a hard to understand sound may lead to the viewer changing the channel. Meincke also considers this a problem, especially since the beginner students are much more concerned about good pictures than good audio.⁵⁶ Sanchez thinks that sound with VJs generally is inferior.⁵⁷ Working as a VJ might amplify the technical problems. Since interviewing and checking audio quality simultaneously is not easily done, VJs will generally preset audio equipment, which leads to problems when the person being interviewed raises or lowers their tone, or when there are other loud noises which have not been accounted for.⁵⁸

The VJ is also limited to just two audio sources, while an additional sound person can choose from a variety of sources. Secondly, there is no way to angle the sound in a competitive interview situation. Kliebhan thinks that audio issues that occurred frequently during the first weeks of training are now under control. Like other VJ stations, they use wireless microphones that are connected with a receiver at the camera. If there is not enough time, the VJ sometimes just plugs the microphone on the interviewee and keeps the transmitter to himself. Wireless transmitters can also be connected to a PA (public address) that is often available during press conferences.⁵⁹

Good audio quality is problematic, given that the camera or the VJ has to compensate for the missing sound person. As a matter of fact, a crew will outperform any one-man band especially during a difficult sound situation. Depending on the type of assignment the difference in quality may be worth the additional expense. Also, avoiding difficult sound situations is a general problem in news reporting.

4.1.3 Lighting

The three-chip cameras used by VJs are more sensitive to light. As a result, pictures in low-lit conditions tend to look inferior. For example, a wedding scene in which the sun is setting in the background, or a situation in which a person is moving from a naturally lit to an artificially lit area will be difficult to capture properly, as the camera has to compensate for

⁵⁶ Meincke, Carsten. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

⁵⁷ Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

⁵⁸ Griffiths, R. (1998): 87.

⁵⁹ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

the missing illuminator.⁶⁰ Michael Sechrist, the General Manager of WKRN has experienced an incident where VJ footage from an overnight tornado turned out to be awful.⁶¹

Rosenblum argues that “if it’s dark, it’s dark” and that artificial lighting would only make the situation appear false.⁶² Lighting is extensively used in movies and in theatre shows. By giving up on it, the package loses a stylistic instrument.⁶³ Whether this lack will lead to a more authentic production, remains to be discussed. However, the VJ might feel forced to avoid shooting in certain lighting circumstances, even though these would be an essential part of the story. Neubauer has experienced one-man bands asking their competitors for light so they can shoot an interview in the dark. He adds that the reduction of lighting equipment to a small camera light that is mounted on top of the VJ camera creates “pan cake aesthetics.”⁶⁴ The problem can, to a certain degree, be solved with postproduction features that are included in the state of the art editing equipment such as AVID Xpress or Final Cut Pro.

Lighting is a problem for VJs and their cameras. Since the VJ is reporting the news, there are likely going to be times when low-lit situations cannot be avoided.

4.1.4 Lens

Rosenblum recommends always using a wide-angle lens.⁶⁵ Those lenses provide a greater depth of field, which means that a greater amount of subjects will be in focus. They also fit more into the picture when getting a scenic wide shot. When a close-up is desired the photographer needs to move closer to the subject.

Sanchez considers the lenses of the small VJ cameras to be one of their greatest disadvantages. According to him, long lens shooting and rack focusing does not work well.⁶⁶ Dunn understands this point and thinks that problems might occur when the camera is far away from the scene and it is necessary to zoom in.⁶⁷

In the Rosenblum model this technical dilemma is considered a strength. VJs are not supposed zoom and have to stay close to the subject, which is meant to provide them with more emotional pictures (4.2.1).

⁶⁰ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 83f.

⁶¹ Sechrist, M. (2006a).

⁶² Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

⁶³ Henk, M. (2005).

⁶⁴ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

⁶⁵ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

⁶⁶ Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

⁶⁷ Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

A zoom and a pan should always be motivated and used sparsely considering the human eyes' natural way of assembling the environment out of several wide shots, medium shots and close-ups.⁶⁸ The Rosenblum model, therefore, prohibits all kinds of zooming and panning.⁶⁹ Neubauer agrees that this is theoretically an interesting approach, because people that are not good in certain aspects of a tool should not operate them. He, nevertheless, adds that this is hardly realistic in professional practice. TV stations try to keep the audience from switching channels by constantly catering moving shots. Neubauer compares the viewer with a "visual hunter" that is supposed to unsuccessfully try to "hunt down" the picture, which will ultimately keep him from switching channels.⁷⁰

Zooming is an acknowledged problem for VJs, therefore it should generally be avoided with the state of the art prosumer equipment. Using a wide angle lens reduces focus problems, but also limits artistic possibilities.

4.1.5 HDTV

The Sony Z1 is a prosumer camera that is, for example, used by WKRN and KRON. The camera is small and within the same price ranges as its predecessors but with the added benefit of being able to shoot in HD. However, most VJs continue to shoot on DV and DVCAM tapes. Phillip Hilven from TV Limburg sees an increase in visual quality compared to the PD 170 even for the use in SD.⁷¹ Kliebhan agrees that the quality might increase a little bit. However, since there is no HD broadcasting happening at the moment, the relevance of this topic in the VJ quality discussion seems to be fairly low. Kliebhan adds that the Hessischer Rundfunk could change to HD operation if necessary. Earlier, he was doubtful about the high data rate that might occur during editing and with HD file transfer, he recently tested it successfully. Nevertheless he suggests a modified workflow, since it is more efficient to do an offline edit on a dubbed SD DV tape.⁷²

HDTV is no obstacle for VJs given that equipment producers have already developed cost effective HD cameras.

⁶⁸ Schult, G.; Bucholz, A. (2002): 30.

⁶⁹ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

⁷⁰ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

⁷¹ Frowein, A. (2005): 28f.

⁷² Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

4.1.6 Conclusion

The overall technical quality that a small lightweight camera is able to produce is inferior to a big analogue or digital Beta camera. However, the difference may not be relevant. In the times when DV was still considered a consumer format, journalists were secretly using it without producers knowing. It can be assumed that an audience sitting in front of a small TV set that is fed with a PAL or NTSC signal will have an even harder time to realize the difference. Technical aspects are in a constant state of progress. It is possible that camera producers like Sony and Panasonic will invent new features that will improve lighting, color correction and audio sensitivity. In the end, it will be about “the quality of the shooting and not the shots.”⁷³ The overall relevance of quality is discussed in 5.1.

4.2 Artistic Quality

4.2.1 Intimacy

Due to technical disadvantages of the cameras, the VJ has to stay close to his subject. He can build a more intimate relationship with his interviewee that will eventually lead to a more sensitive and emotional production. Dunn considers the VJ method perfect for telling the bigger story through one person.⁷⁴ VJs have established a good reputation for human-interest pieces. VJ Franco Foraci from the Hessischer Rundfunk received an award for his package on a clown in a retirement home. The jury praised his telling of “humor as an alternative nursing method where tears of luck meet moments of sadness.”⁷⁵ Bujok criticizes classical news items, that in his opinion, never emotionally touch the audience at all and only give them an impersonal talking head that tells them what they are looking at.⁷⁶ Sanchez, on the other hand, does not believe in the possibility of a more emotional production for news, since the VJ might be overstrained by multitasking during the interview.⁷⁷

VJs have to stay close to their subject, which can benefit more intimate and emotional productions. Whether or not this is always desirable is debated among the participants of this study.

⁷³ Coffman, M. (2000).

⁷⁴ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

⁷⁵ Hessischer Rundfunk (2005).

⁷⁶ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

⁷⁷ Sanchez, Efre. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

4.2.2 Creative Collaboration

According to the Rosenblum model, the VJ has to work on his own, which eventually keeps him away from creative input. Sanchez believes that the more creative minds you have working on a story, the better it will be. He, nevertheless, did enjoy putting his own style and opinions into stories in the past.⁷⁸ Hoock also likes implementing his own vision into a package. Nevertheless, he prefers going out with a shoulder camera, lights and a tripod to take beautiful pictures that he can fully concentrate on. Hoock also sees a problem in the reduced distance that VJs face when editing their own footage.⁷⁹ The VJ considers the package his “own child” and therefore cannot easily dumb shots, which were hard to get but may not be necessary for telling the story. A creative monitoring, which used to be the editor’s task, is missing.⁸⁰

Dunn believes in creative collaboration within the VJ model. The video journalists at WKRN sit in one big room, where they can help each other with creative decisions concerning editing and script writing.⁸¹ Bujok is one of the many station chiefs that solve the problems by sending out two VJs on certain assignments. He believes that their communication is superior compared to a classical team.⁸² Rosenblum, however, believes in the vision of one. He basically considers this “communal collaborative thing” as an “excuse for not working.”⁸³

Creative collaboration is reduced while the VJ is out in the field. Thus a well-assembled team that is able to communicate effectively can outperform the VJ. The collaboration aspect while editing the footage and writing the script has found new forms and resembles the classical newspaper organization.

4.2.3 The “No Tripod Rule”

When applying the Rosenblum concept, the VJ is supposed to shoot without a tripod. Rosenblum considers it an unnecessary piece of luggage that is used by one-man bands to imitate what conventional news crews do. He claims that anybody can hold the camera still.⁸⁴ All of the VJ stations that I have interviewed for this thesis do use tripods to some extent. While Dunn is shooting handheld most of the time, he still uses a tripod for scenery shots or

⁷⁸ Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

⁷⁹ Hoock, Kolja. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

⁸⁰ Samlowski, W. (2004): 43.

⁸¹ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

⁸² Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

⁸³ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

⁸⁴ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

tight shots.⁸⁵ The use of tripods becomes critical when there is no movement within the shot, explains Bujok.⁸⁶ Niethammer remarks that a VJ has to find a solution that fits his personality. That can be a tripod, a monopod, or some other kind of stabilizing device.⁸⁷

The fear of allowing shaky pictures results in the belief that they will convey an amateurish look that will ultimately distract the audience. Viewers might associate this kind of quality with home videos.⁸⁸

The risk in ignoring this part of Rosenblum's philosophy lies in a highly reduced flexibility. Especially when the VJ is assigned to a breaking story, a tripod can be a grant for steady pictures but also a competitive disadvantage. The artistic quality without using a tripod will be inferior compared to classical productions.

4.2.4 The “All Automatic Rule”

Another aspect of the Rosenblum concept that is heavily debated among working professionals is the idea that everything must be shot on automatic. Niethammer says that a good VJ at his station shoots 90 percent of the time in manual mode.⁸⁹ The few leftover VJs at Bay News 9 are less conservative with the use of automatic features, since they are shooting on auto white balance and auto focus most of the time.⁹⁰ The Hessischer Rundfunk uses automatic features in the first training sessions. Following that period VJs are only allowed to shoot on automatic when in a “panic” situation.⁹¹ Neubauer regards the use of automatic features as a “confession of physical inability.”⁹²

In the end, the degree to which a VJ uses automatic features determines the visual quality he can achieve, as well as the workload that he has to sustain.

4.2.5 The Five-Shot-Theory

After the first month of training, the Hessischer Rundfunk noticed that their VJs had developed a certain style in shooting. Very often the news packages included close-ups of feet and faces, or people filmed from the back while they were walking. This was considered

⁸⁵ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

⁸⁶ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

⁸⁷ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

⁸⁸ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 83.

⁸⁹ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

⁹⁰ Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

⁹¹ Bermüller, V. (2004b).

⁹² Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

artistically boring.⁹³ Kliebhan considers the Rosenblum boot camp a good way to get a reporter comfortable in shooting quickly. However, he thinks of it as a teaching method for beginners, which has to be developed further with additional camera training.⁹⁴ Andre Zalbertus disagrees with Kliebhan's quality concern and argues that the five-shot theory is an effective way to build a world that the viewer can understand.⁹⁵

The five-shot-theory can be helpful to enable beginners to convey visual information to an audience. It works like a checklist and would only be problematic when enforced as a creative limitation

4.2.6 Quality of Presentation

The concept of presentation is interpreted fundamentally different in the US and in Germany. While American viewers are used to seeing the reporter on screen, German viewers got used to seeing just the story, which in a lot of cases is not even voiced by the reporter. Kliebhan regrets this lack of personalization in news. The Hessischer Rundfunk had tried to use stand-ups but the concept never really succeeded.⁹⁶ German reporters, however, appear on screen if the story is low on pictures and the topic is difficult to understand, like a court trial or a political development.

Sanchez thinks that although VJs can produce stand-ups on their own, these tend to look awkward most of the time.⁹⁷ In order to stay in perfect focus the VJ can focus on a coin or another person, flip the display around and then take the place of the subject. He may have to do this several times, since he has to make sure that he is well framed. The use of a wide-angle lens can reduce the focus problem. The method works as long as the VJ stands still. If he moves and interacts with his surroundings, as reporters frequently do in the US, the VJ needs a second person. Dunn has asked people on the scene to help him shoot the stand-up for him several times.⁹⁸ At Cologne based center.tv, VJs have come up with an innovative way to shoot their stand-ups. They just talk into their handheld cameras and quickly turn them around.⁹⁹

⁹³ Metzger, J. (2004): 28.

⁹⁴ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

⁹⁵ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

⁹⁶ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

⁹⁷ Sanchez, Efre. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

⁹⁸ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

⁹⁹ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

Antonitis agrees that he wants to “stress the quality of the story and not the presentation,” which is benefited by the VJ model.¹⁰⁰

A completely different trend is emerging at the Hessischer Rundfunk. Kliebhan calls it the “Selbstinszenierung” of media. Live shots and entertainment-based activities with the community like a recent contest between two neighboring villages have become part of the major news show *Hessenschau*. According to Kliebhan, VJs are less suited for assignments that heavily rely on presentation.¹⁰¹ Professor Wasserman has mixed thoughts on the lack of stand-ups, since the reporter on screen has always functioned as a branding device that has helped to assure credibility.¹⁰² In Germany the *Tagesschau* which is one of the most trusted TV news shows hardly uses stand-ups.

Stations that rely heavily on reporter personalities and “Selbstinszenierung” will experience an inferior quality of presentation.

4.2.7 The „New Look“

Rosenblum promises his clients to not only cut costs but to increase quality at the same time. He considers DV cameras a tool that frees creativity to a similar extent as Leicas did for still photography. Rosenblum expects a radical change in the look of TV and proclaims its development to an art form.¹⁰³ The “freedom to fail” (4.3.2) allows people to experiment with new content, as well as on an artistic level.

At center.tv, the new look is defined by constant experimenting with technology. The station has recently embraced the idea of broadcasting some rough cuts that are narrated live and spontaneous by the anchor.¹⁰⁴ When Zalbertus let people talk into the camera during vox pops, he found that the audience reaction was positive, since they felt closer to the talkers.¹⁰⁵

Critics, on the other hand, argue that the pictures make an impression of vacation shots that are degraded to a mere documentation of participation, and have basically no significant meaning.¹⁰⁶ Others believe that there might be higher and lower quality pieces, but that the overall quality will stay the same, since viewing habits will determine certain norms that do not allow this “new look.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Antonitis, Mark. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

¹⁰¹ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

¹⁰² Wasserman, Edward. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

¹⁰³ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 41.

¹⁰⁴ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

¹⁰⁵ Mühlendorfer, M. (2005). Appendix A: 7.

¹⁰⁶ Henk, M. (2005).

¹⁰⁷ Vorhoff, C. (2004).

The video journalist is ultimately supposed to become one with his camera, which allows him to get a better feel for his surroundings.¹⁰⁸ A smaller, more flexible camera might be able to create a “new look”. However, this is only going to be possible when he stops imitating a team and starts experimenting with technology.¹⁰⁹

The VJ might actually end up producing a “new look,” since the economics allow him to experiment. However, experimentation means that he might fail and produce inferior artistic quality at times. Whether the new aesthetics are just another step towards artistic proliferation, is a subject of argument among working professionals.

4.2.8 Conclusion

Theoretically, a VJ that was a former cameraman could produce similar quality footage as before, once he gets used to the new camera. He will, however, have problems with implementing a high quality of presentation. Since most of the VJs in Germany are former reporters (4.6.X), the aesthetic quality tends to be inferior, because a three-week boot camp cannot compensate for a full apprenticeship and professional practice. The workload and multitasking in particular, will make it harder to achieve a similar quality in pictures as well. If used as a creative tool the VJ might have a chance to develop his own “different” aesthetic style.

It is hard to tell, whether or not the artistic quality will inevitably be inferior, since the result depends on the degree of training the VJ has gone through, as well as the personal aesthetic taste of the viewer. The overall relevance of quality will be discussed in 5.1.

4.3 Journalistic Quality

4.3.1 Coverage

If a station that used to work only with teams, trains every former reporter, photographer and editor to be a VJ and equips them with cheap DV cameras, the station will ultimately end up with more people to report the news. Rosenblum states that when he started his training at the BBC, they had 84 news crews, whereas now they have about 800 VJs.¹¹⁰ This heavily increases the number of stories the station produces, and therefore its range of coverage.

¹⁰⁸ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 148.

¹⁰⁹ Mühldorfer, M. (2005). Appendix A: 28.

¹¹⁰ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

Figure 7 exemplifies the possibility. For the calculation it is assumed that each reporter gets assigned to one story, while a photographer can shoot two and an editor can edit three packages a day.¹¹¹ This assumption is fairly cautious and estimates high production efficiency. Stations that used to employ one reporter, one cameraman and one editor per package may actually be able to triple their coverage by using one-man bands. The dark blue and the pink squares in the picture symbolize stories that would not have been covered within the old system.

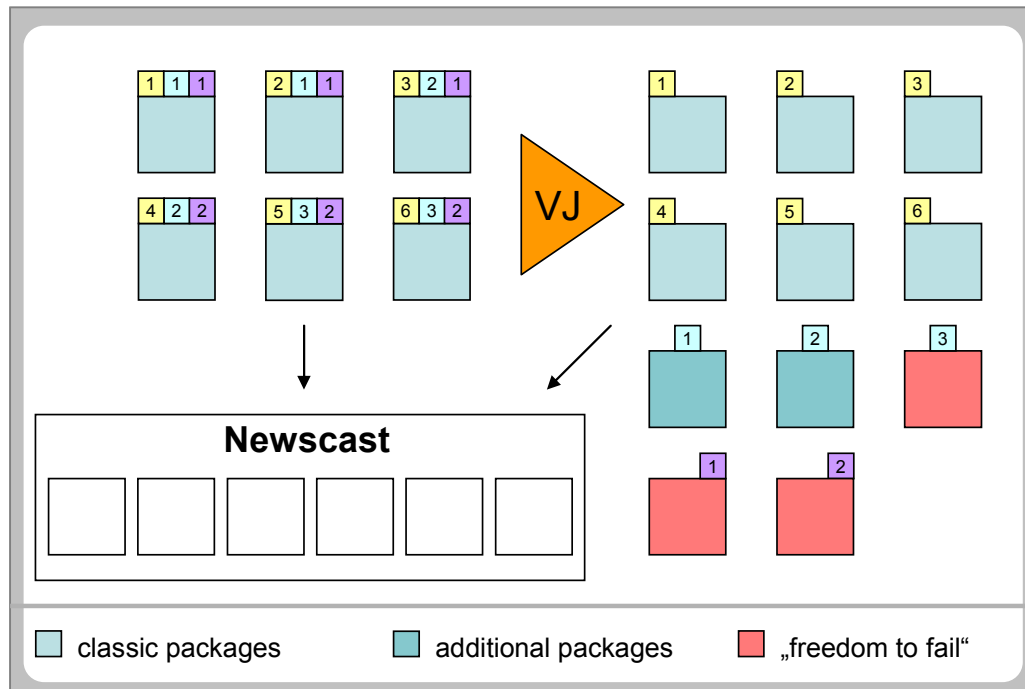


Figure 7: Increasing coverage by training specialized workers to become VJs.

Mark Antonitis from KRON and his colleague Michael Sechrist from WKRN consider an increased amount of covered news an instrument to differentiate their brands and to attract a larger viewership.¹¹² Antonitis believes in a continuous commoditization of news over the past years. Since news is easily accessible from a variety of sources, he sees an increased necessity to differentiate. He thinks that out of 50 trained VJs, five will stick out and produce “those fundamentally different news everybody keeps talking about, but nobody really has.”¹¹³

The differentiation aspect fits with the concept of the Hessischer Rundfunk to have more pictures from outlying areas to strengthen the emotional bounding of the people that live in those places. So even before the station took on the VJ model, they have implemented a

¹¹¹ Weiler, Heiko. Email survey. 6 July 2006.

¹¹² Bergman, C. (2005a).

¹¹³ Antonitis, Mark. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

concept called “video reporter.” Radio reporters got equipped with small DV cameras to gather footage for the weather forecast or to get some VO shots. Then they pre-edited them and uploaded them to a server at the station.¹¹⁴ With an increased amount of stories, stations have the ability to produce web-only features and therefore bring an added value to the Internet site (5.3.4). Wasserman has an ambivalent view on producing a huge amount of content. He remarks that people have a short supply of time, as well as attention, and that they do not want to look at an enormous amount of content but at a well-filtered amount of information that they can digest.¹¹⁵

According to Kliebhan, the programming at the Hessischer Rundfunk has changed due to the increase in coverage. Stories that used to be readers with a still photograph in the background are now featured with authentic footage; current weather shots from all parts of the state can now be seen in the weather forecast and more editions of *Hessen Aktuell*, a short news update, are scheduled throughout the program.¹¹⁶ Neubauer argues that news events like traffic jams are classic readers and do not have to be visualized with authentic footage.¹¹⁷

Sanchez, on his part, does not believe that an increase in coverage has to be attributed to VJs only. He thinks that an efficiently working team that consists of a reporter and a cameraman can produce more stories than two separately working VJs.¹¹⁸

A TV reporter can only report what is filmed. Since prosumer DV cameras are relatively cheap, the station can afford several of those. With a group of VJs that is trained to use them, the station can positively improve its coverage.

4.3.2 The “Freedom to Fail”

When a station produces more stories than needed, the necessity to broadcast each single one of them is reduced. Rosenblum wants to encourage the willingness to take risks. He thinks that this will lead to more interesting stories that will break out of conservative standards. He admits that this is a long-term development that in his opinion will ultimately drive up ratings.¹¹⁹ Rosenblum tries to incorporate a set 35 percent failure rate in the stations he

¹¹⁴ Vogel, M. (2005): 29.

¹¹⁵ Wasserman, Edward. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

¹¹⁶ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

¹¹⁷ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

¹¹⁸ Sanchez, Efreem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

¹¹⁹ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

recently helped to transform.¹²⁰ The pink colored squares in Figure 7 visualize the packages that do not have to be put in the newscast.

The benefit of the “freedom to fail” is acknowledged in most of the VJ stations I interviewed. Nevertheless the interpretations differ. Bujok and Zalbertus both consider this freedom to experiment as essential to their success. Nik Niethammer thinks that the “freedom to fail” is very important during the weeks of initial training and the first few months following it. During this period, VJs can gain creativity and self-confidence.¹²¹

Wasserman sees an advantage for investigative stories, since reporters do not feel pressured to turn a story, if they realize that their initial suspicion was exaggerated.¹²² According to Sanchez, teams and VJs can have the same „freedom to fail.“¹²³ Dunn experiences that this “new mindset” has not established yet. So far only a few packages were not broadcasted on WKRN. Dunn, however, sees potential for change.¹²⁴

In a report written by the Hessischer Rundfunk after their initial training session, the „freedom to fail“ is considered a utopia due to economic restrictions. Still, the lowered barrier for experimenting is acknowledged.¹²⁵

The „freedom to fail“ can improve journalistic and artistic quality. Whether the concept contradicts with Rosenblum’s goal to cut costs by 60 to 70 percent will be discussed in Chapter 4.7.

4.3.3 Authenticity

A single VJ with a small DV camera is less intrusive than a whole team with a big Beta camera. The VJ fades into the background. He can become part of the scene while the team changes the scene, states Ernest Bujok. Demonstrations, for example, are exaggerated by the mere presence of a news crew. Bujok remarks that frequently, the VJ is considered a tourist that is shooting home videos.¹²⁶ Neubauer disagrees and points out that people are very well aware of the fact that a camera is recording what they are doing. In his opinion traditional teams can realize authentic stories just as well.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Glaser, M. (2005).

¹²¹ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

¹²² Wasserman, Edward. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

¹²³ Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

¹²⁴ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

¹²⁵ Metzger, J. (2004): 35.

¹²⁶ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

¹²⁷ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

Kliebhan believes that authenticity is the most significant value in news productions. In his opinion, it is far more important than perfectly shot and well-lit pictures.¹²⁸ The VJ gets access to areas teams would not. Sönke Wortman is producing a documentary on the German national soccer team while using a small lightweight DV camera.¹²⁹

Staging has become a controversial issue in conventional news productions. Interviewees are asked to say or do certain things, because it would fit with the concept of the journalist. At the Hessischer Rundfunk, VJs are not allowed to do this, since the whole idea evolves around an authentic representation of reality. The trade-off is that it might take more time to get good matched action shots.¹³⁰

VJs are said to achieve a higher degree in authenticity than conventional teams. They are less intrusive and are able to access areas a team could not get in.

4.3.4 Interview

The interview seems to benefit from the less intrusive approach VJs have. Dunn, for example, prefers to wire up the interviewee and to keep the camera rolling while the person is doing its usual activities.¹³¹ That way he can hold a conversation without interfering with reality. People also tend to say more, since the one-on-one situation allows a greater intimacy. The ARD recently broadcasted a documentary on sexual abuse of mentally disabled people. VJ Matthias Zuber thinks that he never could have achieved the same intimacy with the affected women, if he had been with a team.¹³²

Jan Metzger from the Hessischer Rundfunk sees an increased responsibility on the side of the VJ, especially when confronted with media inexperienced persons. People might easily become seduced to say things they will regret later on.¹³³

Meincke thinks that workflow issues will endanger the quality of the Interview. From his experience, VJs neglect the listening part, since they also have to concentrate on audio and video simultaneously.¹³⁴ Reporters and anchors are supposed to look into the camera when

¹²⁸ Richartz, D. (2006).

¹²⁹ Völker, M. (2006): VII.

¹³⁰ Bermüller, V. (2004b).

¹³¹ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

¹³² Fesel, D. (2004).

¹³³ Vogel, M. (2005): 30.

¹³⁴ Meincke, Carsten. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

addressing the public directly. Interviewees are usually not meant to do this.¹³⁵ Since the VJ will have to check the framing, holding eye contact can become critical.

There might be situations like press conferences, where authorities are less willing to talk to a news reporter with a semi-professional camcorder. However, learning processes are likely to start and authorities that want to be heard will understand that this is the only way to communicate with a certain media entity.¹³⁶

The interview in general is a controversial topic. On the one hand, VJs can reach a higher intimacy and authenticity while, on the other hand, they are confronted with a very high level of multitasking.

4.3.5 Taking Notes

James Rosen, a former VJ at News 12 The Bronx remembers that he never had the time to take notes while on scene.¹³⁷ According to the Rosenblum model, VJs are not supposed to take notes on paper, since that would be considered a media break. “[VJs] have to learn to work with the medium of video.”¹³⁸

Efrem Sanchez agrees that the camera can become a notepad at times. He has gone out before and shot stories where he basically just asked the 5 W questions and the interviewee’s name. He has also been in a spot news situation where he himself had said a fact right into the camera.¹³⁹ Kliebhan adds that the camera can easily be used to shoot business cards or doorplates.¹⁴⁰

The reporter will have the hardest time to adapt to this workflow change, because he is comfortable to use paper as his medium for memory saving. Editors and photographers that are assumingly more focused on the beauty of their shots will have to learn how to capture the information they need to write up the story.

¹³⁵ Yorke, I. (1997): 83.

¹³⁶ Gilgen, G. (2003): 32.

¹³⁷ Coffman, M. (2000).

¹³⁸ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

¹³⁹ Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

¹⁴⁰ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

4.3.6 “Time for Journalism”

Critics of the Rosenblum concept frequently state that the reporters will not have the time for proper journalism. Classical reporter tasks, like doing in-depth research, looking for archive footage, scheduling interviews and checking facts, are meant to suffer.¹⁴¹ Rosenblum in fact wants the VJ to have more time to craft and research his stories. He thinks that ratings will ultimately improve by doing so.¹⁴²

In the stations I interviewed, VJs really do get more time, which in part has to be attributed to the fact that they also need more time to master all the elements of their job. Todd Dunn remarks that at WKRN almost all packages used to be turned the day of the story. After the VJ transition the station has adopted a 50/50 ratio.¹⁴³

The idea to spend more time on journalism is not just a workflow restraint but also one of the greatest journalistic advantages of the Rosenblum concept. A traditional team has a limited amount of time it can spend in the field. It is simply not feasible to hire three people for more than a couple of hours to produce a package that might end up having a length of three minutes. A VJ on his own can afford to do this and therefore gets a more balanced and in-depth view on the topic. Bujok recently trained VJs at a three-week boot camp in Johannesburg. One of them went out to shoot a story on a merchant that was selling oranges on the street. The vendor turned out to be a teacher that was trying to make some extra money for his family. Bujok claims that through these packages he “understood more about the country then watching the news for three weeks.”¹⁴⁴ At the Hessischer Rundfunk, VJs can theoretically take the “time for journalism” whenever they want to, because the station has decided against building a pool for equipment and assigned cameras on an individual basis. Kliebhan explains that this concept may drive creativity in passionate journalists. One former editor recently did a story on a distillery where she followed the production process over a one-year period. Kliebhan regrets that due to a “culture of reporting on assignment” in public broadcasting stations, such efforts only happen occasionally.¹⁴⁵

The idea to spend more time on journalism is definitely improving journalistic quality although it could collide with the needs of currentness and Rosenblum’s promise to cut costs.

¹⁴¹ Glaser, M. (2005).

¹⁴² Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

¹⁴³ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

¹⁴⁴ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

¹⁴⁵ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

4.3.7 Currentness

The VJ is more flexible, since he does not have to organize a team once he gets a news tip.¹⁴⁶ This can be an advantage for stations that have outsourced their photographers. In situations when there are no crews available, the VJ can simply go out on his own. He, however, loses the time advantage in the long run. Nik Niethammer admits that although he is experiencing the “crack” that can do it all in a day, he would prefer a team to one person for stories that require currentness.¹⁴⁷ Neubauer reports that the VJ will lose time while looking for a parking spot. He also will not be able to quickly leave his vehicle to record something or to shoot out of a sunroof.¹⁴⁸ Kliebhan has experienced that VJs can very well shoot and write a story within a day if the length does not exceed 1:30 minutes. He also recommends that VJs do not do the editing on such pieces, since they tend to edit slower because they cannot write and shoot at the same time.¹⁴⁹ Andre Zalbertus thinks that currentness is expensive. His concept for center.tv is to be a “good mood” station.¹⁵⁰ There is a similarity with the two US stations KRON and WKRN. They both decided to reduce the doom and gloom approach, which has become a common place in most local stations, and therefore to engage in more “good news” that require currentness to a lesser degree.

One way to solve the problem is to send out two VJs. All of the stations I interviewed do this more or less frequently. Another possibility to work around the problem with currentness is to shorten the length of the stories. Considering the possibility to increase coverage, numerous smaller packages can be created without adding costs. The newscast might benefit from more diversity with a greater amount of stories (5.3.4).

By definition, news has to provide new things. If a competitive station manages to get a breaking story on air earlier, the audience might watch it there. In the long run, viewers might lose the belief in the stations ability to provide up to date information. Currentness is possible for single VJs, but significantly increases the workload, especially in stations that enforce the concept of one-man bands very purely. Pairing up VJs or producing many short pieces instead, might decrease the problem.

¹⁴⁶ Griffiths, R. (1998): XIII.

¹⁴⁷ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

¹⁴⁸ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

¹⁴⁹ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

¹⁵⁰ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

4.3.8 The “Beat” System

The idea behind beat reporting is to allow journalists to report stories that are within their area of expertise. This concept, which Rosenblum incorporated into his model, goes beyond having reporters for politics and sports. Examples for beats are the environment, healthcare, music, or religion. WKRN recently added a beat on real estate and religion to their newsroom.¹⁵¹ The purpose of this method is to establish trust with sources and to further develop expertise, which should lead to more informed reporters. Dunn focuses 60 percent of his stories on a military complex close to Nashville. He also admits that as a former photographer he is not used to regularly coming up with new story ideas, so the beat really helps him.¹⁵²

Bay News 9 had tried the beat system, given that it was build after the first US VJ station NY1. Sanchez says that they have returned to general assignment as they found that the beat does not work.¹⁵³ Niethammer does not believe in the beat system. According to him, a reporter should be able to handle all kinds of stories.¹⁵⁴ Professor Wasserman acknowledges the convenience of the system, but warns about the ethical dilemma that occurs when journalists become too close with their sources. The reporter may tend to not report negative news to avoid threatening the good relationship.¹⁵⁵ The beat system also complicates work for journalists who are constantly switching markets and therefore do not have long lasting ties to local experts.¹⁵⁶

While American VJ stations like KRON or NY1 have embraced the beat system, Germany seems to be conservative about applying it to broadcast newsrooms. The concept can lead to interesting stories; however, the risk of corruption is increased tremendously.

4.3.9 Objectivity

Rosenblum considers good journalism to be the vision of one. Video blogger Andrew Baron, on the other hand, thinks that a person working in isolation will be more biased and subjective than a well-assembled team, which ultimately leads to a lack of objectivity. Rosenblum dissents and draws an analogy to newspapers, where the reporter also goes out on his own

¹⁵¹ Sechrist, M. (2006b).

¹⁵² Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

¹⁵³ Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

¹⁵⁴ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

¹⁵⁵ Wasserman, Edward. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

¹⁵⁶ Warley, S. (2005).

without getting swayed by the power of the story.¹⁵⁷ Neubauer believes that this holds true on a mere textual level but considers video another level with a superior suggestive power. In his opinion it is very important to separate those two branches.¹⁵⁸

Zalbertus thinks that objectivity is a problem of the German public TV stations, which claim to be objective, but according to him, follow certain political agendas.¹⁵⁹ Professor Wasserman challenges the concept of objectivity in general. He believes that with the Internet's possibility to cater to much smaller audiences, people will seek out the "news they want to hear."¹⁶⁰ The success of the FOX news channel, which primarily targets republican viewers, proves that people have a desire to hear the news subjectively. Rosenblum also questions the claim of objectivity and rather demands a "multiplicity of opinions."¹⁶¹ Heaton agrees and claims that objectivity is a myth that in his opinion was created to sell more advertising in a "stereological environment."¹⁶² If several VJs are sent out to cover the same story, their individual parts can be cut into one package that provides a multiplicity of opinions.¹⁶³ A major political announcement could be covered by a VJ with a positive and a VJ with a negative attitude towards it.

Objectivity is most likely going to suffer in a single person's piece compared to a team production. Whether this is a negative or positive aspect of the VJ movement, is basically a philosophical question. The claim for authorship should not be an excuse for lazy reporting. It has always been a mandate of journalism to seek out a variety of different opinions on one subject matter. This mandate can be attributed to the power of mass media and its abuse in the early stages. The Internet may be able to shift this power to smaller groups, and a self-regulative public discourse of multiple opinions could take the place of mass broadcasting.

Since stations should encourage the emancipation of thoughts, they have a special responsibility to ensure the multiplicity of opinions on their mass media platform, whether that should happen within the newscast or within each single package is debatable.

¹⁵⁷ Glaser, M. (2005).

¹⁵⁸ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

¹⁵⁹ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

¹⁶⁰ Wasserman, Edward. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

¹⁶¹ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

¹⁶² Heaton, Terry. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

¹⁶³ Warley, S. (2005).

4.3.10 Credibility

According to Rosenblum, the VJ model is basically an adaptation of the print workflow to a broadcast environment (4.6.2). He adds that in a VJ newsroom, editorial input is happening to a similar extent as it is in newspaper organizations.¹⁶⁴ Kliebhan sees a difficulty for the editorial staff at his station to adapt to the new control mechanisms. He pronounces the importance that cameramen and editors had in terms of quality control and the difficulty to fill that void.¹⁶⁵

Seeking the truth is one of the greatest purposes for any journalist. A VJ is not necessarily a less ethical journalist. However, he is harder for the producers and the chief editors to control. Since he has to work harder (4.4), it might be tempting for him to neglect his journalistic duties. Todd Dunn thinks that there are bad people in every group and that he would be no different with a team than by himself.¹⁶⁶

If incorrectly reported news appears on the station, credibility is likely to suffer. Terry Heaton questions the credibility of conventional news organizations. He believes in the importance of argument and demands: “[...] tell me how you get to your version of the truth!” Heaton also doubts that it requires a “special license to get facts right.”¹⁶⁷

The credibility dilemma is basically a problem for an organization’s culture, which is used to certain control mechanisms. Whether it is necessary to conduct stricter controls on audiovisual content than on textual content is discussed among professionals.

4.3.11 Conclusion

Video journalists offer new journalistic opportunities for the station. Since they are relatively inexpensive, they are very flexible to use in various situations. If the Rosenblum vision is implemented correctly, they will increase coverage, differentiate the newscast with new and different types of stories while raising authenticity and intimacy with the interviewees. Enough time is a major constraint for the VJ to do all of this. If he is used as a one-man band on deadlines he may not be as competitive and the journalistic quality will probably suffer. Currentness, which is very important in news, is therefore a major problem for just one person. VJ newscasts are confronted with a responsibility to allow a multiplicity of opinions.

¹⁶⁴ Glaser, M. (2005).

¹⁶⁵ Richartz, D. (2006).

¹⁶⁶ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

¹⁶⁷ Heaton, Terry. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

Newsrooms have to think about new ways to implement control of journalistic content. If used properly, the VJ can help to increase journalistic quality.

4.4 Workload

4.4.1 Deadline Pressure

As discussed in 4.3.7, currentness can become problematic for just one person. Almost all of the stations I interviewed agreed that it might be more sensible to send out a classical team or a group of VJs on a major breaking story. Richard Griffiths, who was one of Great Britain's first VJs at the London news station Channel One, states that the shooting of the footage does not necessarily take longer with a single person. He nevertheless concedes that breaking news is a "highly pressured environment" and that VJs are less efficient when time is integral for the stories success.¹⁶⁸ Ernest Bujok thinks that the shooting does not take too long, once the VJ has decided what he wants. He considers it to be important that the VJ takes some time to "feel" the scene before he starts recording it.¹⁶⁹

Editing might be even more difficult under deadline pressure. VJs that have no background as an editor do, depending on their skill level, take a little to a lot more time. Another problem is the fact that one person cannot write the script and edit the footage at the same time. This dilemma is complicated by an increase in the length of the story (2.6.3). Incorporating the editing task into the job profile for VJs is highly debated, even among supporters of Rosenblum's vision. Richard Griffiths believes that VJs should not edit their packages. "Script editors and video editors are the safety net for video journalists."¹⁷⁰ At the Hessischer Rundfunk, VJs usually do not edit their footage. Kliebhan adds that technical issues like the dubbing and the playout will also remain in the editor's hands.¹⁷¹

Deadline pressure makes the VJ's work harder. Management is obliged to come up with ways to balance out the disadvantages.

4.4.2 Multitasking

A lot of the tasks that used to be performed by the different specialized members of the team are now done by just one person. While some tasks like writing the script and editing the footage can be done in sequence, others like shooting video and getting natural sound have to

¹⁶⁸ Griffiths, R. (1998): 98, 123.

¹⁶⁹ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

¹⁷⁰ Griffiths, Richard, 1998, XIV.

¹⁷¹ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

be done simultaneously (2.6). Neubauer contemplates that a VJ who concentrates on pictures will have a hard time balancing the audio levels and will not be able to gather information at the same time.¹⁷²

Multitasking happens to different degrees within a VJ production. While prestructuring the script during recording can be done relatively easily, the interview situation demands the highest amount of multitasking. Jack LaDuke, who has worked as a one-man band for more than three decades, also thinks that some tasks do ultimately suffer. “You’re shooting an interview, thinking about the questions, listening, asking follow ups, [...]. At the same time you’re worrying about the focus and the batteries.”¹⁷³ It is one of the reporter’s tasks to remain in control of the situation while directing. When he is too consumed with the gear he might forget to be polite and friendly with the interviewee. If, on the other hand, the VJ is too absorbed by the story he may not notice when, for example, a microphone gets accidentally switched off.¹⁷⁴

Andre Zalbertus believes that multitasking is more of an issue for his generation, but also that a generation that grew up playing computer games will not have a problem with it. In his opinion, mastering the gear is like driving a car. With training, VJs will operate it subconsciously while focusing on their real task, which he thinks is to tell a story.¹⁷⁵

Multitasking adds a new component to the list of job requirements for a journalist. It can be assumed that it is harder for a single person to combine the job of several specialists. Multitasking negatively influences journalistic and artistic quality. The effect can be lessened with training or through natural ability of the VJ.

4.4.3 The “Lone Warrior” Phenomenon

Since VJs are meant to go out alone, they bear a lot more responsibility than a team does. When technical problems occur it is up to him to find the problem and to solve it, if possible. This situation is exacerbated for former editors and reporters, since the VJ training conveys only a minimum of technical knowledge.

¹⁷² Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

¹⁷³ Coffman, M. (2000).

¹⁷⁴ Rosenblum, M. (2000): 29.

¹⁷⁵ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

The lack of creative collaboration (4.2.2) is another issue the single working VJ has to face. Wolfgang Ommert, who reports for the Hessischer Rundfunk in the Kassel area, sometimes feels like a “lone warrior” who lacks inspiration.¹⁷⁶ Neubauer emphasizes the problem of getting lost in shooting beautiful pictures, since a reporter is missing to stop the VJ.¹⁷⁷

A person that masters the technique and enjoys telling a story will, however, get the opportunity to express his own voice without being restricted by the video of a photographer or the storytelling abilities of writers and editors. Time consuming discussions within the team can also be abandoned.

Whether or not the “lone warrior” phenomenon is a disadvantage of the Rosenblum model essentially depends on the personality and the communication skills of the individual VJ. Someone who enjoys working with a team might consider it a problem, while someone who prefers to be on his own can benefit from the new possibilities.

4.4.4 Exhaustion

Exhaustion can be attributed to excessive demand over a longer time period. It is more likely to happen to a poorly trained or minimally skilled video journalist. Deadline pressure, multitasking and the “lone warrior” phenomenon are problems that are likely to lead to exhaustion, if management fails to properly train and equip their VJs. This dilemma is amplified within the transition process.

Former photographer Todd Dunn expected the work of a VJ to be longer work, since it took him considerably more time to write the script and to come up with story ideas.¹⁷⁸ Critics consider the high flexibility that allows VJs to shoot a story whenever they have a camera to facilitate self-exploitation.¹⁷⁹ Harald Henn is a member of the personnel board of the Hessischer Rundfunk and has received a lot of emails from colleagues that were complaining about exhaustion.¹⁸⁰ A study conducted among VJs in Switzerland found that two thirds of the participants were lamenting about deadline pressure and physiological stress. Job contentment

¹⁷⁶ Schäfer, M. (2006).

¹⁷⁷ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

¹⁷⁸ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

¹⁷⁹ Vogel, M. (2005): 32.

¹⁸⁰ Mühldorfer, M. (2005). Appendix A: 22.

was, however, very high given that only eight percent were “rather unsatisfied” and no one was “unsatisfied.”¹⁸¹

There are aspects within the Rosenblum model that have the potential to prevent exhaustion. A VJ can experiment and tell new kinds of stories if he is allowed to have more “time for journalism” and the “freedom to fail”.

Since exhaustion is the product of several factors, management has to identify and solve them. This is a difficult task for organization, implementation, recruiting and training (4.6.4).

4.4.5 Health and Safety

Health and safety can become an issue for VJs. In the past, crews and technical people have learned to ensure those matters, so the editorial staff did not need to.¹⁸² Training therefore has to include these new responsibilities.

Equipment theft is more likely to happen when there are less people guarding it.¹⁸³ Since the reporter has no second person to back him up, he is more exposed to danger in violent situations. Riots, for example, should probably not be covered by a single person. Neubauer describes the strike situation as potentially harmful, considering that the VJ is focused on the pictures while somebody might attack him from his back.¹⁸⁴ Dunn reports that so far, he had one situation that the chief editor decided to be insecure, thus he sent out two VJs.¹⁸⁵ Rosenblum himself does not believe in the health and safety discussion. “If you’re concerned about health and safety and getting hurt, then go away!”¹⁸⁶

Health and safety is an increased problem for VJs on dangerous assignments. In these kinds of situations, management, as well as the individual VJ, has to use common sense that has to be sharpened by training and experience. It is simply not economic to send out one person that is likely to get hurt and lose the equipment, when this could be avoided by sending out an extra person.

¹⁸¹ Studer, R. (2002): 47, 55.

¹⁸² Griffiths, R. (1998): 135.

¹⁸³ Coffman, M. (2000).

¹⁸⁴ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

¹⁸⁵ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

¹⁸⁶ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

4.4.6 Schlepping

Since one-man bands have always existed in the smaller US markets, these journalists also used to go out with the big Beta cameras. Former VJ James Rosen enjoyed shooting, but hated to carry all the stuff with him.¹⁸⁷ A major advantage of video journalism lies in the reduced weight of the equipment, which is acknowledged throughout markets.

The use of tripods, however, becomes an issue. As mentioned before, all of the VJ stations I interviewed use them more or less frequently and therefore disregard Rosenblum's recommendation. An extra pair of hands can be helpful on major stories. The VJ might end up asking people on the street, cops, or other officials for help.¹⁸⁸ Situations like this might ultimately harm the station's reputation. Instead of sending out two experienced VJs, this problem can also be solved by accompanying the journalist with an intern.

Schlepping is less of a problem than it used to be, since the weight of the gear has decreased significantly. However, the use of tripods greatly reduces the flexibility of a single person.

4.4.7 Conclusion

Working as a multi-skilled video journalist means doing a harder job than working as a specialized member of a team. Continuous deadline pressure, the need for multitasking, schlepping and the "lone warrior" phenomenon can lead to exhaustion. Management has to think of programs to balance-out these disadvantages of the VJ model. Effective training, recruitment, organization and implementation can reduce the negative effects of workload and therefore, the artistic and journalistic quality of VJ pieces.

¹⁸⁷ Coffman, M. (2000).

¹⁸⁸ Heaton, T. (2005).

4.5 Recruitment and Training

4.5.1 Pre-Existent Skill Level

Rosenblum believes that “any idiot” can be trained a video journalist, but concedes that people may not be equally good. When asked about the abilities a VJ has to have, he responds:

- a fantastic sense of curiosity
- the ability to tell a story really well and
- no fear of technology ¹⁸⁹

All of my interviewees considered the ability to tell a story the most significant skill. Being a good journalist also requires the capability to think critically and structured, to write flawlessly, and to be skilled with a minimum level of creativity.¹⁹⁰ Neubauer considers recruiting VJs an almost impossible task, given that scientific research proves that people tend to be either more visual or more cognitive thinkers.¹⁹¹

The journalistic skills seem to outweigh the importance of artistic and technical skills a VJ has to have, since those are generally considered teachable. The ability to tell a story is considered the most significant skill.

4.5.2 Age

I asked the interviewees, whether a person’s age would influence their suitability as a VJ. Professor Wasserman believes that young people are likely to adapt easier, since they are more likely to see a value in what they are doing.¹⁹²

The multitasking issue might be a minor problem for them, since their ability to do several things at once is considered higher. Zalbertus believes that there are two age groups that embrace the VJ concept most enthusiastically. On the one hand, these are people below the

¹⁸⁹ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

¹⁹⁰ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 82.

¹⁹¹ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

¹⁹² Wasserman, Edward. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

age of 25 that are eager to try new things and break into the business. The other group is people above 50 years, since they again have the desire to try something different.¹⁹³

A problem young people face is their obsession with technical features. Meincke reports that at Tide, student VJs frequently try to improve a mediocre story with editing features.¹⁹⁴ Bujok agrees that due to their young age, VJs enjoy doing the shooting and the editing, but are still immature in telling a story. He, nevertheless, sees an enormous amount of potential for the future.¹⁹⁵ Rosenblum, who has trained thousands of VJs, thinks that age does not matter. “It is true that the 22-year-old gets it faster, but the 50-year-old reporter brings a lot more to the table at the end of the day.”¹⁹⁶

Neubauer pronounces that he has never seen a VJ the age of 60. To his mind, video journalism is a strategy to exploit young people that will lead to unemployment by the age of 40.¹⁹⁷ Michael Sechrist, General Manager of WKRN, was alleged by his critics to secretly plan replacing his senior staff with cheap and young workers. He denies, and comments that after a group of six people left, he hired four replacements that included three news veterans and a former intern.¹⁹⁸

Age is a factor that is less important than having the right attitude and the right mix of skills. It can be assumed that young people are more likely to fill those needs. Stations that are only focused on short-term economic success may be tempted to hire young and cheap VJs.

4.5.3 Gender

Women are broadly considered very good editors and reporters. Due to the heavy weight of the old Beta cameras, the shooting job was vastly dominated by men. Since weight is no longer an issue, more women get the chance to try it all. Their increased communication skills will, according to Kliebhan, bring an actual advantage for production.¹⁹⁹ Women can achieve a high intimacy on certain subjects. Some female reporters preferred to have a female photographer in order to produce certain kinds of stories, in the past.

¹⁹³ Mühlendorfer, M. (2005). Appendix A: 8.

¹⁹⁴ Meincke, Carsten. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

¹⁹⁵ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

¹⁹⁶ Bergman, C. (2005b).

¹⁹⁷ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

¹⁹⁸ Sechrist, M. (2006a).

¹⁹⁹ Vogel, M. (2005): 30.

Dunn reports that he considers his colleague Melissa Pentry, who is age 50, as one of the best VJs at WKRN.²⁰⁰

The elimination of the gender issue enables a new flexibility in story covering, given that the individual personality of the VJ, as well as his approach to a story garners more significance.

4.5.4 Internal Recruiting

Unless a station can start from scratch, the VJ transition has to happen within the staff. The former specialized workers have to be trained in new skills. Even long time cameramen have to learn how to operate the smaller gear. This transition is not easy considering that they were used to shoot with the big Betas for their entire career.²⁰¹ Sanchez assumes that only 20 percent of the specialized people have the potential to become really good VJs.²⁰²

The majority of my interviewees declared that technical parts like shooting and editing are easier to teach than the journalistic elements of the job. Meincke, for example, states that it is better to teach a “content person” the techniques.²⁰³ In most German stations, VJs are recruited from former reporters. Though the VJ program at the Hessischer Rundfunk was also open for cameramen and editors, only a small fraction actually did have a background in technical production. Kliebhan thinks that it is harder for production people to establish themselves as valuable members of the newsroom, since they need to demonstrate their journalistic skills to chief editors and producers first.²⁰⁴ At Sat.1 the first wave of VJs was exclusively recruited from reporters. Niethammer concedes that cameramen and editors will also be trained in the future.²⁰⁵

At the two US stations WKRN and KRON, all workers with prior experience in one of the job fields were asked to become a VJ. Antonitis considers it as one of his goals to establish a “company of freethinking people” with the right mix of personnel. He mentions a former photographer that was trained a VJ and now produces interesting packages from the gang area in San Francisco.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁰ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

²⁰¹ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 47.

²⁰² Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

²⁰³ Meincke, Carsten. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

²⁰⁴ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

²⁰⁵ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²⁰⁶ Antonitis, Mark. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

In Germany, training more cameramen and editors could help to soften the lingering debate on artistic quality. Dunn has observed that with time it became harder to differentiate, whether the person doing a package was a former photographer or reporter.²⁰⁷ Rosenblum even believes that editors become the best VJs, since they know best how to assemble a story with pictures.²⁰⁸

Internal recruiting seems to follow two patterns: if a complete VJ transition is desired by management, photographers, as well as editors and reporters are trained. If management decides to implement a hybrid system with teams and VJs, they preferably train reporters. Especially in Germany, video journalism is considered a journalistic rather than an artistic value for production. Rosenblum envisions an all VJ newsroom, which greatly simplifies the issues of recruiting.

4.5.5 The „Boot Camp“

Rosenblum Associates offers so called “boot camps” where the initial VJ training happens. They vary in length from a weekend seminar to a three-week intensive program. These group sessions are conceived for 12 – 30 participants. Rosenblum teaches editing, writing, shooting, story telling, producing and directing in video.²⁰⁹

The Hessischer Rundfunk did a three-week boot camp with 30 participants at a hotel in Kassel. The group enjoyed the community spirit that was created through long days of hard training and through a placement away from home. However, they critiqued the large size of the group. Some of the packages produced during the boot camp made it on air.²¹⁰ Employees at WKRN and KRON only received one week of intensive training, since it would not be feasible to take people away from work for a longer time period. At WKRN, four VJs and two trainers were paired together for six days and had to work between ten and twelve hours each day. The VJ team consisted of two former reporters or anchors and two former photographers or editors. That way the group could benefit from each other’s strengths.²¹¹

Kolja Hoock who attended a VJ seminar conducted by AZ Media was amazed that reporters who had no prior knowledge in picture composition were able to produce a three-minute package within a week of training.²¹²

²⁰⁷ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

²⁰⁸ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

²⁰⁹ Rosenblum Associates (2005a).

²¹⁰ Metzger, J. (2004): 11f.

²¹¹ Sechrist, M. (2006a).

²¹² Hoock, Kolja. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

The Rosenblum boot camp is a way to quickly train a specialized journalist into a multi-skilled VJ that is able to produce “broadcast quality.” A small sized group and longer training periods might increase this effect. The training conveys the basics in all three job fields. Proficiency will only be achieved through further training and work experience.

4.5.6 On the Job Training

At the Hessischer Rundfunk, the boot camp was followed by a three-month trial period. The project coordinators, as well as a support editor and a support cameraman, offered feedback and help. VJs could also take additional courses in media law, lighting, research and camera techniques. A monthly get-together was implemented where VJs could mingle with coordinators and exchange their experiences.²¹³

Sechrist found that intensive one-week training was not enough to properly teach the complicated Pinnacle system that is used by the station. To solve the problem, a Pinnacle trainer was hired to train so called “super users,” who are able to train others.²¹⁴ Niethammer employed a media designer that offers continuous advice and support. He also trained assignment editors in the proper utilization of video journalists.²¹⁵

The „freedom to fail“ has a significant importance during the learning period. Stations that are only focused on cost-cutting and do employ a downsized staff, will likely be forced to broadcast low quality material, and as a matter of fact tend to increase pressure on the VJ, which might ultimately kill creativity (5.3.1).

On the job training has to provide a guided “learning by doing” experience. Additional seminars, as well as constant support through specialized experts, are methods a station can employ to ensure continuous improvement.

4.5.7 Learning Curve Effects

The interviewees recognized learning curve effects that have improved skill level and decreased workload issues. Kliebhan has experienced that a VJ becomes a better photographer once he edits his own footage, since he is also forced to watch his mistakes.²¹⁶ WKRN and

²¹³ Metzger, J. (2004): 13f.

²¹⁴ Sechrist, M. (2006a).

²¹⁵ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²¹⁶ Metzger, J. (2004): 15.

KRON state that the VJ will not spend time shooting unnecessary footage.²¹⁷ Rosenblum confirms this, and adds that shooting ratios do significantly go down.²¹⁸

Niethammer states that VJs do come up with more story ideas. Over time, different types of VJs have emerged at Sat.1, including specialists that are able to handle currentness.

Niethammer, however, concedes that those are exceptions.²¹⁹

Certainly, the biggest training effect is to sharpen the understanding of the different journalistic tasks. A multi-skilled journalist conceives the grammar of television and is a more valuable member of the team, since his communication skills are improved. This conclusion is shared throughout my interviews and is not entirely new. The Hessischer Rundfunk had, for example, started to teach their journalism trainees in editing and shooting in the 1980s to implement mutual understanding within teams.²²⁰ Journalism schools all over Germany and the US offer classes in production techniques.²²¹

There is a lot of proof that effective training can decrease quality problems that result from inexperience in a certain field of the VJ task, as well as from heavy workload. The employees will ultimately become better journalists, even if the organizational transition towards a VJ newsroom should fail.

4.5.8 Conclusion

Finding the right mix of personnel is essential for a VJ newsroom. While gender is no issue, age can be important, although it is less important than the individual attitude towards the transition. The ability to tell a story, and the desire to do that have to be pre-existent, whereas technical knowledge or the ability to work under deadline and to multitask can be taught or improved. Initial Training can happen through the Rosenblum boot camp or a similarly structured intensive program. While those “crash courses” make people able to produce broadcast material, proficiency and the benefits of the learning curve can only be achieved if it is resumed with continuous on the job training and support. The organizational aspects that result from this will be discussed in the next chapter.

²¹⁷ Business Wire (2005).

²¹⁸ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

²¹⁹ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²²⁰ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

²²¹ Serim, R (2005): 40.

4.6 Organization and Implementation

4.6.1 Organizational Transition

Stations have to decide, whether they want to go all VJ with a limited number of conventional crews, like WKRN or NY1 have done it, or whether they want to keep most of their conventional crews and add a few VJs, who will shoot stories that are either more economic to produce or better suited for this production method. The Hessischer Rundfunk and Bay News 9 are largely following the second approach.

Figure 8 visualizes the different ways for transitioning that a station can, according to Griffiths, choose from:

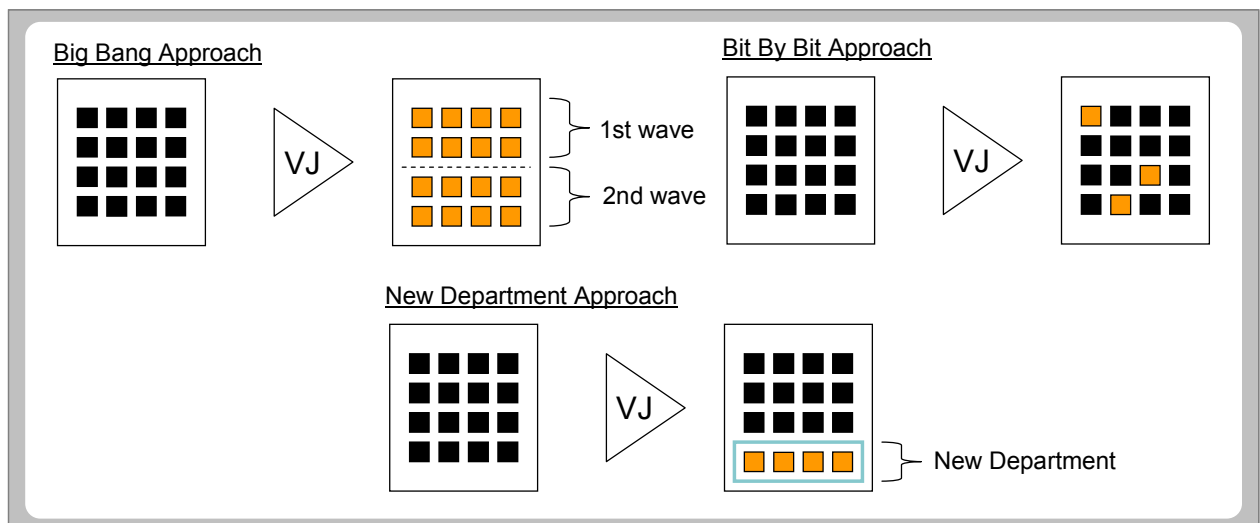


Figure 8: Three ways of transitioning to a VJ organization.²²²

A station that chooses the *big bang approach*, trains every specialized employee into a VJ (e.g. KRON). This has to happen in several waves, since the station has to resume producing news bulletins at the same time. The big bang method is closest to the Rosenblum concept, where an all VJ newsroom is envisioned.

With the *new department approach*, a station can create an all VJ editorial department. That way, the individual strengths and weaknesses of the model can be tested without interfering with normal production. *Herkules*, a local show for the Kassel area that airs on the Hessischer Rundfunk, has taken on this approach.²²³

²²² Griffiths, R. (1998): 134f.

²²³ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

The bit-by-bit-approach is a very precautionary way to try out the method, since only very few workers are trained. Griffiths believes that this may result in problematic reactions from employees that keep on working in a specialized field.²²⁴ In 2005, VJs produced 10 percent of the programming at the Hessischer Rundfunk. This quota is forecast to climb up to 20 percent within the next couple of years.²²⁵

Kliebhan believes that VJs work best in an all VJ surrounding, given that gate keeping issues (4.6.5) and prejudices are diminished. As part of a hybrid newsroom, where VJs are the minority, they tend to be pushed into an outsider role. Kliebhan reports, that as a matter of fact, the VJ feels less privileged and that there is no broad interest in further VJ training.²²⁶

Adopting the Rosenblum model demands a broad commitment towards a different way of making television. If it is applied very sparsely, journalistic and artistic innovations may not materialize and implementation issues are likely to occur.

4.6.2 The “Newspaper Model”

Rosenblum states that the future broadcast newsroom will be organized like a newspaper. The staff is supposed to consist of a group of contract and salary employees and a second tier of freelance contributors. He believes that television companies should eventually move from an era of producing to an era of publishing.²²⁷ This newspaper model alters classic control mechanisms (4.3.10), as well as collaboration aspects (4.2.2).

Sechrist enjoys the effect on the morning meetings. Those used to be held in the news director’s office at WKRN and were only attended by reporters, not by production people. Now, the location is the newsroom and all VJs and producers do participate.²²⁸ Sechrist points out that adapting to the increase in output was a difficult organizational task. “Just keeping track of their stories and who is a today turn and who isn’t, is quite a job.” He believes that management has to change as much as the VJ in order to not “drift back to the old reporting techniques.”²²⁹

²²⁴ Griffiths, R. (1998): 135.

²²⁵ Zuber, M. (2005): 46.

²²⁶ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

²²⁷ Glaser, M. (2005).

²²⁸ Sechrist, M. (2006c).

²²⁹ Sechrist, M. (2006a).

A station that wants to efficiently use the potential of video journalists has to reshape the organizational structure. Since the VJ is supposed to be able to report news stories on his own, a newspaper model might be recommendable.

4.6.3 Assignment Flexibility

All of my interviewees coincided that a VJ can significantly increase the stations flexibility to cover different stories. This is enabled by interpreting the fact that one person can do it all as a creative possibility rather than as a restriction. Certain stories may require more persons. Heaton states that two VJs with two cameras can outperform a conventional crew with just one camera.²³⁰

Stations can cover big events like a concert relatively cheap when they utilize a group of VJs to shoot from various perspectives.²³¹ Niethammer has experienced that it is possible to mix conventional crews with VJs. That way, the benefits of both production methods can be combined. Another advantage that Niethammer has detected is the possibility to send out a VJ for a longer time period. This will result in more stories or a multi part series.²³² Zalbertus, for example, is planning to send out a VJ on a journey around the world to report for center.tv.²³³ Kliebhan has seen all kinds of team formations. VJs for instance, have been paired up with sound persons or boom operators.²³⁴

Employing VJs increases the possibilities to cover a story. Assignment editors and chief editors have to understand these opportunities in order to properly utilize the capabilities.

4.6.4 Employee Reaction

The VJ transition is a vast organizational change for the newsroom. Vahls pronounces that only a small group embraces change as a chance, while the vast majority will be skeptical or fearful about it. The spectrum of employee reaction can range from visionary enthusiasm, over opportunistic reactions and indifference, to passive and active resistance. Some employees might instantly leave for good.²³⁵

²³⁰ Heaton, T. (2005).

²³¹ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 87.

²³² Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²³³ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

²³⁴ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

²³⁵ Vahs, Dietmar (2003): 291.

Dunn from WKRN asserts that “when I realized it was coming, I just embraced it with both arms.”²³⁶ The Hessischer Rundfunk decided to only train people with an essentially positive attitude towards video journalism.²³⁷

Most of the employees’ fears are connected to losing their importance and their jobs as a result from mere cost-cutting (4.6.4). Some photographers might simply not be comfortable asking questions and writing the script, while reporters might be uncomfortable handling the camera. Though news-gathering is not meant to be a comfortable job, the lack of passion to explore certain fields of the VJ task will certainly lead to a decrease in overall production quality. Inexperienced reporters might actually feel pressured by management to work as one-man bands on major stories.²³⁸

A certain seniority factor also needs to be taken into consideration. A very good long time reporter might feel embarrassed when shooting bad video. Dunn states that he again needed to learn how to handle critique when people were judging his writing.²³⁹ The prestigious reporter position as being the boss in the field is also vanishing.²⁴⁰

I found organizational resistance to be an important issue in stations that make the VJ transition. The topic is frequently overshadowed by a very emotionally led debate on quality and workload.

A positive attitude is essential for a successful training. Management will have to deal with fears, while encouraging assimilation during implementation. If fears turn into permanent hostility it might be sensible to lay off aggressive people to avoid a “poisoning effect” for the whole project.

4.6.5 The “Gate Keeper” Phenomenon

Gate keeping can be a result from fears connected to the VJ change. If employees with a negative attitude are manifested within the hierarchy, they will ultimately use their position to either secretly or openly fight the change. Stations with a huge hierarchy, like traditional commercial stations in the US, or public stations in Germany, suffer from this structural dilemma.

²³⁶ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

²³⁷ Vogel, M. (2005): 29.

²³⁸ Pavlik, J (2000): 231.

²³⁹ Dunn, T. (2005).

²⁴⁰ Mühldorfer, M. (2005). Appendix A: 27.

Zalbertus sees the slender organization of AZ Media as a huge benefit. That way, he was able to build two new local VJ stations within only a year.²⁴¹

The Hessischer Rundfunk exemplifies the gate keeping issue. Before the initial training, every editorial department had the chance to decide about participation and was asked to outline ideas about how they intend to use VJs. Every VJ was assigned to a special department, which project coordinator Jan Metzger considers one of the key success factors. The new VJs could create their own packages very early and the initial quality concern has proved to be overrated.²⁴² Although the VJ has been established as a production tool, the Hessischer Rundfunk is still far from using it to its full potential as Kliebhan remarks. Especially former editors and camerapmen have a hard time passing the “gatekeepers.” The cockiness of the newly trained VJs, who were told to have the power to do better television during the boot camp is another problem. Gatekeepers also face a lack of power and control. A lot of assignment editors simply do not want to take risks and, therefore, tend to avoid experimenting with VJs. Kliebhan hopes that future seminars with gatekeepers will be able to diminish predetermination and ignorance.²⁴³

Since the VJ model demands a high flexibility from every organization, it is applied to, stations with a strong hierarchy will have to deal with gatekeepers. If it is not possible to integrate them through individual talks and seminars, it might be necessary to lay them off in order to ensure the overall success of the project.

4.6.6 Layoffs

If one person can do it all, laying off the other two seems to be the logical consequence. Dunn reports that some WKRN employees did not want to do the transition and were released from their contracts. He adds that they were replaced later on.²⁴⁴

At the Hessischer Rundfunk, no employees have been laid off, but the demand for freelance Beta teams has, according to Kliebhan, declined a bit.²⁴⁵ The demand for specialized sound persons is likely to be reduced as well. This cannot only be attributed to the VJ model, but also to prior cost-cutting measures that led to a spread of camera reporter crews.

²⁴¹ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

²⁴² Metzger, J. (2004): 5f.

²⁴³ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

²⁴⁴ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

²⁴⁵ Handwerk, M. (2004): 20.

Bujok has actually employed additional people. Two researchers are helping the journalists to do phone calls and to gather information while he is in the car driving to the scene.²⁴⁶

In a VJ environment, every employee is judged by his own work, so that incompetent people will not be able to keep a low profile. Due to the phenomenon of blame, other members of the team carried those for a long time.²⁴⁷ editors that see themselves in an “operator role” and can only edit by strict time code form another group that is likely to lose their jobs is.²⁴⁸

Rosenblum acknowledges that the VJ model is a way to cut jobs. He sees it as an opportunity to slenderize an organization by implementing a flatter hierarchy and by getting rid of incompetent people.²⁴⁹ KRON’s staff had already gone through a reduction of 60 process people within the term of two years, before the VJ model was implemented.²⁵⁰

I could not find proof that the Rosenblum model was primarily used to cut jobs in the stations where I conducted interviews. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that stations engage in job cutting because it provides a major potential for cost-cutting.

4.6.7 Exploitation

Working as a VJ is proven to be the harder job (4.4) that can eventually lead to exhaustion. Proper training will lessen these effects but additional organizational measures have to be implemented. Dunn reports that he gets a “planning day” every once in while where he can concentrate on research and story ideas.²⁵¹ Antonitis is thinking about giving his best people two free days per week.²⁵²

Since a lot of the employees at the Hessischer Rundfunk were complaining about exhaustion, the station incorporated a 50/50 ratio. VJs work on their own half of the time, while they go out with a classical team the rest of the time, reports Kliebhan.²⁵³ The risk in having such a set ratio is the stigmatization of VJ work as hard work. Such a one-dimensional look does not consider the creative potential of the production method.

²⁴⁶ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

²⁴⁷ Griffiths, R. (1998): 131.

²⁴⁸ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.; Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

²⁴⁹ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

²⁵⁰ Antonitis, Mark. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²⁵¹ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

²⁵² Antonitis, Mark. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²⁵³ Richartz, D. (2006).

At center.tv, about 80 percent of the assignments are covered by a single person, while the rest is covered by a group of VJs.²⁵⁴

The most common method to compensate employees for the higher workload is to pay them more money. The different payment models are discussed in 4.7.3.

Neubauer does not believe in management that broadly implements recreational measures. He believes in the VJ model facilitating exploitation considering that one person will not be able to speak up against unfair assignment policies. Neubauer sees no future for a long lasting professional career and demands: “Don’t become a VJ! Keep your hands off of that!”²⁵⁵

The interviewed stations tried to prevent exhaustion from an organizational point of view by differentiating the assignments, giving time off, offering support, and paying more money. If exploitation is part of a station’s strategy to cut costs, it will not be possible to establish a core of well trained and experienced VJs and learning curve effects cannot materialize (5.3.1).

4.6.8 Conclusion

A successful application of the VJ model can only happen through effective change management. While some employees might embrace it, others may fear it. Most fears are connected to job security. Though saving on numbers is a temptation of the VJ model, this study could find no actual evidence that the interviewed stations were implementing it to primarily lay off reporters, photographers and editors. If fear and ignorance is not dealt with, gate keeping can materialize. This phenomenon is amplified within a hybrid newsroom, where VJs are the minority. A successful VJ organization gains higher assignment flexibility. Organization and implementation has to be accompanied by training sessions for chief editors, assignment editors and other integral members of the hierarchy.

²⁵⁴ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

²⁵⁵ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

4.7 Economic Aspects

4.7.1 Investment Costs

Before a station can benefit from cost-cutting effects, it has to make an actual investment. The additional expenditures differ, depending on the amount of VJs a station wants to train. The cost structure is made up by fixed-step costs (e.g., initial training) and variable costs (e.g., camera equipment). The Hessischer Rundfunk, for example, paid €300.000 for their three-week boot camp for thirty participants.²⁵⁶ This equals an invest of €10.000 per VJ. The unproductive times that a specialized journalist spends away from his work also have to be taken into account.

The investment costs for VJ equipment can be reduced significantly, compared to traditional crews. Classic professional equipment has, according to Kliebhan, an economic life of eight to ten years, while VJ equipment is only used for half that time period. Figure 9: Cost saving potential by investing in VJ equipment per year and set. Figure 9 compares the expenses for the two production technologies per year, as well as per set.

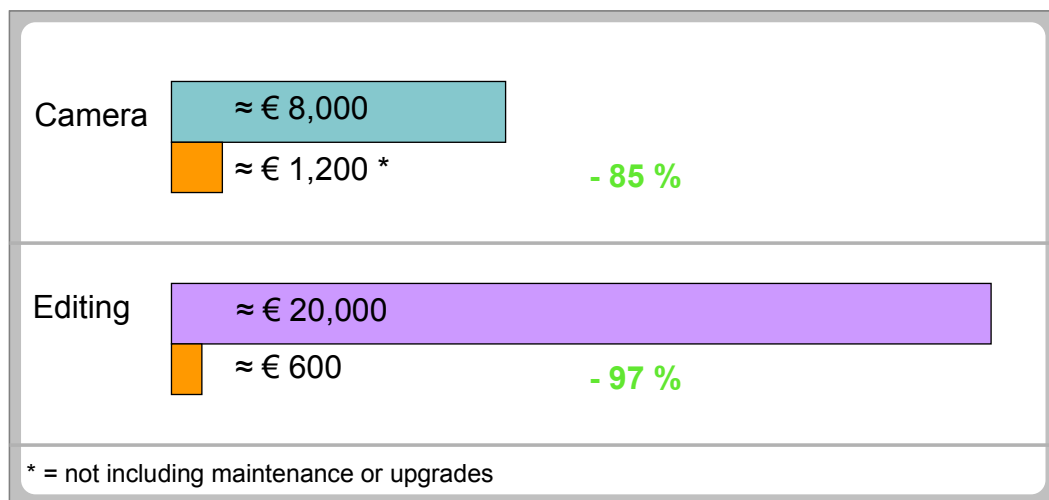


Figure 9: Cost saving potential by investing in VJ equipment per year and set.²⁵⁷

While Rosenblum promises an amortization within the first six months, this is no guarantee due to several variables discussed within this chapter.²⁵⁸ The Hessischer Rundfunk, for example, was not able to amortize their investment costs within the first nine months of the project.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Samlowski, W. (2004): 41.

²⁵⁷ Kliebhan, Bernd. Email request. 21 July 2006.

²⁵⁸ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

²⁵⁹ Metzger, J. (2004): 37.

A station that intends to transition to the VJ model has to be able to financially back up this investment. Existing small local stations that work on very small profit margins might have a problem coming up with the necessary budget for a quick transition.

4.7.2 Past Investments

An economic dilemma that stations face is past investments in expensive infrastructure. VJs are not trained to work with heavy shoulder cameras or operate complicated analogue editing suites. Existing workflows, staffing and union agreements are other past commitments that are hard to overcome. Rosenblum considers the existing infrastructure and the fact that US stations are still profitable reasons for the relatively low VJ penetration in the US.²⁶⁰

Antonitis could benefit from economies of scope. KRON just like WKRN is owned by Young Broadcasting, so the station could simply shift some of its cameras to other stations in the group while keeping a few for special coverage.²⁶¹

Past Investments that have not amortized yet are blocking the transition to the VJ model. If the existing infrastructure is functioning and operating profitably, stations tend to have very little desire to change to the VJ model.

4.7.3 Payment

A VJ basically has to do the job of three to four persons, which is proven to be harder. Most of the stations I interviewed react by adjusting their pay scale. WKRN, for example, offered contracts to all of their employees and raised the payment.²⁶² At the Hessischer Rundfunk, a reporter gets 20 percent extra if he shoots and another 20 percent if he also edits.²⁶³ Sat. 1 has established an incentive plan that is based on amount and quality.²⁶⁴

Rosenblum believes that a VJ should always be paid depending on the quality of his pieces.²⁶⁵ Bujok thinks that a freelance pay would never work in Europe. VJs at TV Limburg are unionized, they receive higher payment and they earn more money when working in the evening or on weekends.²⁶⁶ Zalbertus explains that the salaries for reporters have decreased

²⁶⁰ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

²⁶¹ Antonitis, Mark. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²⁶² Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

²⁶³ Richartz, D. (2006).

²⁶⁴ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²⁶⁵ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

²⁶⁶ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

within the last years. He believes that VJs at center.tv earn an appropriate amount of money.²⁶⁷

The pay scale differs immensely. In December 2005, AZ Media paid €5.000 for a VJ produced 30 minute feature. For a similar feature, a specialized reporter at the public regional station RBB would earn €6.200.²⁶⁸

At Bay News 9, VJs do not earn more than normal reporters do.²⁶⁹ It can be assumed that a lot more stations are tempted to keep their old pay scale. This may not lead to problems as long as the VJ is only used for some VO shots or easy to do features that do not require currentness. As soon as he is meant to compete on stories with classical news crews from competitors, agony is likely to rise.

A station that wants to benefit from the positive creative aspects of the Rosenblum model has to deal with the workload issue. Increased salaries can be one of several effective organizational tools.

4.7.4 Costs per Package

Rosenblum promises to cut costs by 60 to 70 percent while increasing quality at the same time.²⁷⁰ Shortly after the end of their initial VJ training, the Hessischer Rundfunk claimed that with a VJ package, the price per minute would be 12 percent less than with a conventionally produced package.²⁷¹ Kliebhan, however, concedes that it is hard to objectively compare prizes, since both production concepts are used differently. A VJ is especially cost effective when long, unproductive travel times are involved. He might shoot one story in an outlying area, while the team shoots three short stories in an area close to the station.²⁷² Video journalism is a chance to try ventures that were not financeable before, like following a person for a whole day, instead of just two hours or for reporting from foreign countries. VJs are also very flexible and therefore more cost effective when the station needs some quick VO shots.

Figure 10 visualizes three different scenarios. In scenario A, the VJ basically does the work of four persons with no increase in payment, so that costs can be cut by three fourths. Scenario B suggests a more cost efficient classic crew structure, where editors and cameramen work on

²⁶⁷ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

²⁶⁸ Fesel, D. (2004).

²⁶⁹ Sanchez, Efrem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

²⁷⁰ Bergman, C. (2005b).

²⁷¹ Metzger, J. (2004): 37.

²⁷² Schäfer, M. (2006): 23.

several stories a day. Example C visualizes the possibility that a VJ takes double the amount of time to produce a story compared to an efficiently working team. A definite cost driver is editing, since VJs with no background in editing take more time and cannot write simultaneously.²⁷³

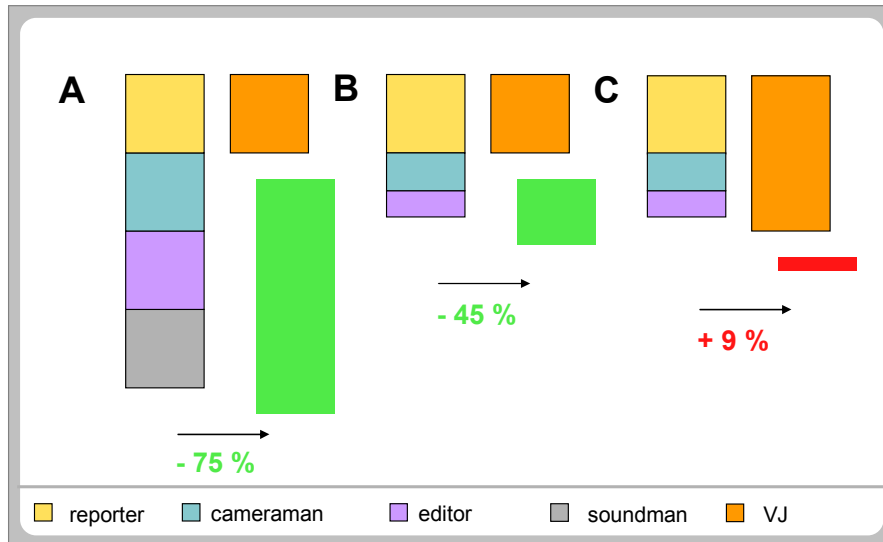


Figure 10: Cost saving potential per package depending on workforce and working hours.

The cost per package can theoretically be cut within the promised range of 60 to 70 percent. This is, however, only possible if the station used to operate very inefficiently in regards to costs. The costs per package also differ depending on the assignment

4.7.5 Costs of Operation

Figure 11 visualizes the potential margin for stations to cut costs within their budget for personnel. This calculation is based on a 40 percent payment increase for VJs, which the Hessischer Rundfunk is willing to pay. The crossed rectangles mark the costs that can be saved if the station would employ freelancers that work on a per-package base. The green space marks the cost-cutting potential that occurs by applying such a payment model to the newsroom.

²⁷³ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

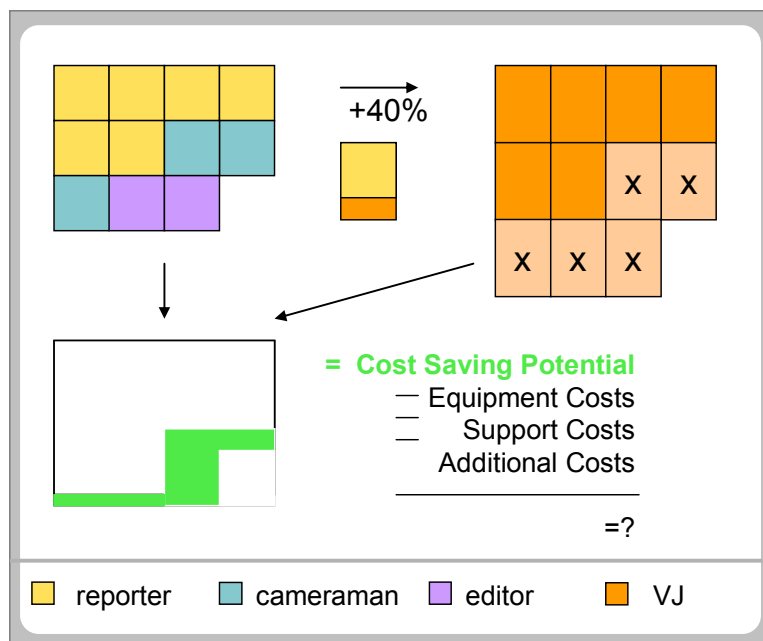


Figure 11: Cost saving potential by increasing wages and establishing a freelance loan.

Bujok, who is one of the closest followers of the Rosenblum vision, had expected to save some money in the first place. He explains that there are two ways to cut costs: "You save on wages or you save on numbers." Since he's having more employees and he pays VJs better than other journalists, he can not cut costs.²⁷⁴ Bujok concedes that an organization that establishes a freelance pay might be able to do that, but adds that though this might work in the US it is less likely in more regulated European markets.²⁷⁵

The cheap equipment has its trade-offs, as it tends to malfunction more frequently. Given that every VJ has his own camera at the Hessischer Rundfunk and that they only work 50 percent of the time as VJs, the use of the equipment is also limited.²⁷⁶ Additional training sessions and ongoing support also have to be taken into account. The BBC has restructured the whole organization by increasing coverage and implementing more local stations, but was not able to save money.²⁷⁷

Niethammer reports that he could save huge amounts in the regional coverage and with reporter pieces from foreign countries.²⁷⁸ Meincke believes that the VJ movement in general is a way to cut cost and that the reason to increase quality is a myth.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁴ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.
²⁷⁵ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.
²⁷⁶ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.
²⁷⁷ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.
²⁷⁸ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

Heaton states that the overtime budget at WKRN could be reduced significantly. Besides creating a salary pool for its employees the station also bought new vehicles. Although Heaton sees the potential to cut costs, he argues that stations that use video journalism as a mere cost-cutting method should not call themselves “VJ news organizations.”²⁸⁰ Rosenblum remarks that “stations only make it as a way to make cheap television, which is a tragedy, but that’s life!”²⁸¹

The information on overall cost-cutting differs immensely throughout my interviews. It can be assumed that it is not possible to implement the Rosenblum vision, which allows “freedom to fail,” more content and more time for journalism and to also cut costs within the promised range of 60 to 70 percent at the bottom line unless the station used to be extremely cost ineffective before.

4.7.6 Ratings

Ratings are an important indicator for advertisers that ultimately determine a station’s revenue. Although German public regional stations are financed by a viewing fee that is paid by the TV set owners, they still have to justify the amount of money they take from the public.

Antonitis reports that ratings at KRON have not gone down since they started to transition to VJs.²⁸² The same is true for WKRN. Whether the ratings will go up in the future is too early to tell. Considering that the TV advertising pie is growing at a decelerated rate while Internet advertising is growing at a double digit rate, this is not very likely.²⁸³

In Germany, the Hessischer Rundfunk has not experienced negative audience flows, once a VJ package was broadcast.²⁸⁴ Kliebhan has observed ratings and finds that the VJ piece sometimes happens to be more successful than traditionally produced pieces within the newscast.²⁸⁵ It might be necessary to further monitor those trends to come up with an

²⁷⁹ Meincke, Carsten. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

²⁸⁰ Heaton, Terry. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

²⁸¹ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

²⁸² Antonitis, Mark. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²⁸³ By April 2006 advertisers spent a cumulated amount of €174 Mio on Internet advertising which equals a 56 percent growth compared to the same time period in 2005. (Source.: Nielsen Media Research)

²⁸⁴ Metzger, J. (2004): 30.

²⁸⁵ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

objective judgment. Bujok believes that VJs can produce better television, but has also not experienced an increase in ratings.²⁸⁶

Niethammer praises the possibility to cover more foreign stories. Packages on people that are emigrating from Germany to live their life in marvelous travel destinations are very popular within the Sat.1 target group.²⁸⁷ Those stories have a minor significance for local and regional news, but could theoretically be implemented if the emigrant is a member of the local community.

It is not possible to prove a positive or negative influence of the VJ model on ratings of local news shows at the stations I interviewed.

4.7.7 Other Revenues

Some stations see the real benefit of the Rosenblum model not within general cost-cutting or an increase in ratings, but within the possibility to create new revenue streams at no or little additional costs in the long run.

Bujok believes that VJ stories are better stories, since they tend to have a beginning and an end. His philosophy is to tell stories in a “timeless” style.²⁸⁸ That way, the station was able to sell a lot of news items they did on a local soccer player that transferred to Ajax Amsterdam to a soccer website. The increased content can theoretically be fed to a variety of media platforms.²⁸⁹ Additional local TV channels can be launched that cater to much smaller audiences like the BBC has done it. The stations can put additional packages on the web site and make money from banner ads or short commercials that are shown before the film runs. On demand, pay per view or downloadable pod casts are other possible sources of income. The possibilities are further discussed in the chapter on the “content differentiation strategy” (5.3.4).

The demand for content on mobile phones or the Internet might provide future revenue potential for TV stations. Quality content can either be reused or additional content can be created. VJ stations tend to follow one of these strategies.

²⁸⁶ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

²⁸⁷ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²⁸⁸ Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

²⁸⁹ Pavlik, J (2000): 234.

4.7.8 Conclusion

A station that transitions to video journalism has to be capable of making new investments in infrastructure and staffing. Past investments might lose their value due to new equipment and workflow needs. Cutting costs can be achieved on a per-package base. On an organizational level this is only possible through reduced salaries or reduced workforce, or if the prior organization used be extremely cost ineffective. A higher payment, however, might be necessary to compensate for the increased workload. It is possible to use the VJ model to cut costs, even though it may be more sensible to think about additional revenue streams, since an increase in ratings is rather unlikely to happen.

5 Guidelines for Successful Application

The following Guidelines are derived from in depth expert interviews (see Appendix) and their close examination in the previous chapter of this thesis.

5.1 The Quality Decision

The top argument among Rosenblum’s critics is: The quality will ultimately suffer. As analyzed in chapter 4.1 and 4.2, this holds true for technical and artistic quality, as long as the station expects the VJ to produce the traditional team look. The journalistic quality, however, does not necessarily have to suffer. Elements like “freedom to fail,” “more time for journalism,” or authenticity have the potential to improve quality as examined in chapter 4.3. Any station that is experimenting with VJs will therefore have to redefine “broadcast quality” for themselves. Figure 12 visualizes the different ways to approach this question.

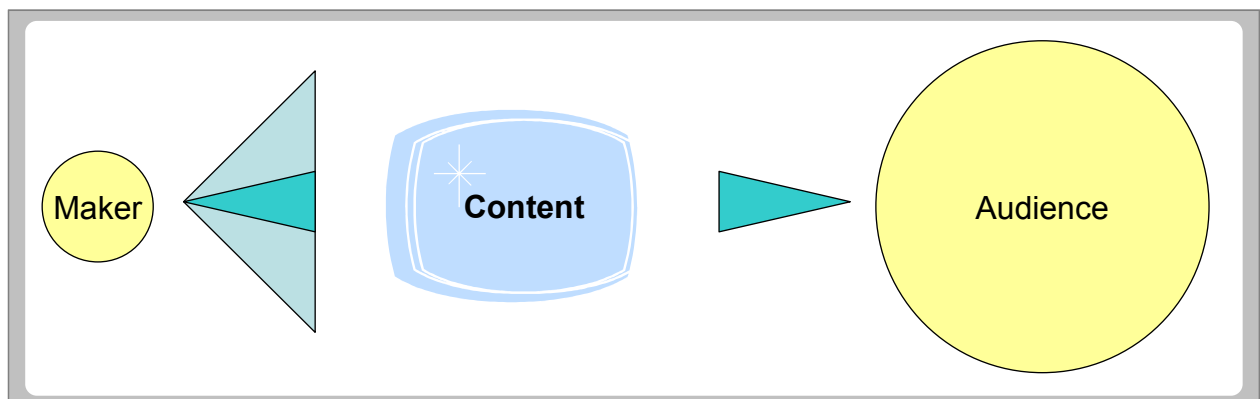


Figure 12: Maker vs. audience perspective on quality.

5.1.1 The Audience Perspective

After their initial VJ training, the Hessischer Rundfunk surveyed audience reactions to a selected sample of VJ produced and traditionally produced packages. The viewers were not able to differentiate between the pieces. Even some heavily criticized packages caused no significantly negative audience reaction. Some participants stated that they did not consider visual quality to be a reason for changing the channel, as long as there was a certain minimum quality level. They pointed out that they would not normally have actively paid attention to artistic and technical aspects if they were not asked to do so. The audience felt “closer” to the subject. The topic was in general considered much more interesting than the production method.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ Metzger, J. (2004): 30f.

A focus group at the BBC stated that they were able to better memorize details about the characters.²⁹¹ Ernest Bujok has also conducted focus groups and found out that the audience simply does not care about the differences. From his research, he has learned that VJ stories are considered “much more stories with a beginning and an end.”²⁹² Ratings have gone neither up nor gone down at the analyzed stations (4.7.6). Antonitis points out that he has never heard people outside the industry debating the issue of visual quality. “We have built a huge infrastructure to satisfy a need that is only in our heads.”²⁹³ Niethammer has worked at TeleZüri for 5 years and at Sat.1 for 2 years. In all this time, he never received a viewer response because of bad shots but because of bad stories.²⁹⁴

YouTube, a digital platform for video on the Internet, gets more clicks a day than most cable stations get in terms of viewers. The low visual quality of viewer created videos is no obstacle for the page’s success in traffic.²⁹⁵ Zalbertus considers this as evidence of an upcoming “digital tsunami” that will inadvertently alter the way quality is perceived and end the pointless quality discussion that is held within small professional circles.²⁹⁶ The audience’s quality expectations have changed over the years. Today’s audience has learned from video clips and is more likely to accept quick edits and less steady shots.²⁹⁷

5.1.2 The Maker perspective

Television makers have studied their profession for years. They have learned to distinguish between good and bad shots. Figure 12 visualizes their broader perspective. TV makers can also evaluate the quality of the aesthetic packaging while the audience seems to be rather focused on a mere content level. Bay News 9 has largely moved away from VJs, due to quality reasons. Sanchez concedes that the audience may not notice the difference, but thinks that “if you’re serious about your profession. these things should matter, whether the audience is aware or not.”²⁹⁸ For example, Telezüri has also switched to teams while public Suisse television increasingly uses VJs.²⁹⁹ Neubauer agrees that VJ quality may be sufficient but that it is not okay. He believes in a familiarization with quality standards and an educational

²⁹¹ Warley, S. (2002).

²⁹² Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

²⁹³ Antonitis, Mark. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²⁹⁴ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

²⁹⁵ Reuters (2006).

²⁹⁶ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

²⁹⁷ Mühldorfer, M. (2005). Appendix A: 40.

²⁹⁸ Sanchez, Efreem. Telephone interview. 16 May 2006.

²⁹⁹ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

responsibility of media entities. In the long run, Neubauer argues that the downfall of quality standards is simply not good for the audience.³⁰⁰

5.1.3 Quality Recommendation

Any station that wants to judge video journalism, should incorporate the audience perspective. The level of quality relevance is significant for application. Public stations might feel a responsibility to uphold traditional visual quality as part of their educational commitment, while a commercial station is probably going to be more focused on audience desires.

Quality also has to be put into a media perspective. Viewers are used to low quality video streams on the Internet due to bandwidth issues, while they are given higher visual standards on their TV sets. Video journalism is the perfect production method for Internet considering the current technological standards.

If a station decides to keep on producing the exact same visual quality, VJs will play a minor role (5.3.2). If they focus on journalistic possibilities of video journalism and creating additional Internet content, video journalism will be important to very important (5.3.3/5.3.4). The same advice can be given to stations that accept lower visual quality to cut costs in the longer run (5.3.1).

5.2 Recommendations for Assignments

It is true that a VJ can theoretically produce broadcast material in any kind of reporting situation on any kind of subject. Although in some situations this might be easier than in others. This study found that the suitability rather depends on the reporting approach than on the topic itself. “Right now we are watching team television.” comments Kliebhan. He thinks that technology will seek out the best content. For VJs this is supposed to be less intrusive coverage of reality, rather than creating a huge media circus.³⁰¹ VJ Franco Foraci believes that VJs have the possibility to cover stories behind the pictures. When he was reporting for the *Hessenschau* from Thailand after it was struck by the tsunami in January 2005, he was not looking for more sensational shots, but for people with interesting anecdotes.³⁰²

Figure 13 displays the different reporting aspects that have a major influence on assignment suitability. The yellow segment of the circle stands for other reporting approaches that do not

³⁰⁰ Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

³⁰¹ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

³⁰² Foraci, F. (2005).

influence suitability on a mere topic level. Ratios between the different segments vary throughout markets. The brief content analysis in chapter three of this thesis, found that currentness was of unequal importance to local stations.

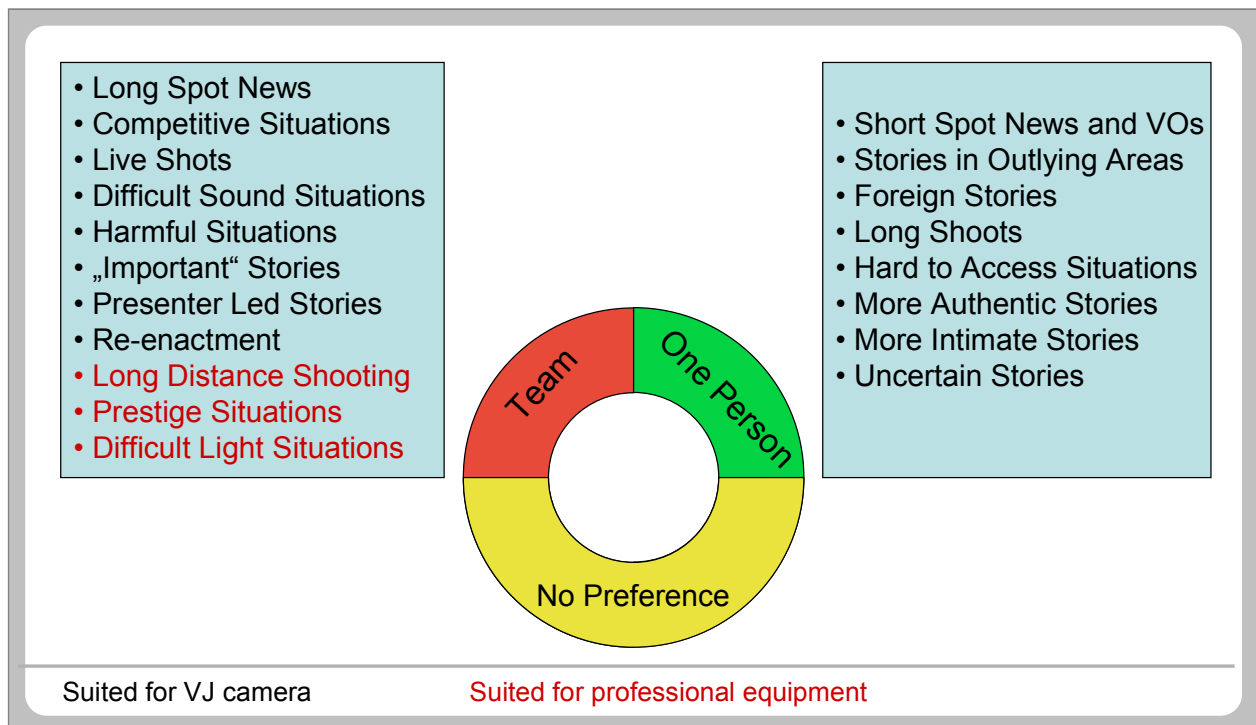


Figure 13: Topic suitability for teams and one-man bands.

5.2.1 VJ Suited Assignments

The VJ is frequently used to get some quick sound bytes or VO shots. This evolves from their function as a cost effective production tool. When more people are out to cover news, former readers can be visualized with authentic footage. The VJ can also take the time to drive to an outlying area, which would simply not be economic with a team. This factor makes video journalism especially interesting for foreign stories. Though this type of assignment is rare in local and regional news, the *Hessenschau* reporting from Thailand is a successful example of the use of VJs. Local and regional stations can increase their topic range by accompanying locals to foreign destinations. Niethammer proves that this kind of topic is currently very popular among audiences.³⁰³ Longer shoots are more feasible, which results in the possibility of portraying a person over a day or to attend longer lasting events. The VJ gets access to areas a team would not get. Filmmaker Sönke Wortmann was recently allowed to film the German national soccer team during the 2006 World Cup. In the past, VJs were able to shoot

³⁰³ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

a concert on the stage or enter military jeeps on patrol missions.³⁰⁴ One person can potentially create higher authenticity in reportage and intimacy in interviewing. This works for stories that tell the bigger story through one person. The possibility to fail at times makes it possible to investigate uncertain threads without having to broadcast them.

5.2.2 Team Suited Assignments

A single person is overstrained when he has to produce longer pieces within a day. The Hessischer Rundfunk has detected this length to be longer than 1:30 minutes. The VJ is also handicapped in competitive news situations. Important press conferences are an example, as well as court stories where a lot of teams are awaiting the verdict. Getting an “ambush interview” at a celebrity’s doorsteps while standing in a group of teams is similarly hard to produce.

Difficult light situations where it is either dark or the light changes quickly are another problem for VJs. Getting good audio in difficult audio situations where, for instance, strong wind blows or sudden noises come up is an almost impossible venture.

VJ stations are reserved to cover really important stories with just one person. Niethammer would not send a VJ to a press conference in which the chancellor resigns from her office.³⁰⁵ Zalbertus prefers to send out two people on longer assignments such as trips to foreign countries.³⁰⁶ Potentially dangerous assignments should not be handed to a one-man band. Strikes or fires require a second person to protect the person operating the camera from sudden danger.

Stand-ups or other active reporter involvement on screen cannot easily be realized. The problem is amplified when the story requires a live shot. Even all VJ stations like WKRN would not send out just one person in such situations. Stories, which are low on pictures or hard to visualize with authentic footage, may require re-enactment, which benefits from the possibility to have one person to direct and one person to concentrate on shooting.

5.2.3 Conventional Teams vs. Multiple VJs

Instead of a classic reporter cameraman duo, it is always possible to use two VJs. The second VJ might, for example, help to balance the audio levels to compensate for the missing soundman. The station could theoretically also send three VJs to equal the classic manpower and to realize hard to get stories. If all VJs are fully equipped, they can get several different

³⁰⁴ Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 153ff.

³⁰⁵ Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

³⁰⁶ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

perspectives on one event. Two VJs will have four different audio tracks. The assignment flexibility (4.6.3) is increased. If the original reason for the pairing-up proves to be unfounded the VJs can always split up and gather news separately, or tell one event from different perspectives.

There are three exceptions that are marked in red in Figure 13. A small camera is not very prestigious. Officials will consider this an inferior reporting standard. For example, if it is necessary to stun the interviewee when the reporter confronts the corrupt gang leader at his doorstep in an investigative story, a large camera is much more impressive.³⁰⁷

The lenses are a technical problem that forces the VJ to stay close to the subject. If this is not possible due to some kind of barrier the shot will suffer significantly. Very difficult lighting situations should also preferably be done with a better camera. Other technical and artistic disadvantages do not influence the story suitability and are a part of a station's "quality decision" (5.1).

While some stories are better done by one person, others require a team. The assignment editor can generally build such a team on occasion. It does not have to be made up by specialized workers, but can consist of VJs that will utilize their multi-skilled training to improve news gathering.

5.2.4 Topic Recommendation for VJ Stations

Using multi-skilled teams can be an effective production tool at times, but contradicts with Rosenblum's basic idea of a VJ working as a one-man band. A station will not be able to significantly increase coverage or cut costs by constantly pairing up VJs. Stations should engage in different reporting that is benefited by just one person (5.1.1) For instance, they should provide more intimate and authentic news, produce packages that are led by the story rather than by a presenter, and avoid longer spot news. Dunn has experienced positive reactions from the audience after the station started to show more "good news."³⁰⁸ A newscast with short spot news and longer features is recommended for a VJ station. Very important stories that the audience has to get can be covered with a VJ team.

³⁰⁷ Richartz, D. (2006).

³⁰⁸ Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

5.3 Possible Business Strategies

Michael E. Porter differentiates two basic competitive advantages a company can try to achieve: low cost and differentiation, with quality being an important column for differentiation. Figure 14 visualizes the different generic strategies and how they are applied to a broad market or a niche segment.³⁰⁹

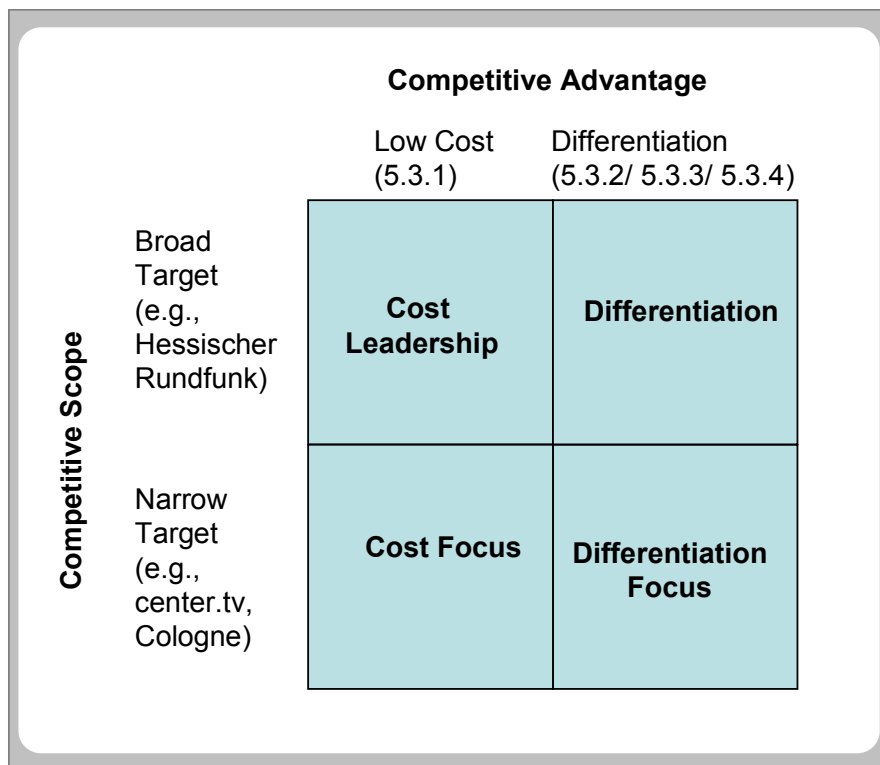


Figure 14: Generic competitive strategies according to Michael E. Porter.³¹⁰ (with own additions).

If a company is not able to clearly define one of these positions, it will, according to Porter, get “stuck in the middle” and profitability is ultimately going to suffer.³¹¹ This chapter analyzes the strategic possibilities for implementing video journalism into local newsrooms.

5.3.1 Success through Low Cost

Video journalism can be used as a cost-cutting tool (4.7). This demands a very strict implementation of the original one-man band idea. A part of the original staff has to be laid off and the payment level has to be kept relatively low. The station will focus its personnel mix on cheap young workers, while keeping a small core of professionals for support and training. A part of the additional support and research work can be handed to cheap interns.

³⁰⁹ Porter, M. (1999): 70ff.

³¹⁰ Porter, M. (1999): 78.

³¹¹ Porter, M. (1999): 78.

The profit margins for local stations are significantly smaller in niche local markets, compared to huge regional or metropolitan markets. Low cost is, therefore, an interesting option for smaller stations. It is simply not feasible to send out a team with high-end equipment to cover small news items in the local community. In the end, it decides whether the program is made or not. Since small German local stations are not supported by strong network programming like their American counterparts, this problem is amplified.

If a local station can start from scratch, they will most likely invest in cheap DV equipment and laptop editing rather than buying expensive editing suites and high quality gear. Prior investments will complicate the transition, because the station will have to wait for amortization. If the station is low on capital, they cannot buy all the equipment at once. In fact they will be forced to take on the “bit by bit approach” for implementation, which tends to provoke a bad working climate (4.6.1).

Quality is supposed to stay at the minimum journalistic, artistic and technical level because of the station’s decision to abandon these restraints. Rosenblum’s quality promise is not going to materialize in such a newsroom.

The workload is very high, and training is low, which eventually leads to exhaustion. The young workers will try to evolve to a bigger market. If they are very good, they will be able to incorporate intimacy and authenticity into their stories, and promote themselves through their work.³¹² A minority might get the chance to become a part of the exclusive professional core of the station. The station has to keep on recruiting and cannot use learning curve effects to the fullest potential.

Considering that Television is free to watch for the audience, an inferior artistic and journalistic quality will not be competitive if another station is able to offer significantly higher standards. The cost advantage, therefore, has to be transmitted to the advertisers that will be charged lower rates. As long as viewers do not react negatively this might force other stations to reduce prizes for advertising space and, therefore, to also cut costs.

³¹² Gilgen, G. (2003): 34.

Low cost is a clever business strategy for first movers when there is a lack of regional coverage in the local area. TeleZürich, center.tv, Bay News 9, or the new hyper local stations of the BBC are a few successfully launched VJ stations.

5.3.2 Success through High Artistic Quality

This approach relies on the belief that a high standard of classic visual quality is or should be important to the audience. The VJ is considered a helpful journalistic add-on to get some extra shots that might help to improve a story. They will be sent to outlying areas to get some traffic and weather shots, or accompany a classical team to gather additional footage in hard to access areas. Their fields of assignment are strictly limited, and their responsibilities are reduced to a relatively low level.

In such an environment, the VJ has a difficult stand compared to his colleagues, who are specialized in one field, given that his work is always considered inferior. He will not necessarily get paid more, but has to produce the classic team look when assigned to a story. Members of the organization see the VJ as a “necessary evil” that has to be incorporated to make production a little more economic, but who will not play a major role.

In the print market, magazines like *National Geographic* in the US or *Stern* in Germany are famous for their high standard in photography and very popular among certain target groups. A similar model is likely to work in television news. It is, however, economically impossible in a small local market.

5.3.3 Success through High Journalistic Quality

Stations that are able to look beyond the mere cost-cutting benefits of video journalism will follow this strategic path. The VJ is considered an alternative production method that can help to tell some stories better. The concept relies on the desire to cover every story with the best tool available. In such a newsroom, teams and one-man bands will coexist, so that the assignment editor is able to flexibly react on the demands of the news story. Theoretically, all of them can be multi-skilled VJs that are paired up, depending on the assignment (5.2.3).

In Germany, stations that want to be competitive through high journalistic quality hardly tend to recruit from editors or photographers. All three organizational ways of transition are possible. The bit-by-bit approach bares the risk that the new VJs will not be used to their full

potential, while the new department approach is an effective way to carefully pretest the possibilities that can later be implemented into the main newscast. The big bang approach enables the biggest assignment flexibility, diminishes agony and gate keeping but is also the most expensive from a short-term perspective.

Such stations heavily rely on the materialization of learning curve effects and will spend a lot of concern on moderate workload and efficient training. The stations, therefore, will not engage in exploitation, but pay more money and give time off, or allow more time for journalism. Management has to be careful to prevent stigmatizing VJ work as hard work to continue facilitating creativity.

An increased authenticity, more intimate interviews, as well as a multiplicity of opinions or uncertain stories, are each possibilities that help improve the journalistic quality and are each implemented within the Rosenblum model. TV Limburg is a follower of this approach. Even though a lot of stations try to merge this strategy with a higher classic artistic quality, it is more closely connected to the differentiation in content. It can be interpreted as a benefit for journalistic quality that more output will lead to more opinions, more topics and more news.

5.3.4 Success through Differentiation in Content

The economic principle demands that a company either reduces the input by keeping the same output level, or increases the output by keeping the input level.³¹³ Stations can use video journalists to both extents. Instead of cutting costs and laying off people, the money that was saved by utilizing cheaper technology can be shifted to a salary pool.

When every former photographer, editor and reporter is trained as a VJ, the station will end up having more stories. Figure 15 visualizes how that effects the newscast. New stories (dark blue) that would have never been covered in the first place may turn out so interesting that they get a spot within the show. With an implemented “freedom to fail,” such creative stories are more likely to happen and the newscast might evolve into a less routine driven television program.

³¹³ Wöhe, G. (2005): 1.



Figure 15: Possible media platforms for VJ packages.

The differentiation in content can also be viewed as a way to reconnect with the audience. By increasing coverage and allowing the “freedom to fail” VJs might provide new stories on different subjects. Sechrist intends to win back viewers with stories that are relevant to their lives. The beat system allows reporters to do in-depth segments on topics that are either only possible to cover with greater expertise or would not be feasible to cover for a minor audience. However, those non-traditional or non-mainstream stories might be relevant for the people. WKRN has recently added a beat on real estate and one on military. A lot of Nashville citizens face housing issues or might have relatives that serve in the military.³¹⁴ It may not always be possible to place those stories within the newscast. They, nevertheless, can be useful to bring an added value to the Internet site or for cell phone businesses.

The average newscast offers a limited inventory. Depending on the amount of commercials, a thirty-minute newscast can decline to only 20 minutes of actual news. With the increase in content, a station can produce more editions of a show. The Hessischer Rundfunk has done that with their news update *Hessen Aktuell*. Another example is the BBC, which has launched additional local television channels in the UK. The Internet, on the other hand, can serve as an almost unlimited platform for content, due to no inventory issues. Chris Anderson describes this phenomenon in his “theory of the long tail.” Internet companies like Amazon or Netflix, according to him, do not have to focus on their hit products, since they can simply make

³¹⁴ Sechrist, M. (2006a).

everything available online. A product that is not profitable at a certain time may cross that margin in the future.³¹⁵ Figure 16 displays the “long tail” phenomenon.

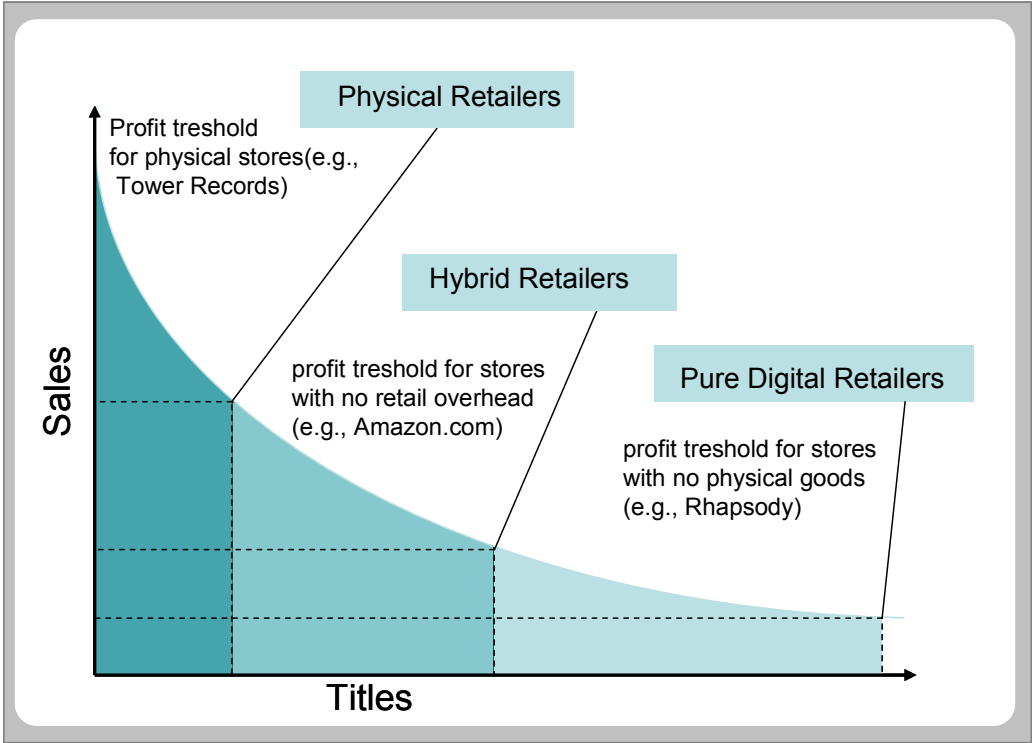


Figure 16: The theory of the long tail.³¹⁶

When TV Limburg produced packages on a local soccer player; they did not know that Ajax Amsterdam would hire him and the value of those stories would, therefore, increase tremendously. If Bujok is right and his VJs are able to produce a “timeless” style, the station has the potential to draw revenue from their content in the future. Pure digital retailers that don’t offer physical goods like television stations can, according to Anderson, benefit the most from the Internet.³¹⁷

The Rosenblum model is an interesting bridge technology to prepare a conventional station for future Internet business. Though the budget, retailers spent on Internet advertising, is still low compared to traditional ad spending, it is growing at a double-digit rate. Rosenblum points out that a station that does not make the move to web casting is doomed³¹⁸. Visual quality is, due to bandwidth issues, largely considered less important in an online environment. The possibility to cover more stories also enables the station to produce content

³¹⁵ Anderson, C. (2004).

³¹⁶ Anderson, C. (2004).

³¹⁷ Anderson, C. (2004).

³¹⁸ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

that is especially suited for certain distribution channels (green packages). There is a demand for unique content for cell phones, as well as on the web. Video journalism can help to overcome strategies that are based on pure repurposing of the same stories.³¹⁹

WKRN, the BBC and TV Limburg are examples of stations that have embraced the VJ model as a way to gain additional revenues in the online and offline world by increasing coverage and therefore differentiating their content from competitors.

5.3.5 Success through Outpacing

While low cost is a clever way to break into a market, it might be sensible to reinvest the saved money into one of the differentiation strategies to outpace competitors and to establish a sustainable competitive advantage. The extra money can be spent on wages, additional equipment or training. Bay News 9 and TeleZüri have both embraced high artistic quality strategies in their market. A content differentiation strategy similar to WKRN and TV Limburg is another way to go. The success depends on the market situation, the growth plans and the perspective on quality.

Another popular strategy is to marry two or more different approaches. TV Limburg, for example, connects differentiation in content with journalistic quality. A “best of both worlds” approach that equally emphasizes a classic artistic look and journalistic quality can lead to a conflict of interest at times. It may simply not be possible to fully materialize the benefits of the production method.

Rosenblum promises the possibility to connect all approaches except the high visual quality. This study was not able to prove this within the stations where I conducted interviews, considering the factors that I determined to be relevant (Chapter 4). It is recommendable to look at more markets and for other stations to come up with a final conclusion. Outpacing strategies always bear the risk of getting “stuck in the middle.”

³¹⁹ Warley, S. (2005).

6 The Democratization of Media through Citizen Journalism

The Internet is fundamentally altering the world of journalism. In an era of mass media, a small group of professionals is entitled to the privilege and the responsibility to inform a huge audience. Author A.J. Liebing once stated that the “freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.”³²⁰ The Internet empowers everybody to become a part of the communication that makes up news. People write online diaries, so called blogs, where they put their opinion and enable others to comment on them. The online newspaper “OhmyNews” in South Korea was based on the belief that everybody is a journalist. It gathered so many participants that it eventually transformed the country's government.³²¹ Passionate, so-called citizen journalists have taken on tasks that traditionally belonged exclusively to the big media organizations.

Rosenblum believes that video journalism will further enable the democratization of media. Video is in his thinking the most powerful media of our times. He thinks that stations should take on a publisher role and broadcast quality content that is produced by people with the ability to tell an interesting story in video.³²²

With cheap lightweight cameras and easy to use laptop editing tools, everyday people are free to produce their own content. Current technological advancement enables even cell phone users to shoot video.

YouTube is an Internet site that allows users across the world to upload video clips. Every day more than 100 million videos are watched on the site.³²³ *Rocketboom.com* and its look a like German version *Ehrensief* provide a free video pod-cast on a daily basis that is successfully drawing traffic. Such video blogs are one manifestation of the “democratization of media.” People that are “literate” in using video can become content providers and compete for audience with traditional media companies.

As a matter of fact, the citizen journalism movement has caught the interest of traditional media companies that see new revenue potential in an online world. Current TV is a US cable and satellite channel that incorporates viewer-created content into their schedule at a share of one third. Users can upload their self-made video productions to the website, where the best pieces are picked to air on TV. If a package is broadcasted, the creator receives a payment in a

³²⁰ Pavlik, J (2000): 236.

³²¹ Hauben, R. (2005).

³²² Zalbertus, A.; Rosenblum, M. (2003): 52.

³²³ Reuters (2006).

range from \$500 to \$1,000. Current has recently started to accept viewer created commercials and cell phone video.³²⁴

In Germany, the Current model has inspired local media companies. Meincke wants to train a group of VJs that will help people to produce their story ideas in video. He also plans on running workshops with local citizens that are interested in learning how to improve their camera skills. In his vision, an average person that goes to a baker and also has a desire to interview him on current events or on his person, will simply do it³²⁵ Zalbertus has pioneered citizen journalists during the 2006 soccer World Cup. 60 so-called World Cup reporters got equipped with consumer DV cameras to shoot private videos that aired on center.tv.³²⁶ Zalbertus also thinks that it is necessary to pay citizen journalists a certain freelance loan, since he does not believe in volunteers.³²⁷

Incorporating citizen journalism content is appealing but also feared by classic TV stations. From a pure economic point of view, stations gain a source of relatively cheap content that can help to further differentiate the program based on actual viewer interests. Figure 17 visualizes the implications for a station that adds freelance citizen journalists to their VJ staff. The content will gain in magnitude and in diversity, even though, ethical issues might occur. Credibility and the vanished possibility to control the content production will increase problems that were already pronounced when employing classic video journalists (4.XX). Objectivity is also continuing to suffer, but the multiplicity of opinions is encouraged. Heaton considers it one of the greatest possibilities of the citizen journalism movement that argument will return to news.³²⁸

³²⁴ Current (2006).

³²⁵ Meincke, Carsten. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

³²⁶ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

³²⁷ Zalbertus, Andre. Personal interview. 9 June 2006.

³²⁸ Heaton, Terry. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

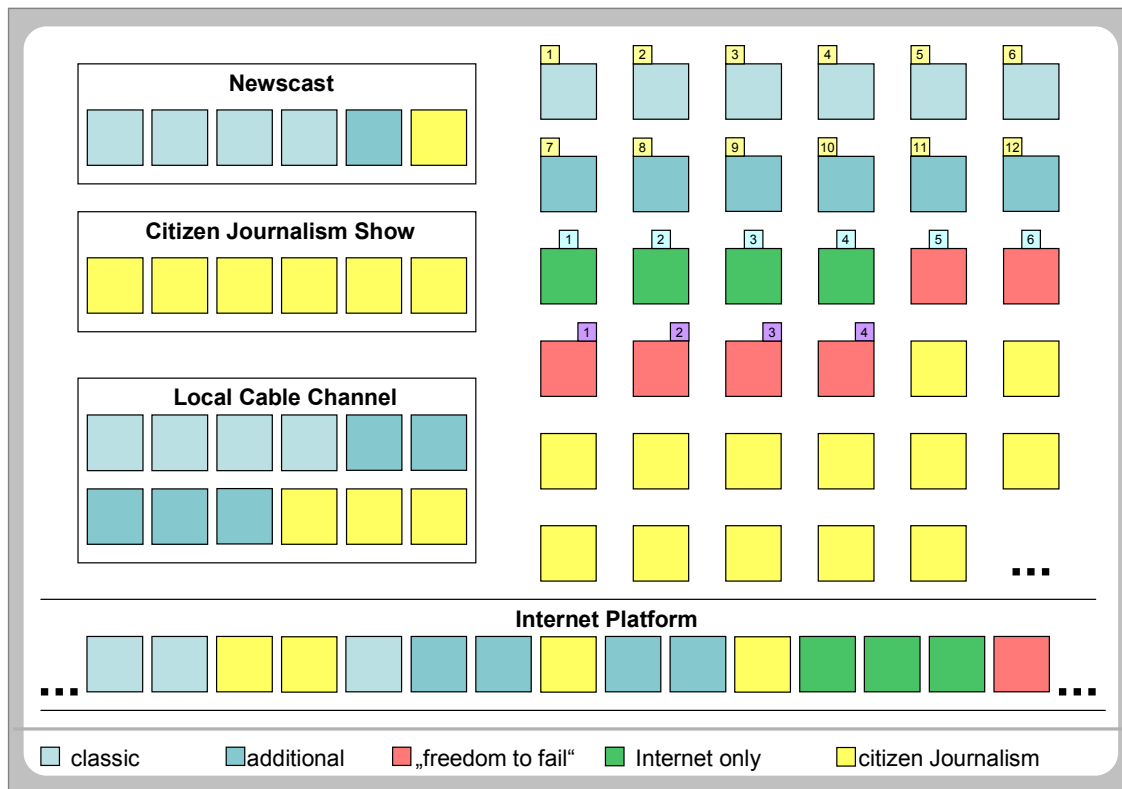


Figure 17: Increasing coverage by working with citizen journalists.

Using people’s desire to express themselves publicly as a revenue model demands a high sensitivity for management. WKRN in the states is also working along that thin line between exploitation and economic success. Heaton reports that the station is a rare example of a media company that has managed to incorporate some of the existing citizen media, rather than creating their own. The station has approached local bloggers and created a moderated blog called “Nashville Is Talking.” A former blogger was hired by WKRN and is now aggregating interesting posts.³²⁹ In summer 2005, the station started to offer free video classes to the public. The concept was to improve shooting skills and to encourage video blogging in the long run. Heaton believes that the station can benefit from an image standpoint and also get better amateur video in the case of spontaneous news events like fires or weather disasters.³³⁰ When asked about the implementation of citizen journalism packages, Heaton suggests that television stations should clearly label such pieces or create a special show just for them.³³¹ In July 2006, WKRN finally announced that they will pay local bloggers to run approved stories on their website and within their newscast.³³²

³²⁹ Heaton, Terry. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

³³⁰ Heaton, Terry. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

³³¹ Heaton, Terry. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

³³² Heaton, T. (2006).

The opportunities and threats that come along with citizen journalists who have the ability to shoot video, have a potential to change the broadcasting news market. During Hurricane Katrina and the terrorist attacks on the London subway, stations were confronted with a huge amount of amateurish cell phone and camera video. Whether stations will be able to adapt to the changes or whether citizen journalists will make their way through pages like OhmyNews or YouTube will be determined in the future.

7 Conclusion

I have looked at video journalism from various perspectives. I have found that it is indeed a cost-cutting measure. It can lead to exhaustion, but can also increase job contentment. Depending on the individual definition of quality, it may lower or increase it. It can encourage job cutting or lead to more people getting a chance to try it. It is suited for every production but might be better suited for parts of it. But most of all, video journalism is a 'tool'. And like every other tool it can be beneficial in the right hands or harmful in the wrong hands.

The big advantage of video journalism is that it is such a flexible tool. Stations can train a multi-skilled workforce and assign their employees, depending on the needs of the story. The possibilities are numerous, compared to strictly specialized teams. Assignment editors are not the persons to operate only one tool; they are the ones that have to make the right draw from a whole toolbox. They occasionally might be forced to invent completely new combinations. Managers have to decide whether that tool will get special treatment or whether it is simply exploited as long as it can last. Video journalism is a relatively new tool and management of regional and local TV stations will have to get accommodated before there will be proper utilization.

This study found **four major strategic thrusts**: There are stations on the local level that will use it very extensively to cut costs, while stations that value high classic artistic standards will only use it very sparsely as a production add-on for special occasions. If high journalistic quality is the focus, video journalism will have an important role within the assignment mix. The fourth thrust allows stations to create a 'VJ factory' that works efficient and leads to more coverage on a greater variety of topics and ultimately more content. There is not one way to correctly use this tool, because the usage depends on the individual market, the audience expectations, and the professional claims.

Rosenblum believes in the "democratization of media" through video journalism. The Internet allows everyday people to broadcast their self-made videos. Services like YouTube or Current TV are eager to be their "publishers." It feels like the debate is shifting from an "I don't want to be a publisher!" standpoint to a "Can I be your publisher?" standpoint. Are these citizen journalists VJs? They have not gone through professional training and years of television work experience. However, they have a curiosity about the world and no fear of technology. If they are able to tell interesting stories, they will create original content that draws traffic on

the web. *Rocketboom.com* and *Ehrensensf* are successful examples. Would it not make sense to have a company that consists of a group of such individuals that are able to assemble larger audiences? Internet show rooms like YouTube might ultimately become a recruiting source for TV stations' talent scouts.

The possible benefits of video journalism do exceed the possibility to cut costs. Stations can transfer knowledge about workflows and reporting techniques to people with the ability to use the technology, or simply train their professional staff in the use of such equipment. The professional background and the knowledge base of the company is a core competence that cannot easily be copied by amateurs. However, it can be conveyed to them. If a station manages to aggregate a group of loyal people that have the ability to produce marvelous content, it is likely to draw audiences in an offline or online world, which will ultimately attract advertisers. Loyalty is something that cannot be assured by heavy workload, low payment, or missing support. A small local station that is only focused on cost-cutting may not be able to compete with the economies of the web. This study concludes that a mere low cost strategy for video journalism is not going to be beneficiary in the long run.

The Rosenblum model is basically an 'instruction manual' that tells TV stations how to use the 'tool' video journalism. This study found it to be controversial in many aspects. The no-tripod rule, as well as the all-automatic dogma, are examples of advice that was hardly taken by professionals. Rosenblum compares a VJ operating the camera to a newspaper reporter taking notes using a pencil, which greatly simplifies the job of a cameraman and is not shared across markets.

The real accomplishment of Michael Rosenblum is not the 'instruction manual' itself, but the fact that he wrote one. He was early in realizing that the way broadcasting news was made could be changed. Rosenblum managed to meet some curious TV makers with a desire to try something different, and he motivated them to try it out. Kliebhan praises the spirit that was brought into the project, and Niethammer pronounces the confidence that he got from Rosenblum.³³³

The "godfather of video journalism" describes his role as follows: "At first I convince them that what they do is shit and then I show them how to do something different and then they kind of dig it."³³⁴

³³³ Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.; Niethammer, Nik. Telephone interview. 17 May 2006.

³³⁴ Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

The Rosenblum model has been around for more than 15 years and it almost seems as if the markets, the techniques and, therefore, the ‘tool’ itself adjusts to its ‘instruction manual’. There is currently no demand for high visual quality on the Internet. The web is popular among younger audiences for their information and entertainment needs. At the same time, technology has advanced and has become easier to operate.

Figure 18 shows a future video journalist. This picture could become reality if miniaturization continues to advance. Right now, this may be just science fiction, but Rosenblum's analogy might come true once technology really becomes as easy as using a pencil.



Figure 18: The video journalist of the future (Artist: Herkel, Jasmin).

Glossary

Beta

Established professional broadcast quality tape that had become the industry standard.

Blog

Blog is short for web log. It refers to a journal that is available on the web. The activity of updating a blog is “blogging” and someone who keeps a blog is a “blogger.”

Change Management

The leadership and direction of the process of organizational transformation especially with regard to human aspects and overcoming resistance to change.

Citizen Journalism

The act of citizens taking part in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information (also known as “participatory journalism”)

Currentness

This thesis uses the term to categorize all news stories, that have to be reported the day the story breaks. It equals the German term “Aktualität.”

HDTV

High Definition Television. HDTV displays pictures either in 720p or 1080i.

Hi-8

Semi-professional tape format that is almost but not quite broadcast quality and has now been superseded by DV. The first VJ stations utilized it.

Prosumer

A description of a product that is targeted at, and appeals to, both professional and consumer buyers.

Ratings

Television viewership estimates based on entire market populations.

Readers

Also known as read or tell stories. These stories are read by the anchor without the use of authentic video.

Regional Windows

Regional programming that is shown on German national television.

SDTV

Standard Definition Television. Generic term used for conventional television sets, based on the NTSC or PAL standards.

Selbstinszenierung

German expression, which in this context refers to a news organization that tries to entertain the public by actively creating certain news events.

Sound Bite

Any short recorded audio segment for use in an edited program usually a highlight taken from an interview.

Voice Over (VO)

A voice over is a narration that is played on top of a video segment, usually with the audio for that segment muted or lowered.

Vox Pops

Ordinary people are asked for their opinion on a topic, often on the street. From the Latin word vox meaning "voice" and popular meaning "people", thus, voice of the people.

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Appendix A

1. Rosenblum, Michael. Telephone interview. 14 May 2006.

Michael Rosenblum is often referred to as the godfather of video journalism. He believes that VJs will eventually replace conventional production.

T.: Was NY1 the first station where you started to train VJs?

R.: No, I actually started to train VJs for a man named Jan Stenberg who was starting the first commercial television network in Sweden.

T.: Why did you do so much in Europe and just later brought the video journalism concept to the states?

R.: Europe was much more aggressive for the concept than the Americans were because Europe has less of a tradition in commercial television. Commercial television has been around in America since the 1940ies. Europe commercial television really only started about ten years ago. And people starting off, were looking for a much more cost effective way of building networks. So this was the right time and the right place.

T.: Wouldn't it make more sense for commercial stations to think about cost cutting first? So why didn't the Americans embrace it?

R.: Sure, but what happened was: Commercial stations were making enormous investments in infrastructure: cameras, staffing, work flow, union agreements. And then you can't really come and blow it all off. But if you have someone who is starting from scratch this much easier to do it that way. That's why it was so appealing for them. The new commercial stations in Europe were much more amenable to trying something different than the commercial stations in America that already were staffed and running and were profitable. It's not like they were losing money.

[...]

T.: You also trained VJs at the "Hessischer Rundfunk," which is a German public station. And one of biggest stations you ever helped to transform, is the BBC in Great Britain, which is public too. So how did that happen?

R.: I was very surprised that the BBC bought the concept. But the man, who was running the BBC [...] had come out of commercial television and was very interested in new technologies. The BBC has to renew their licence every ten year and they have to justify the huge amount of money they take. So now they really embraced the technology. They are moving very quickly into a digital platform and of course this is the only really intelligent way to create a digital platform for video.

T.: Do you think the Americans are getting it now?

R.: [...]. The places you see it happen in America are places like Google, Yahoo or Microsoft. They are very aggressive. When they go into video and broadband - which they are doing -

this is obviously the way that they will do it. Commercial television will probably go out of business first. I think the future will be video on the web. I think that broadcasting and cable are dead already. It's just that they don't know that they are dead, but they are dead. And if you look at websites like "YouTube" or I did a website with Al Gore in California called "Current TV". I mean these places are very aggressive and if broadband carries real time video there is no reason anybody would go to cable.

[...]

T.: How do you think television stations are going to make money in the future? Do they have to go on the web or are they running out of business anyway?

R.: I think the stations will effectively run out of business. I think the future for people who make money on television will be people who put their stuff up on the internet. And the funny thing is that this can really be anybody. It's a free market and it is going to be messy for a pretty long time. We're just at the beginning. But if you look at a website like rocketboom.com, they get 200.000 hits a day. That is more than most cable channels get in terms of viewers. You can see that this is really where the future is.

T.: In your concept of video journalism you speak of the "democratization of media". Is that how it is going to happen? Through pages like rocketboom.com?

R.: Yes, I think so because anybody can get a camera and make something. A lot of it will be garbage and anybody can put it up but every once in a while you get someone, who does really interesting stuff. [...] And advertisers are not far behind.

T.: Speaking of news: There is just that certain amount of news that people have to get to stay informed and they have to get it objectively. Don't you think this could be a problem then?

R.: If you watch the war in Iraq in Europe and you watch it in America: They give you two different wars. I am not that sure that there is such a thing as objectivity. I would rather say that media mandates a multiplicity of voices and opinions. And you can't have a multiplicity of voices, when you have one state broadcaster. But when you have an infinite number of internet channels, you will have an infinite number of voices and that is when the thing is really interesting.

T.: Aren't people going to be overwhelmed by all this information?

R.: Did you ever walk into a bookstore? How many books are in a book store? Do you get overwhelmed? Do you say: "Oh my god there is so much literature! I must call for the state that they can give me one book a month, so I know what to read." [...] It's a free press and people can chose.

T.: The Nashville based local station WKRN is offering a blog called "Nashville is talking" where they select from different blogs in the area. Is that going to be successful?

R.: I don't know whether it will work or not. I see an analogy to radio. When radio was first invented in the 1920s things went nuts and everybody was starting a radio station and eventually it shook down. There will be a shake down here also and it will be a shake down based on what people want to watch on the internet. It's going to be messy but free press is messy. It's not generally a healthy thing

T.: Since you are often referred to as the “godfather of video journalism” I have a few questions on your concept. What’s the new thing? Haven’t there always been one man bands in the US?

R.: One man bands were essentially a cheap way of imitating what conventional news crews did. They sent one poor guy out with a tripod and a camera. It was a mess. This is completely different. Largely because the technology really frees people. And the idea is not to take the technology and make it look like it looked before, because it looks pretty crappy to start with. Rather to take the technology and push the limits of what you can do with it. [...] Historically, what will happen here is no different than what has happened before even though people are all freaked out about it. It’s simply the implications of a new technology. And this happens all the time.

T.: From your experience, are there certain stories that are suited for VJs and other stories that are not suited?

R.: No, do you think that there are certain stories that are better suited for pencils and others that aren’t?

No

T.: That’s a good analogy, but critics say that court stories or stories on situations where it might get messy, if for example the President shows up, are less suited for VJs.

R.: I don’t think anyone ever wants to watch a court story. Are you dying at home waiting for court stories to come on the air? And then you watch TV and there is a court story and you say: “Holy shit! There is a court story. I can’t wait for this to happen!” The media should really stop doing them because people don’t care about them.

T.: Is that the same with the so called “doom and gloom” stories? Will they also start to disappear with video journalism?

R.: I don’t think so. You got to bring in the viewers. That’s what it’s all about.

T.: I talked to a VJ from WKRN and he said that he likes the fact that, since his station took on the video journalism model, they have more good news to offer and that they reduced the “doom and gloom” approach.

R.: [...] They do more features and less car crashes. Part of the reason is that when you only have six crews, you have to be so much news so you tend to cover every stupid thing that happens. But when you really think about it, the car crash has pretty much no impact on anybody’s life except for the four people that are in the car. So it’s not really news.

T.: You think that every story can be done with a VJ. Do you however think that the state-of-the-art VJ cameras have technical disadvantages?

R.: No, I don’t see that. The bad thing about the big cameras is that they are fucking heavy.

T.: However, the lenses are better.

R.: You know, no one ever changed the channel because of the size of the lens.

[...]

T.: There is an article in the book that you wrote with Andre Zalbertus from the German production company AZ Media. The article states that the three- chip cameras have a problem with the lighting in difficult situations. For example if you do reality TV and you have a wedding going on where the sun is setting in the background. So it is not as well suited for these kind of assignments.

R.: Well that's possible. But again my attitude is if it's dark it's dark. I think it's very bad to use artificial lighting. It makes the whole situation really false.

T.: VJ productions lack the communication within the team. Some reporters say that they like this collaboration aspect and that they like to talk their cameramen because they bring ideas. Where are these ideas going to come from in your VJ concept?

R.: In what city are you in?

T.: I study close to Frankfurt.

R.: What's the big newspaper in Frankfurt? There is really big newspaper, right?

T.: Right! It's the „Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung“.

R.: It's a very famous newspaper. Right? Do you think when they send there reporters, they send out two or three reporters so they have people to talk to each other. Do you think you can't get good journalism without the reporters discussing everything with a million other people?

T.: I think that if somebody is for example specialized on pictures that he might have extra ideas.

R.: I think that really good journalism is the vision of one person. I think that a really good print reporter goes out, gets a story and writes it up. And if you can't do that, you don't belong working at the newspaper. If you have a reporter at the newspaper, you don't need two or three other people to go with him to give him other ideas.

T.: So do you still see opportunities for collaboration in the video journalism concept or is it this strict one man one mind thing?

R.: When it comes to the journalism part it's like in a newspaper. Sometimes you will have two or three reporters to cover a really special story which is great. But for the most part I think journalism should be one person's opinion. That doesn't mean you can't have eight different opinions in one show. But this notion of this communal collaborative thing, is just an excuse for not working.

T.: What do you think about the use of tripods? On the one side you want to be close to the subject, but on the other hand you risk shaky pictures?

R.: You don't get shaky pictures if you hold the camera still. Any idiot can hold the camera still.

T.: So in your concept, it is without tripods anyway?

R.: Yes. If I send you to Afghanistan to go and report a story, I don't want you to drag that stupid thing around.

T.: I went to the University of Miami for a year and I had a class, where we had to work as one-man bands. We always had to use tripods which always took more time.

R.: That's the one-man band thing. That's when you're essentially imitating what a crew does. It's just a cheap way of making bad television.

T.: Do you experience more beat reporting at the stations where you've trained VJs?

R.: I hope so. I don't know if they've done it. But that's the whole idea.

T.: So you go to the stations and explain them your concept and then you sort of hope that the station will do it that way?

R.: If I go to the station, I explain the concept and then they pay me this huge amount of money. Then I put them through this three week boot camp brain washing thing. At first I convince them that what they do is shit and then I show them how to do something different and then they kind of dig it.

T.: You want video journalists to have more time to craft and research their stories. Do you think stations are doing this?

R.: No, from my experience, they only make it as a way to save money and to make cheap TV which is a tragedy, but that's life. The whole idea is that if you spent more time on a story you get a better story. And if you get better stories, more people will watch and that is really what we are looking for. They don't have the courage to go the whole distance.

T.: On the other hand you say that the stations are doomed because of the whole broadband development. So isn't their behavior (are you writing in British or American English??? If American, it's behavior. If British it's correct as it is.) kind of understandable?

R.: Yes, they want to save as much money as they can. It is understandable but they are still doomed. I mean there is nothing really they can do to save them. It's unfortunate but that's life.

T.: Even though they hire you and ask you to train their people they are still doomed?

R.: Eventually, if they can have the intelligence to make the conversion to taking the journalistic resources they have and make a conversion to web casting, because they can go online immediately, then I think they have a chance of survival but most of them don't want to hear about it. If you work through the station you feel like a million people are on television. And if you go to the online area you have may be two guys. [...]

T.: Is that the same with the “freedom to fail”? Have you ever trained a station that is allowing their employees to fail from time to time? Because this is one of the most interesting parts of your concept.

R.: The BBC really bought into the freedom of fail thing. I mean they are big enough to do it. [...] And that was one of the basic plans that we tried to incorporate [...]

T.: I read the final report of the “Hessischer Rundfunk” that they wrote a few month after your training and it says that the economics dictate that they are not doing the “freedom to fail” stuff.

R.: What they don’t understand is that the economics get much better once you allow people to take risks. The risk will give you much more interesting and creative people and interesting and creative people will drive your ratings up. But no one wants to go through the long run. [...]

T.: Has that somehow been proven? Has there been an increase in ratings for the BBC?

R.: Oh yes there has. The BBC has trained 750 VJs. That is a big commitment. No one else has done that really. So when you have 750 people then you can take a risk and allow people to fail. They still have enough volume to pound that.

T.: It seems like you’re still pretty connected to the BBC. At what percentage could you cut costs there?

R.: I don’t think that they cut costs. What they did was they took the money they were spending on crews into the VJ thing. When I started at the BBC, they had 84 crews covering all of the UK. And when I finished they had 800 cameras covering the UK. They made a huge change there. And the on-air stuff is much more local. They have restructured the whole BBC news organization to do this hyper local thing. The BBC had 13 regional stations, like the Hessischer Rundfunk. And now that they are restructuring the whole thing they have 60 hyper local stations manned by VJs. So they definitely bought the concept and now they are rearchitecting the whole network.

T.: Another technical question: To what extent can VJs take notes? Don’t you think that this might be a problem because they are not able to take notes because they have to shoot at the same time?

R.: They have to take notes with the camera which is the whole idea. I want them to take notes. But I want them to take them on video. There is no point in taking notes on paper.

T.: So they are just talking to the camera?

R.: You have to learn to work with the medium of video. It’s like if you’re a painter. Do painters take notes and then go back and paint something? They should just make their notes into the camera. And that’s what I want VJs to do.

T.: But when they quickly have to check facts, they always have to look on the video?

R.: Yes. What's happening is that once you edit your own stuff the shooting ratio will go down enormously and they tend to shoot at a lot lower ratios. They pay much more attention to what they are shooting. [...]

T.: If you consider costs for training and additional equipment, how long does it take to experience the cost cutting effects?

R.: About six months.

T.: Where exactly do you see the possibilities for cost cutting? A lot of people say it is basically about laying off people?

R.: It is about laying off people. Of course it is.

T.: But you say that you want to train everyone a VJ. Then you have more VJs.

R.: Let's look at the BBC. Each of the local stations has 150 people in it. They are making a half hour a night. So if I take 150 and I train 50 and I have another 50 for support, secretary and stuff like that. I have freedom to fail and I can fire another 50. Nothing personal but I don't need them to hang on. They didn't do anything. In the end of the day it is a manufacturing process and the way they do it now it is extremely cost ineffective.

T.: Do you think a VJ should be paid more than a camera person or a reporter?

R.: You can make the pay depending on how good the stuff is.

T.: Is it harder to work as a VJ than to do just the camera work?

R.: It is definitely harder, but we want the best persons to make our television, don't we? [...] If you want to participate in public discourse on important events than show me you can win. Otherwise get lost!

T.: So you don't think, they should necessarily get paid more. What should management do to prevent exhaustion?

R.: This is a very European attitude. Here's my job: If you can do it, do it! If it's really good we pay you a lot. If you [...] [make a serious mistake] we'll fire you. I'm not here to protect your job and to guarantee union. I don't even care what you get paid. If you don't like what you get paid. Good! That is an American perspective.

T.: How do stations ensure health and safety for VJs on dangerous assignments?

R.: I don't really care about that stuff. There are really good photojournalists that work for a magazine and that go to a war zone and bring back fantastic pictures. Really award winning stuff! I don't want people to sit around and complain all the time. If you're concerned about health and safety and getting hurt then go away. What you're talking about is an employee in a factory and that's true, they're having a good time. But that's not the journalist.

T.: What skills are essential for a person that wants to become a video journalist?

R.: A fantastic sense of curiosity, the ability to tell a story really well and no fear of technology. And that's about it.

T.: Reporter, cameramen or editor? Who makes the best transition?

R.: Editors make the best transition because they understand the elements of the story. And they have learned by having to rescue garbage their whole life from other people how to create a good story.

T.: How long does a VJ have to be trained until he can produce broadcast quality packages himself?

R.: Broadcast quality is a technical issue. You can take a nice camera and point it at a tomato and you can have broadcast quality. It's about the ability of story telling. Some people are born with the ability and some people can go to school their whole life and never learn it.

T.: What happens if the VJ training fails? You just lay off the person because it's the economic way to do it. Right?

R.: It's the reality. I am sorry for them, but when computers came to offices, the people that couldn't work them didn't have a job anymore.

T.: When recruiting VJs, do you consider factors like age or gender as being important?

R.: It's no gender thing. That's interesting. It actually gives women a lot more opportunity than they had before. [...]

T.: In the future, will newsrooms employ only VJs or will there be a permanent hybrid model?

R.: In the future I think they will only employ VJs, because that is the pure economics. If you come to me for a job and you say: "I have a camera! I have a laptop! And here is the quality of my work!" And some other guy comes in and says: "I need a cameraman and I need an editor!" [...]. This is ridiculous!

T.: There must be something like a "Rosenblum factor"? In its final report the "Hessischer Rundfunk" speaks of a certain spirit, you brought in that helped the project? So what is this Rosenblum factor?

R.: [...]. The only thing that I did is [...] when I come into clients, I generally take a look at the stuff they are putting on the air and then I show it to everybody and I say this sucks. It's just the truth but nobody wants to hear it. It's like "the emperor's new clothes". It's garbage the whole time on TV. But nobody ever looks at it and realizes that it is a piece of shit but it is a piece of shit. The people that run television stations are not stupid. They are very smart and they understand that what they put on the air is garbage. They just don't know how to stop it and they are surrounded by people that tell them this is great.

T.: Did you experience union issues or strikes?

R.: Yes, all the time. There was a big strike at the BBC and all kinds of union issues. You can't really do anything about it. This is not because I came in with this idea. This is just the

consequence of technology that is here and now. You can cry as long as you want but it is not going to change anything.

T.: I actually read that you have trained retired people as VJs. Why is that?

R.: There was a retirement home and I got the idea that it would be really interesting to have a channel for retired people. So I convinced the guy that owns the company to come in and train a 125 senior citizens age 75 to 93 and I gave them video cameras and I taught them to shoot and cut. And they were actually pretty good at it. They really liked it. The thing was that they made really interesting stuff. [...] Really long takes, long and slow and they liked it. And I had big screenings with them because it gave me that instant focus group. And I asked them: "How do you like that stuff?" And they said: "We like it, because it is slower." They're from another generation.

T.: I don't want that to sound hard. But does this go along with your philosophy that any idiot can be trained a video journalist?

R.: Any idiot can be trained to do this. It doesn't mean that people won't suck. But any idiot can be trained to do that. It's not that hard.

2. Dunn, Todd. Telephone interview. 11 May 2006.

Todd Dunn used to work as a photographer at WKRN in Nashville, Tennessee, for eleven years. When the station announced the transition to video journalism in the summer of 2005 he decided to embrace this change. Today, he is a successful VJ and a valuable asset to the station.

D.: [...]. I used to work as a photographer for the station and my weakness is the reporting part of it. And the reporters: their weakness is the shooting part of it. But with time I see them both getting better. I get a little better in writing and I definitely see improvement on the former reporters and their shooting part. The more you do it, the better you are going to get.

T.: What are the technical disadvantages of VJ cameras for production?

D.: I don't think the size and the weight are a problem. That's one of the things I like about it actually [...]. Critics have asked before: "What do you want to do when you get in a situation where the scene is a long ways away and your camera can't zoom in there." I haven't had that yet but I'm sure that there are situations where a bigger camera would be nicer.

T.: From your experience, what stories are suited for VJs?

D.: Stories that work well for me are stories that I can focus on one person to tell the bigger story through that one person. That's the way I approach my stories. Let's say it is a council meeting and they are raising taxes I try to find one person that is going to be affected and I tell the story through that one person. In my opinion people driven stories are at the time the best stories for VJs.

T.: What stories don't work for VJs?

D.: The stories that don't work well are the ones that I don't like doing. When management told us that we would change to the VJ model, part of the draw was that we would actually get stories that are in our expertise and in our interest. Any time you have an interest in a story it's going to be better because you are going to be excited about it. [...]

T.: So WKRN does more beat reporting with VJs?

D.: Yes, there is more beat reporting! [...] We have a girl that does entertainment stuff. Anytime country music is really big in Nashville she does a lot of stories with the country music stars. [...] My primary focus is Fort Campbell, a military complex that is about an hour away from Nashville. So I try to do most of my stories up in that area. I think about 60 percent of the stories that I make are in that beat. The others are stories that I just come across.

T.: Do video journalists have more time to craft and research their stories?

D.: Compared to before, there is more time for stories. The average story used to be due the day of the story. Now there is a ratio of 50/50. I do some stories that I turn around on a day and other stories where I shoot the one day and edit the next. [...] Now I can spend more time in the field, maybe getting another element of the story that I didn't have before. Here is an example. I did a story about an old slave cemetery that was not marked as a historic site. [...] It used to be on farmland where now there is a neighbourhood. One guy got interested in it and found out about its history. So I went out and talked to him and since I got pretty much

the whole day to shoot it I could come back when they were posting the sign later that day. [...] The old way was different. Unless there was a special sweeps piece 99 percent of our stories were shown the same day.

T.: According to Michael Rosenblum, the “freedom to fail” is considered a creative basic of the video journalism concept? How many of your packages don’t get aired?

D.: There have been a few stories that have not been shown. I still think that it is the “nature of the beast” that you need to get a story. But I think the more we get along the further we get into this kind of mind set. I don’t think we’re quite there yet but we are getting there.

T.: Has the station increased coverage by employing VJs?

D.: I think we have increased coverage, since we have more people doing different stories. There is more variety then there ever was.

T.: Is it a problem to shoot video and to also take notes at the same time?

D.: I don’t usually do it at the same time. I always try to get my stuff on tape first. And very rarely do I set up the traditional interview, where I tell somebody to stand or sit somewhere. Most of the time I am putting a radio microphone on them. If it is for example a farmer, I tell him to do what he is doing when I was not there. And when he is working [...] that is when I am doing the interview with him. So that way my video is kind of interactive with what he is doing. And at the end I take my notes. That can be some background information [...]

T.: Who is more objective? A team or a single person or don’t you see a difference?

D.: It depends on the person. There is the old saying: There is a bad apple in every group. I don’t think I would be any different with another person with me than I am by myself. It might be tempting for person A, but it’s not for me, I guess.

T.: Does your station use VJs for live coverage?

D.: If for example my story is done or if I had an easy day then they would use me to go out and run a camera. You still need a couple of people. [...]

T.: Are stand ups a problem for VJ pieces? Are they too time consuming to realize?

D.: I don’t think it is so much time consuming. It is rather that the story is more about the person you are doing the story on. I have done stand ups [...] a couple of times. [...] I have just asked people to shoot the stand up for me. If it is something that I would think would kind of add to the story than I’ll do it. [...]

T.: Do you think video journalists are just used to cut costs?

D.: The sceptic in me thinks, maybe it is a cost cutting measure. [...] from right of the top I don’t see where they could have saved any money. They bought more cameras and vehicles. [...] So if they look in long term [...] may be they will save some money.[...] Our general manager likes to keep ahead with new stuff and I think that is probably what has driven that more than anything.

T.: Did you go through operational layoffs?

D.: As far as laying off people, nobody has been laid off. When the General Manager made the announcement, he said that he knows that some people don't want to do this. So he basically just released those from their contract. [...] At that time photographers didn't have a contract so some of them just left too. I liked those people and I wasn't happy to see them go. I was happy however, that they left in regard to the fact that no one wants to work around someone who is miserable at their job. Pretty much everyone that has moved on has been replaced with another person.

T.: Do you have more VJs then you used to have teams?

D.: I think we used to have about eight teams and now we have about twenty video journalists. So yes, we managed to double the number.

T.: Is the pay for new video journalists higher compared to workers that are specialized in one field?

D.: Our reporters were contract and salary before, but the reporters were hourly. They offered everyone contracts and we all are salary employees now. And they went ahead and gave everyone a raise across the board

T.: Is it harder to work as a VJ?

D.: At first I thought it was not necessarily [...] harder work but longer work for me. Because it would take me pretty much all day to write my story. So if I shoot my story it would still take me a long time to figure out what am I going to say and how am I going to say it. I've been doing it since last summer and the writing is going quicker so it is not taking me as long any more. It's not harder physically, mentally may be a little bit.

T.: How does management prevent exhaustion?

D.: Every couple of weeks they will give us a "planning day", where we don't have to go shoot a story but where we can organize and set up stories for the future. They do it on individual bases. Our management is good and they generally care about their people

T.: How is health and safety of VJs assured on dangerous assignments?

D.: I only had that come up one time and that was early on. There was some kind of drug deal or shooting that they wanted a story on and they decided that it might not be safe, so they teamed two of us up together. [...]

T.: So your station does use multiple VJs for certain assignments? What type of assignments are these?

D.: We have the ability to customize how we are going to cover things. And if this is a story like may be the president is coming to town we can team up too. We don't have to do it all solo

T.: What skills are essential for a person that wants to become a video journalist?

D.: Just like being a good photographer you almost have to be a good talent scout when you are out on a story. When you find the right character that you can tell your story about, you are going to have a good story [...]. You also have to be good in managing your own time. And you got to have the ability to talk to people. If you are an introvert this might be a hard job for you. Multitasking is something that can be trained and the more you do it, the better you are going to get at it.

T.: Who makes the best transition? Reporters, cameramen or editors?

D.: I can't say that our photographers or our reporters are better. They both have their own strong areas. The longer everyone does it the harder it will be to notice what they were before. Right now [...] all the photographer's shots are sequenced and edited really tight. And the reporters might have a little looser shots still. But the writing is good. I think it's all a question of practice.

T.: Do you consider factors like age or gender as being important to qualify for a VJ?

D.: I don't think so. One of the best reporters, that is now a VJ, is Melissa Penry and she is may be 50 and she does a really good job. She edits in sequences and has taken on it really well.

T.: How long does a VJ have to be trained until he can produce broadcast quality packages himself?

D.: If you have previous experience you can start doing it pretty early. The thing with me was that I didn't like how I sounded. I pretty much sounded like I was reading which I was. I am getting a little better. However when I am listening to my friends that are reporters I am like: "Man, you make that sound so good!" I am still not where I want to be. [...]

So I guess the question is: what is broadcast quality? They've let me do it all this time. [...] If you don't have any previous experience then again it is based on the individual [...] how good they can do it. Speaking for me, I have a background in Television. I have worked as a photographer for twelve years and that has definitely helped with the reporting site, I think.

T.: Do VJ packages convey the feeling of being closer to the subject compared to conventional production?

D.: I think so. Now I am doing a story the way I think a story should always be done anyways, even with two people. The difference is that a reporter I worked with in the past didn't quite see the same thing that I saw. I think a better story is always based on just one person anyways or just a few people. [...]

T.: Do you still experience the positive effects of collaboration as a VJ?

D.: [...] The area that I work in, there are ten work stations. [...] Not all of us are there, all at the same time but usually there are probably at least three or four there all the time. [...] And we are always asking: "How would you spell that word or how would you say this?" [...] Or we're asking: "Look how this edit works! Does it work?" So we're always bouncing ideas off. It helps the creative process. [...]

T.: Do you prefer to use tripods that enable you to take stable shots or do you prefer to risk shaky pictures in order to move more quickly?

D.: I use my tripod according to the situation that I am in. Probably the majority I am handheld just because I am moving with my subject. [...] I still think that if it is a building or a scenery shot or a tight shot of something, you need a tripod. It just depends on what I am shooting. [...] I did a story on bicyclists. Most of it was handheld but when I had to do a shot of them riding up the street, I put that on a tripod.

T.: Do you experience audio issues more frequently in VJ packages?

D.: I don't think so. Our audio is always good because we have wireless microphones. So the quality of the audio is the same as it was before.

T.: How was the transition to video journalism introduced to you?

D.: When they introduced it, it was just: "Okay, this is what we're doing!" I never thought that it would happen. [...] I was like: "What? What are you talking about? No way!" [...] When I realized it was coming I just embraced it with both arms and said okay let's do it. That might have helped a little bit with the success that I am having. It is not going away. This is what it is. I might as well make the best out of it.

[...]

T.: After nine months in the VJ system. Do you consider it a success?

D.: [...] In the last station meeting that we had we talked about the numbers and they were holding their own which the manager took as a good sign. [...] The people that I run into seem to like that we don't do the "doom and gloom" stories any more which I also like because I got tired of doing this stuff too. I don't want to watch depressing news all the time and that's the way a lot of stations are going. [...] a lot of people were always saying: "Give me some good news!" With the VJ thing now we are doing more "good news" than we ever have done before.

3. Wasserman, Edward. Telephone interview. 22 May 2006.

Professor **Edward Wasserman** teaches journalism ethics at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. Though he values some of the possible creative implications of video journalism, he is concerned about other aspects of the Rosenblum model.

T.: Do you think VJ stations will preferably train young people?

W.: I don't have a feel for that. [...] I think that perhaps when you're younger [...] you are more receptive to the idea that what you are doing has a value. [...]

T.: What are your thoughts on the possibility to cover more news with VJs

W.: The idea here is that you can get a whole lot of sets of eyes out there on the street and come back with a multiplicity of perspectives. [...] You cover the riots outside of Paris involving immigrant communities by sending thirty or forty video journalists out [...] You might actually get some extremely good coverage by just having more people out there listening to more, ordinary people and coming back with an enormous amount of footage. [...] But what are you going to do with it? You can't put it all on the air. Who is going to watch it?

T.: You have the Internet. Rosenblum says that if a station does not do the move to web casting it's doomed.

W.: Web casting is just a technique. You're still facing the question: Do you wanna put three hours of raw footage on the air. Who's gonna watch it?

T.: You could bring an added value to the website. If you have for example packages that don't air but that are on your website.

W.: Is that added value? Well, what's the value? [...] It's possible that people do wanna see this. My own sense is that people [...] have a short supply of attention and time. [...] They trust professionals that they have sat down and gone through the tedious task of [...] filtering through this enormous volume of information. [...] They have to come up with a coherent narrative that [...] encapsulates in to a coherent set of images and messages. I don't have fourteen hours to sit and watch raw footage put together by amateurs with three week training. What I wanna do, is to sit down for twenty minutes or thirty minutes [...] [and someone] provides me with something that gives me some insight of what's going on. [...]

There may be a variety of perspectives that they will seek out in order to find some [...] balance, but each of those perspectives will have to provide some coherence in the story they tell. [...]

T.: Rosenblum wants VJ stations to implement a beat system. What do you think about this?

W.: I have gotten increasingly concerned that the beat system in general represents a source of corruption for journalists. [...] The trade off [...] is that they become extremely close to their sources. Their effectiveness is determined by the continued cooperation of the sources. [...] Certain things that they learn about, they might not be free to report. [...]

The beat system really grew up as a way [...] for institutions to get routine coverage that was acceptable to them. [...] It's somehow like DNA and RNA how the institutions imprint themselves in newsrooms. It has a lot to do with the convenience of sources, a lot to do with the convenience of reporters, and not so much to do with the goal of informing the public.

T.: Are most of the US newspapers on a beat system or are they general assignment?

W.: There's a mixture between the two. [...] The core of the operation is on a beat.

T.: What do you think about Rosenblum's idea of the "freedom to fail?"

W.: I agree. It is important. It is something that any really good news director or editor understands. [...] If you go after a story for which it might take a lot of digging and a lot of interviews and you find out unbalance [...] and you just say: "I don't think the evidence of wrongdoing here is strong enough to warrant going on the air with it, so I am not going to do it." That's the kind of failure I am looking at. [...]

The news audience is looking for synthesis and context and for reporting that puts things together. So having more cameras on the street; what does that mean? More domestic shootings?

T.: It's harder to shoot stand-ups for just one person so VJ stations try to avoid them. How do you evaluate that?

W.: The television people are convinced that viewers want to associate stories with individual reporters. [...] It gets to the point where - in the more sophisticated operations - the reporter presenting the story has really had nothing to do with assembling the story and yet that person becomes the branding device for the authenticity of the story. [...] So if you don't have this familiar face associated with the story what becomes the branding device that assures the viewer that what they are seeing is credible?

T.: So you think that it is a problem?

W.: [...] I agree that it is overdone. The question is: What do you substitute as a device to assure the viewer that the information the viewer is getting is credible.

T.: Very few German newscasts use stand-ups on a regular basis.

W.: It's the trust in the station then. All I am saying is that you need to have something to give the viewer some assurance that the report is credible.

T.: Do you think objectivity is going to suffer in the VJ model?

W.: It's meant to suffer. It's meant to be a more individualized perspective on the news. Implicit in the model of having a great number of people/ associated authors with different reports, is to back off of the claim of an objective report [...] and no longer make that claim.

T.: If you take video journalism one step further you get to "citizen journalists." WKRN recently trained a group of local bloggers in the use of video cameras. What do you think about this development?

W.: [...] The citizen journalism model is [...] extremely [...] susceptible to manipulation. We found that in the blogosphere in the US case that there is a lot of political manipulation going on. As a columnist I know the kind of feedback I get on certain columns and I know how it feels if it's orchestrated and financed [...]

You have the enormous potential to put lots of people out there with communication technology [...] I don't know what happens to professionalism in that. What happens to the notion that the journalist is supposed to be independent [...]? I fear for that professionalism model to be destroyed by [...] what appears to be a very democratic [...] "let's empower the people to provide their own reporting". That sounds fine except that it is acceptable to a great deal of manipulation and distortion.

T.: So may be it is more of an anarchy rather than a democracy within the blogosphere?

W.: I think it is more like a top down manipulation. I think that it is some kind of crypto democracy.

T.: What is your personal opinion on the future of journalism?

W.: I think that there will be tremendous pressures on journalism as a professional practice. There is an attempt to force journalism into a number of different categories: some journalism will become polemics and it will be wedded to a particular political line. Some will be taken over by amateur citizen journalists who provide raw material. There will remain something that I consider a core of professional practice in journalism, which holds to a notion of independence and public service. It will be increasingly under pressure to move either into a more personal reporting, more political reporting or more sensationalized, more entertainment based reporting. [...] It will morph [...] because it is possible to provide news too much smaller audiences. So the temptation will be there to provide the news they wanna hear.

T.: Do you agree with Rosenblum when he states that classic broadcasting has no future?

Television will be reborn. It will migrate to the web. There will be no reason to retransmit signals over the air. That seems to be quite clear that all of the existing media is going to migrate to the web [...]. It will take very little time and it is happening at an accelerating rate. The question is: How long are they going to be able to hold on to their residual monopolies. I would see the local TV stations the most vulnerable right now

4. Bujok, Ernest. Telephone interview. 29 May 2006.

Ernest Bujok is the CEO of TV Limburg in Belgium, the local VJ station. He is one of the truest followers of the Rosenblum vision and a believer in its economic potential. Bujok is also responsible for the Concentra Award. Each year, €10,000 are given to the most successful VJ piece in Europe.

T.: When I talked to Rosenblum he said that with video journalism you could take journalism to a new level. Since you're not doing this contest for the first time, what are your experiences? What is this "next level"?

B.: Most of the items that have been sent to us last year and also this year are what we would call [...] "human interest items". [...] A lot of chief editors still use video journalism to produce "human interest items", so they actually don't use it for the hard news. So one of the objectives of our award is to promote the use of video journalism in hard news. [...]

I think in a very slow movement – it is going to take a few years – chief editors will [realize] that you can use video journalists for everything and even better if it is hard news. [...] The "next level" that Rosenblum is talking about is that we believe that video journalists can approach their items much better than traditional camera crews.

T.: Because they are less intrusive?

B.: They also can take more time. So one of the things that we teach our journalists is: "If you enter the news scene don't start shooting! Try to understand what has happened. Try to build your story in your head [...], be part of the scene and then start shooting! Because the shooting itself won't take very long, if you know what you are looking at. Very often traditional journalists will enter the scene and start panning with their cameras and then the scene is changing already. Because people are [realizing]: "Hey there is a camera!" So a smart VJ doesn't do that. [...] It's like a [still] photographer. They take their shots and nobody knows and then they have their best pictures.

So if you're really good with your small camera and you're really a good filmer and you know what you are looking for, you can make a totally different kind of journalism and that's what Rosenblum is talking about when he is talking about the "next level".

T.: Can you give an example of a story where you said: "I never thought that would be possible with a VJ"?

B.: Most of the time when we are surprised we are surprised about technical things [...]. There are a lot of [...] software tricks and that is still the most amazing aspect of the video journalism. The new generation of VJs they are pretty young people and they are not mature yet [...] in the sense of telling a story. They are very enthusiastic about making the story --- doing the editing and shooting the pictures, but they are not yet mature enough to really bring a strong story. That is something that we hope to change in the next few years, when VJs get a little bit less mature, and a little bit older, and a little bit less fascinated by technique, and more interested in the subject. [...]

This year in the award [...] there are only a few pieces that really touched my soul.

T.: Would you think that right now a classical package would touch your soul more than a VJ package?

B.: The classical news items that you see on every stations; they don't touch you at all. They don't inspire you at all. They don't give you information. [...] They show you the rushes and then a talking head is telling you what you see. Almost all the pieces that we got for the award this year are much much better than everything that I watch on television. [...]

We were in South Africa in Johannesburg, last month, and we gave a video [journalism] boot camp to the SABC the national television there. [...] They had a three-week boot camp and at the end of the boot camp [they] had to show the whole items they made. [...] It was the first time that they used the camera and that they did their own editing. [...] I was in Johannesburg for three weeks and I watched the news every day, the SABC news, and at the end, when I saw their pieces [...] I understood more about the country than by watching the news for three weeks there. [...]

For example, there are a lot of salesman on the street there. Every time when you stop the car, somebody wants to sell you something and you got the impression that they are all poor people. [...] One of these VJs [...] went with a guy for the whole day. And he explained in his item who the guy was; he was a teacher in a school, but he did not make enough money with teaching. So every time when he had some time off he bought himself some oranges and he went selling them in the streets. So you got a totally different image of what was happening there. And it was so strange. Even the guys from SABC asked themselves: "Why did we never make an item about these guys?" [...] When you go with a crew to a guy who is selling oranges on the streets [...] it is very scary. [...]

Very often they think we (VJs) are tourists making a holiday movie. But that is quite interesting about it. Sometimes it is even very smart to pretend you are a tourist.

T.: So TV Limburg is an all VJ station?

B.: Yes, we changed everything four years ago and we have no cameramen and no editors.

T.: How does that work? Some critics say that court stories or rallies aren't very well suited for VJs.

B.: No, no! We cover it all. Rosenblum says we should not go to a press conference. That's the theory. You're a local TV station, so if there is a press conference, you have to cover it.

T.: You also do the "freedom of fail." So you're actually very close to his original concept.

B.: In fact, Michael always says: "You are the only guys who are doing what I'm telling you should do." Because he never did it himself. He always says: "When I wanna see what I'm talking about I go to Brussels."

T.: Do you also take his all-automatic advice?

B.: We do a lot of automatic.

T.: Do you use tripods?

B.: Well we do. [...] Michael believes that we shouldn't. Very often you have to, because if there is not much to see than it is quite important that your picture is steady. [...] If you're on a press conference you have to use a tripod. We are not "Rosenblum religious". We like him and we like his ideas. [...] We change some things. When we believe it's gonna work better in a different way, we just do it. We don't ask his permission. [...]

T.: Since the VJ does not work in a team there is no communication and no creative collaboration.

B.: That is rubbish. There was no communication before. The cameraman was just asking, "What am I supposed to shoot here?" And the editor said at the end of the day, "What are you bringing to me, guys?" And then the journalist says: [...] "This was not what I meant but this is the material that the guy shot. [...]" These discussions are all over now. [...] And what you see is that they have a lot of discussions between each other. [...] For example one thing that we do a lot is, we send two VJs out to make one item together. Sometimes, it is very comfortable that I do the shooting and that you do the talking, because you cannot always shoot and talk at the same time. Two video journalists is totally different than a [journalist] and a cameraman. Then you really start discussing the story you wanna tell.

T.: What are the skills a video journalist has to have? I mean those that can't be trained.

B.: I think the more journalist you are the better video journalist you will be. Because the technique is so simple to learn. [...] The other way around is much more difficult. [...] If you don't understand what a story is about that is very hard to learn.

T.: The Concentra award is a European award. Where do the best VJ pieces come from?

B.: Great Britain.

T.: Because of the BBC?

B.: The BBC is amazing. [...] No one comes from the national BBC. It is all local TV journalists. [...] Germany is doing well, Norway is doing very well. [...] Holland is doing well. But nothing from Spain, nothing is happening in France, in Italy [...]. TV in the southern countries is quite conservative.

T.: That might all change in the future, when more stations embrace it because of the economics. Right?

B.: Absolutely, but there is one strange thing about the economics. First we thought if we would change to video journalism we would save some money [...]. I wouldn't say it's more expensive but it is not less expensive. At the end of the day you have more people. You have to pay them better because they work harder. And you have to buy a lot of material because they screw it up; they lose it. The small cameras are very often broken. You cannot take insurance on them. So at the end of the day it's not cheaper.

But you have more content. You have more power. That is the good thing about it. And if you only wanna do it to save money you won't [...]

Before when the journalist wanted to do some research he was in the car and the cameraman was driving and he could do phone calls and he could check some sources. Of course now that

is much much harder. They are alone and they have to drive themselves. Now in the house [...] we have two people that only do research for them. [...] So that is two extra persons and so on and so on. In the end it's about the same [...].

T.: There have always been one-man bands in smaller US markets that employed those to save money.

B.: What Michael also says – but that is typically for the United States - He's paying them like €150 a day. In Britain for the BBC also. And every morning they have to call in and say: "Is there a job for me?" No job no pay. But that is not how it works here. Everybody is fully employed here. They have a car, a mobile phone and a computer. They have the three-weeks holiday. If they work on the weekend and in the evening we pay them extra. [...] The only things you can do is save on wages or save on numbers. [...] But since they work harder, I pay them more than I pay other journalists and since they need researchers [and] they need people inside the house [...] you have the same amount. It doesn't make a difference.

T.: Do you feel like your ratings are going up with that?

B.: No. [...] The audience doesn't know. They only watch it. [...] I believe you make better television and when you make better television normally your ratings should go up. But you cannot prove that. [...]

Every time that we do that focus groups and we ask the audience: "Do you see that we are working with video journalists?" They say: "No!" "Do you see any difference with what we did like five years ago?" They say: "We don't remember." If we show them items from other stations, they don't know. [...] If you take our items away from the news programs and if you show them [...], for example, on a website or you send them to a mobile. The VJ stories are much more "stories". You can use them in another time [and] in another country. [...] They are little stories with a beginning and an end [...] Most of the classic items, you can just use them in that specific news program on that specific day. Otherwise you don't understand what this is all about. [...] I believe that with VJs we have [...] the future in our hands. In the next years, content will find its way to a broad audience on very different "screens". And so it's gonna be the story that is important and not the screen you are looking at.

T.: If you would have to explain this to an economically-thinking person, would you say that this is like a future investment?

B.: Yes! I'm absolutely convinced. For us, news was always dead. It had no value unless the day that we broadcasted it. Since we are doing video journalism on news items they are an asset to us. We are selling them to ZOOM TV in Holland, who is selling them for us all over Europe. We are selling them now to digital channels. We will sell them to mobile phones. We also see that all our items are reviewed sometimes two years later. [...] We have a very famous football (soccer) player here in Belgium who went to Ajax in Holland and now we have, like, 69 items about him. He was playing here in our hometown. [...] When he started playing for Ajax, a lot of Dutch sites bought our items about the player, because they were all this nice small stories. [...] "You have such nice stories about the guy!" And they did not realize that they were looking at news items. They just thought that we made those small movies about him.

I believe that in 15 years we will still sell them. And that is something that we are focusing on now. I always tell my VJs: "If your item is ready [...] ask yourself: "If a Chinese guy would

see it, would he understand what it is about? [...] When somebody in 20 years will see this, will he still understand what it is about?" If not, change it a little bit.

T.: You said you did not cut costs and your ratings have not gone up. But could you already increase income through other sources?

B.: The only thing that I can tell you is that since we changed to video journalism that the company is very profitable. We are also using [it] in the production of advertising and community services [...]. And that's why Rosenblum is so fascinated with what we do, because we are not only doing what he is telling the world to do, but we also make money with it.

5. Kliebhan, Bernd. Personal interview. 8 June 2006.

Bernd Kliebhan works as VJ coordinator at the Hessischer Rundfunk in Frankfurt, Germany. He is a former reporter who taught himself how to shoot and edit long ago. He is fascinated by the journalistic opportunities of the new production technology.

K.: Seit Mitte der Achtziger haben wir hier im Hessischen Rundfunk eine Volontärsausbildung, zu der gehört, dass jeder Programmvolontär selbst dreht und selbst schneidet. Also jeder Volontär hier in diesem Haus hat in seiner Ausbildung ne Kamera in der Hand gehabt und selbst geschnitten

T.: Weil man sagt, dass, wenn man mehr kann, man auch besser kommunizieren kann?

K.: Ganz genau. Das war die Idee.

T.: Haben Sie mit VJs mehr Berichterstattung und mehr Geschichten?

K.: Wir haben, denke ich, jetzt mehr Bilder aus der Fläche.

T.: Das Inventar ist ja irgendwann erschöpft, die Hessenschau hat zum Beispiel 30 Minuten Sendezeit. Wie wird dieses Problem gelöst?

K.: Sendungen können erstens kleinteiliger werden. [...] Man kann [außerdem] zusätzliche Nachrichtensendungen hinzunehmen. [...] [Es gibt] frühere Ausgaben von „Hessen Aktuell“. [...] Man kann da, wo man vorher Archivmaterial oder Symbolbilder gesendet hat, authentisches und aktuelles Material senden. [...] Wenn man nur mal die ganzen Wettersendungen ansieht. Das sind drei Einstellungen, aber die muss man ja erst mal haben und die kriegt man auf diese Weise aus den unterschiedlichsten Ecken des Landes. Das ist nicht immer nur das Bereitschaftsteam, das ein paar Blüten am Ostbahnhof ablichtet. [...]

Man hat Bilder im Fernsehen immer dann, wenn man eine Kamera hat. [...] jeder, der für ne Zeitung schreibt, kann über jeden Punkt der Welt lange Artikel schreiben, der Hörfunkmann kann über alles und jedes berichten, ob er vor Ort gewesen ist oder nicht. Der Fernsehmann kann Bilder nur zeigen, wenn er da ist. [...]

T.: Haben Sie wirklich mehr Leute draußen? Einige amerikanische Stationen betonen, dass Sie die Berichterstattung erhöhen konnten?

K.: In der Theorie ist es klar, dass wir eigentlich mehr Kameras unterwegs haben. Wir haben personenbezogene Kameras. Jeder VJ hat seine eigene Kamera.

T.: Warum? Damit kein anderer etwas verstellt?

K.: Wir gehen davon aus, dass eine Poolbildung von Equipment bei VJ-Equipment teurer ist als wenn man jedem seine eigene Ausrüstung gibt. [...] 10.000 € kostet die ganze Ausrüstung [...] [die] Kameraausrüstung sind ungefähr 5.000 €. Die hält ungefähr vier Jahre. Das sind [...] genau 1.250 € im Jahr. Sagen wir 100 € im Monat kostet so ein Equipment. Jetzt muss man sich überlegen, wie viel kostet es, dieses Equipment zentral zu verwalten. [...] Jede Administration von Equipment kostet Geld.

[...] wir kriegen dadurch auch Bilder, einfach weil der VJ eine Kamera dabei hat. Das passiert nicht in dem Umfang, in dem ich das gerne hätte. Das hängt natürlich auch mit öffentlich-rechtlichen Strukturen zusammen, dass wir auch bei den freien Mitarbeitern viel stärker so eine Auftragskultur haben. [...] Es passiert nicht sehr oft, dass Leute auf Verdacht irgendwas drehen einfach weil sie die Geschichte interessant finden und dann der Redaktion was anbieten, sondern in der Regel ist es andersherum. Das ist aber spezifisch für öffentlich rechtliche Sender.

T.: Sie haben hier im Hessischen Rundfunk eine duale Struktur aufgebaut. Auf der einen Seite gibt es die VJs und auf der anderen Seite die EB-Teams. Haben sie auch eine Redaktion die nur mit VJs dreht?

K.: Das „C't-Magazin“ wird komplett mit VJs produziert, also bis auf die Studiotile, aber sämtliche Filme werden von VJs gemacht. [Ebenfalls] „Herkules“ (Anmerkung: ein Magazin für Nordhessen) besteht entweder aus Übernahmen oder wird nur von VJs produziert. Ich habe das Gefühl, am besten funktioniert ein VJ-Konzept, wenn man Sendungen hat, die nur von VJs produziert werden.

T.: VJ-Befürworter sagen, dass prinzipiell jeder Beitrag auch mit VJs geht.

Es geht ja auch alles. Es geht nicht alles gleich einfach, aber eigentlich geht alles [...], manche Sachen gehen halt besser. Ich glaube, jede Technik sucht sich die Inhalte. Wir sehen jetzt überwiegend im Fernsehen das, was mit Teams gut zu drehen ist. Wenn wir mehr mit VJs drehen würden, würden wir andere Geschichten sehen und ich glaube nicht die schlechteren, sondern die überraschenderen.

Ich glaube, ein Hauptproblem für den VJ ist in der Tat so eine "mixed economy". Der VJ in einer Redaktion, die teilweise auch mit Teams dreht, hat eine schwierige Situation [...]. Er ist immer in so einer Exotenrolle [und] fühlt sich auch nicht unbedingt besonders privilegiert. Im Gegenteil! Er hat den härteren Job. Also ich merke das jetzt auch bei den Aktuellen. Da gibt es [...] kein großes Gedränge um weitere VJ-Ausbildung. Die VJs kriegen immer die harten Jobs und verdienen zwar mehr, aber so spektakulär viel nun auch nicht.

Ich habe gelesen, dass das ein Zuschlag von 40 % ist.

Ja, wenn sie selbst drehen [und] selbst schneiden. Wobei die aktuellen Geschichten von den VJs in der Regel nicht selbst geschnitten werden. Das geht einfach in der Cutterei schneller [und] da kann er gleichzeitig texten. [...] Und da kriegt er fürs Selbstdrehen 20% mehr - 50 €. Da relativiert sich das schon ein bisschen.

T.: Glauben Sie, dass Sie mit VJs die Quoten steigern konnten?

K.: Ich habe mir wirklich viele Minutenprotokolle angeguckt. Wir haben keine wirklich systematische Untersuchung gemacht, weil das wahnsinnig schwierig und sehr aufwendig ist, aber ich hab immer wieder festgestellt in solchen Minutenverläufen, dass das VJ-Stück die höchste Quote in der Sendung hatte. Ich hab's quasi niemals erlebt, dass beim VJ-Stück die Quote [eingebrochen] ist.

T.: Rosenblum will mit seinem Modell die Hierarchie kürzen. Ist das beim Hessischehn Runfunk möglich?

K.: Ich denke, das ist aus der Sicht von manchen Beteiligten ein Problem der VJ-Produktion. Das hat ja auch alles was mit Machtstrukturen zu tun. Eine VJ-Produktion ist zunächst einmal nicht richtig kontrollierbar. Die normale klassische Produktionsweise, arbeitsteilig mit Disponenten und vielen Sitzungen heißt ja , dass ein Verwaltungsapparat immer ganz genau weiß, was passiert. Woher soll man wissen, was der VJ gerade dreht? Da gibt es natürlich Leute denen gefällt das überhaupt nicht.

T.: Thema HDTV. Es wird gesagt, dass man selbst in SD bessere Bilder mit der Sony Z1 bekommen kann. Können Sie das bestätigen?

K.: [...] So lange man SD sendet wie bei uns, ist der Unterschied nicht dramatisch.[...]. Ich bin bei uns, bei den Wohnungsgrößen, die wir haben, bei den Bildschirmgrößen, die wir haben, momentan noch so ein bisschen skeptisch. Aber ich weiß nicht, vielleicht liege ich auch völlig daneben.

T.: Sie haben einmal gesagt dass Schnitt mit HD ein Problem sein könnte. Sehen Sie das immer noch so?

K.: Wir haben da gerade einen Test gemacht. [...] Wir haben diese Z1 mal in verschiedenen Workflows ausprobiert. Man kann auf dem [Laptop] wunderbar HDV schneiden. [...] Der bessere Workflow, wenn man denn HD haben will, [...] ist, dass man im Grunde einen Offlineschnitt auf DV macht, also von der Kamera auf DV herunterkonvertiert und das anschließend auf einem HD-Schnittplatz noch mal nachschneidet.[...] Wenn wir HDV-Bilder hier brauchen, könnten wir das auch ohne weiteres auf dem Weg machen. Im Moment brauchen wir das nicht.

T.: Wie viele VJs arbeiten tagesaktuell für das Hauptnachrichtenmagazin die „Hessenschau“?

K.: Tagesaktuell sind das sehr wenig. [...] Was passiert ist, dass ein VJ tagesaktuell dreht und dann mit einer Cutterin schneidet. [...] Aber ein tagesaktuelles Stück für die „Hessenschau“, so von 2, 3 Minuten Länge ist mir eigentlich nicht bekannt.[...] für das „Hessen Journal“, das um 21:45 läuft [...]gab es mehrfach 2:30, 3 Minuten Stücke die ein VJ dann morgens gedreht und nachmittags geschnitten hat und man hat gemerkt: das geht eigentlich nicht. [...] Was wunderbar geht ist ein 1:30 am Tag. Das ist überhaupt kein Problem.

T.: Ich habe im Abschlussbericht über das Pilotprojekt gelesen, dass es VJ-typische Einstellungen gibt, die auf Dauer langweilig wirken.

K.: Davon versuchen wir jetzt wegzukommen. Der Rosenblum-Ansatz mit den „five shots“ und immer im Weitwinkelbereich und immer nah dran ist pfiffig, weil er Anfänger aus dem Stand auf einen ordentlichen Level bringt. [So] entstehen nach kürzester Zeit schon Stücke, die man senden kann. [...] Was oft verschwiegen wird ist, dass das halt ein Anfängerkonzept ist. Und wenn er da stehen bleibt, kriegt der VJ auch leicht so ein Markenzeichen und wird von der Redaktion so angesehen als eine Ressource für Spezialfälle, die diese Bildsprache auch verträgt. Wir haben ziemlich viel Aufwand betrieben auch mit weiteren Schulungen. Also wir haben eine VJ-Akademie mit Topkameramännern veranstaltet, wo wir versucht haben, das gestalterische Spektrum für VJs einfach gewaltig zu öffnen. Das ist natürlich eine

Falle, wenn man meint, man muss hier alles und jeden nur mit den „five shots“ ablichten und weitwinklig drehen.

T.: Wie stehen Sie zu dem Einsatz der Automatik?

K.: [...] Das mit der Automatik ist ja gut und schön für die erste Drehübung, aber danach nicht mehr. [...] Rosenblum hat das Konzept „alles mit Automatik“. In [dem Training] war eine Stunde vorgesehen mit der Überschrift „Wozu die ganzen Knöpfe gut sind und warum ihr sie nicht braucht“ und da haben wir ganz klar gesagt, dass das nicht unser Konzept ist.

T.: Wird die Kamera als Notizblock genutzt?

K.: Das machen die Leute ganz individuell und unterschiedlich. Was sehr praktisch ist, ist natürlich ein Visitenkärtchen abzulichten oder irgendein Türschild abzulichten.

T.: Standups sind ein Problem für den allein arbeitenden VJ. Wie wichtig sind die in Ihrem Programm?

K.: Wir haben das mal bei uns eine Zeit lang probiert, bei unseren Nachrichten einen Teil im „On“ zu haben. Also mir hat's ganz gut gefallen. Es hat sich aber nicht durchgesetzt und es ist eher die Ausnahme.

T.: Wie ist das mit Tonproblemen? Wird das besser?

K.: Ja, das haben wir im Großen und Ganzen im Griff. [...] Bei längeren Geschichten ist es gang und gäbe, dass ein Protagonist eine Funkmaus kriegt. Man braucht natürlich einen Ersatz für den fehlenden Tonmann. Also man braucht eine weitere Audioquelle. Was recht häufig gemacht wird ist, dass das Ansteckmikro einem angesteckt wird, aber er wird gar nicht verkabelt. Für einen kurzen O-Ton kriegt er das gerade angesteckt, da kann er auch nicht wegrennen und den Sender hat halt der VJ in der Tasche.

T.: Ein VJ kann den Ton nicht selbst angeln. Wie lösen Sie das Problem?

K.: Es gibt inzwischen alle möglichen Mixformen. [...] Es gibt VJ mit Tonmann, VJ mit Beleuchter, [...] VJ mit zwei Beleuchtern. [...] Mit Ton [gibt] es [...] alle möglichen Tricks. Was sehr gut funktioniert ist wenn man den Sender der Funkstrecke mit einer PA (public address) kombiniert. [...] Wo immer irgendwas passiert, gibt es ja meistens vom Veranstalter her ein Mischpult. Wir haben ein ganzes Adapterset von Audiosteckverbindungen. [...] Die Leute sind da unterschiedlich kreativ und pfiffig. Einige sind wirklich sehr gut und hängen sich bei irgendwelchen Veranstaltungen an die Beschallungsanlage dran. Auf der einen Spur haben sie den ganzen Ton des Veranstalters in einer wirklich sehr schönen Qualität und die zweite Audioquelle ist das Richtmikro. Oder man kann bei einer Preko (Anmerkung: Pressekonferenz) ein Mikro mit Sender vorn hin stellen. [...]

T.: Werden sich VJs stärker durchsetzen?

K.: Es hängt sicherlich auch damit zusammen, welche generelle Programmstrategie man verfolgt. Momentan setzt nicht nur der HR, andere Sender auch, sehr stark auf [...] „Selbstinszenierung des Mediums“. Wir fahren irgendwo hin und sind als Medium dort präsent und ein Reporter ist im „On“ und erklärt live dem Zuschauer die Welt. [...] Das ist

nicht VJ. Es gibt momentan Programmtrends, die mit dieser Produktionsform nichts anfangen können. Aber das wird sich auch wieder umkehren.

T.: Warum gibt es so wenig Cutter und Kameramänner die zu VJs ausgebildet werden?

K.: Der Weg für Produktionsleute in die Redaktionen ist schwieriger als umgekehrt. [...] Die haben sehr mit Vorurteilen zu kämpfen. [...] So eine journalistische Ausbildung, die fliegt einem nicht so einfach zu.

[...]Ich bin überzeugt, dass über kurz oder lang der Schnitt in die Redaktion wandern wird. Da gehört er ja auch hin. [...] Völlig überflüssig sind meiner Meinung nach Cutter die sich in so einer „Operator-Rolle“ sehen. Also Cutter, die einen Reporter nur dann für gut halten, wenn er ihnen genau den Timecode ansagen kann. Die sind so überflüssig.[...] Die flinken VJs bei Hessen Aktuell sagen, dass sie schneller schneiden als mit einer Cutterin. Das Thema ist nur, während des Schnitts können sie texten.[...] Es sind halt sonst zwei Vorgänge. Und an dem Schnitt hängt natürlich auch noch bisschen was dran: Tonbearbeitung, ausspielen, exportieren, verschieben auf den Server. Die ganzen Konfektionierungssachen, die halten unter dem Strich dann doch auf und da macht es wieder Sinn, dass das ein Cutter macht. [...]

T.: Im Abschlussbericht steht ebenfalls, dass Rosenblums Idee von einem „freedom to fail“ auf Grund von ökonomischen Realitäten nicht machbar ist. Wie stehen sie dazu?

K.: Ich sehe ein unheimliches inhaltliches Potential in dieser Produktionsform. Leider sehen die meisten unserer Redaktionen das nicht.

T.: Woran liegt das? Sind das dann die Chefredakteure und die CVDs, die eben keine VJs sind?

K.: Ich denke, wir haben eine Menge Überzeugungsarbeit in den Redaktionen zu leisten. [...] Wir haben vor Seminare zu machen. Unsere Bilanz ist jetzt: Wir sind in so einer Phase der Normalität angekommen und jeder weiß, das funktioniert, aber das Potential nutzen wir eigentlich noch nicht und das hängt von ganz vielen Faktoren ab [...]

K.: Man muss natürlich auch eins sehen. Rosenblum vermittelt in seinen Trainings zwei Botschaften: einmal - das ist alles sehr billig und wird das Fernsehen revolutionieren und zweitens – alles, was ihr bisher gemacht habt, ist dummes Zeug. [...] Erfüllt mit diesen zwei Botschaften kommen die VJs frisch ausgebildet in die Redaktionen zurück. Die sagen jetzt ihren CVDs: „Wir sind billig und flexibel!“ Da sagt der CVD: „Prima!“ Da sagt der VJ: „Alles, was ihr hier gemacht habt, ist totaler Unfug. Wir erfinden jetzt das Fernsehen neu.“ Da sagt der CVD was wohl?

T.: Würden Sie sagen, dass sie mit VJs Kosten senken könnten?

K.: Wenn man es sich mal rein ökonomisch betrachtet: Das Equipment ist zwar billiger, allerdings geht es kaputt und es ist natürlich nicht Tag für Tag im Einsatz. Es sei denn, man hat einen aufwendigen Pool mit hohen Verwaltungskosten. [...] Eine Digibeta kostet zwar das 10- oder 15-fache von einer kleinen VJ-Kamera, ist aber vielleicht auch 10 bis 15 mal häufiger im Einsatz. Die ganzen Equipmentkosten dürften kein großer Unterschied sein.

Man zahlt dem VJ zurecht mehr. Weile es ein härterer [...] und ein sehr anspruchsvoller Job ist. Dieser [Job] verlangt eine hohe Qualifikation. Man bezahlt ihm mehr Geld dafür, dass er

schneidet. Dafür schneidet er langsamer und braucht mehr Zeit. Das was man beim Drehen einspart, gibt man zum Teil beim Schneiden wieder aus. [...] Der VJ schneidet einfach teuer, wenn man nur die Personalkosten rechnet.

T.: Wie viele VJs haben Sie eigentlich inzwischen insgesamt?

K: 62

T.: Und 30 haben Sie im ersten Gang geschult?

K.: Zu aller erst haben wir mal sieben für „C't“ geschult [...], die gesamte C't-Redaktion wurde von unseren eigenen Trainern geschult.[...] Dann kam der Rosenblum-Kurs mit 30 [...], dann haben wir noch ein zweites boot camp gemacht mit 20 [...] mit unseren eigenen Trainern.

T.: War Rosenblum wieder dabei?

K.: Er hatte sich ein Bein gebrochen. [...] Wir wollten ihn als Entertainer [...] in der ersten Woche dabei haben, um ein bisschen Schwung in die Sache zu bringen. Aber wir wollten nicht seine Trainer. [...] Denn wir haben schon gemerkt man muss so ein Training [...] und den anschließenden Support als Einheit sehen. Die amerikanischen Trainer sind ja gut und schön, aber wir machen kein amerikanisches Fernsehen. Wir haben auch andere Arbeitsweisen.

6. Neubauer, Michael. Telephone interview. 28 June 2006.

Michael Neubauer is the manager of the German Society of Cinematographers. He believes that news quality will suffer due to workload issues and pronounces the value of artistic quality in news

[...]

N.: Das Drehen fordert meine ganze Aufmerksamkeit, wenn ich das auch nur einigermaßen technisch und gestalterisch, also das sind zwei Ebenen, umsetzen möchte, dann muss ich mich in der Phase des Drehens vollkommen auf das Bild konzentrieren; habe dann schon ein Problem mich auf den Ton zu konzentrieren, den ich gleichzeitig da mache und habe sowieso das Generalproblem, dass ich mich in der Phase des Drehens redaktionell, das heißt, als Journalist, als Mensch, der seine „Löffel“ aufgestellt hat und in die Zeit und in die Situation hineinhorcht, bin ich da völlig [überfordert].

[...]

N.: Der Videojournalist auf der Demo, wunderbar, es wird also randaliert, die Hooligans schmeißen mit Flaschen und sonst was, und er ist voll beschäftigt sich mit Bild und Ton mit dieser Situation zu befassen und merkt überhaupt nicht, dass schon von hinten ein anderer Trupp kommt und einer gerade dabei ist ihm von hinten eine Bierflasche über den Kopf zu ziehen.

[...]

N.: der fährt also zum Drehort, muss da seine Vespa parken oder sein Auto, das kann übel sein oder in der Aktualität gibt es so etwas, dass der Kameramann raushupft und der Assistent bleibt im Fahrzeug oder man dreht aus dem Schiebedach raus; alles dieses würde ich dem VJ nicht raten, weil er dann gleichzeitig mit dem großen Zeh steuern und oben drehen muss.

[...]

N.: Man müsste ja verlangen von einem VJ, dass er gleichzeitig ein brillanter Journalist wie auch ein genialer Bildgestalter [...] ist. Diese Person sucht man leider sehr häufig vergeblich, weil Menschen entweder mehr verbal orientiert sind oder visuell. Also, es ist eine alte Weisheit aus dem Bereich der Hirnforschung, dass es Menschen gibt, die mehr verbal, logisch, argumentativ sortiert sind und andere Menschen, die mehr visuell, kreativ gestaltend sortiert sind.

[...]

N.: Wie oft haben wir das erlebt beim Drehen, also ich bin auch Kameramann von meiner Ausbildung her ursprünglich, dass dann irgendwelche Leute kommen und sagen: „Ach Mensch kannst du mal dein Licht anlassen, ich muss hier noch ein Interview machen“, weil er selber dann nur seine kleine Aufsatzlampe dann hat, [...] von der Pfannkuchenästhetik eines Bildes, dass mit der Aufsatzlampe angeleuchtet ist, möglichst weitwinklig gedreht ist, dass ich auch nah genug an das Gesicht von Herrn Minister Müller herankomme und dann leuchte ich ihm auch noch mit meiner axial montierten, also genau in der optischen Achse montierten Aufsatzlampe ins Gesicht; das ist unsäglich.

T.: Das Argument, das Rosenblum bringt ist, dass man als Zeitungsreporter auch alleine rausgeht [...] und in der Lage ist, zwei Seiten über eine Sache zu schreiben, die in der Zeitung veröffentlicht werden.

N.: Sie sehen das jetzt auf der reinen Textebene, wenn Sie das übertragen auf die audiovisuelle Ebene, dann haben Sie eine Ebene Text/Ton und Sie haben eine Ebene Bild. Die Suggestionskraft, die sich daraus ergibt, oder sagen wir auch die Glaubwürdigkeit, die ist wesentlich höher. Ein derartiges Medium erfordert meiner Meinung nach auch eine kritischere Kontrolle.

[...]

N.: Es ist zudem so, dass die Leute heute sehr genau wissen, [...] dass jede Kamera, eine kleine Kamera oder eine große, sie ablichtet und dokumentiert und fixiert. Mit einer kleinen Kamera werden Sie viel eher als verdeckter Ermittler in der Szene wahrgenommen, als wenn Sie mit einem großen Teil anrücken, wo ZDF, ARD oder RTL drauf steht.

[...]

N.: Haben Sie schon mal einen VJ gesehen, der 60 ist. [...]Hier wird darauf spekuliert, dass man die jungen Leute herkriegert, dass die das machen und die machen das und apportieren die AV-Häppchen für ein Programm und kriegen dafür einen bestimmten Lohn.

[...]

N.: Ton, der ist doch völlig überfordert. Der soll also ein gutes Bild machen nach Möglichkeit, soll schauen, dass das Ganze auch sinnhaft in seine Story reinpasst, ja er darf ja nicht entwickeln eine Bildverliebtheit, eine Situationsverliebtheit, die ein Kameramann da vielleicht entwickeln kann, da klopft ihm der Regisseur auf die Schulter und sagt, das langt mir.

[...]

N.: Und dann soll er auch noch den Ton machen, und er soll nachregeln nach Möglichkeit, [...] oder er schaltet auf Automatik. Automatik ist etwas ganz „Tolles“, es ist das Eingeständnis der physischen Inkompetenz. [...]

T.: Rosenblum sagt: Verzichtet auf Schwenks und Zooms, es entspricht eh nicht den Sehgewohnheiten, weil man in Wide Shot und Close Up guckt! Wie sehen Sie das?

N.: Das ist theoretisch gedacht ein interessanter Ansatz, er ist aber auch nur interessant, aber nicht wirklich gut. Theoretisch gedacht ist es ein interessanter Ansatz, weil es heißt, wenn ihr Werkzeuge nicht wirklich gut bedienen könnt, dann lasst sie weg, ja, und wenn sie zu komplex sind, dann verzichtet auf diese Art der Komplexität. Das ist ein gedanklich guter Ansatz, nur machen Sie das mal in der Praxis im Programm. Die Leute sind heute absolut bewegungssüchtig, verstehen Sie, es wird in Fernsehserien zum Teil mit diesem System der visuellen Deprivation, d.h., die machen immer irgendwelche schnellen Bewegungen, die der Zuschauer kaum nachvollziehen kann, aber so bleibt er drin und bleibt im Programm und bleibt hängen, weil er ist ein optischer Jäger, er will es erlegen, das Bild, aber er schafft es nicht und so bleibt er auf der Pirsch, weil er sozusagen heiß gemacht wird. Das kommt aus

dem Bereich des Musikvideos und der Werbung. Ja diese absolut schnellen Bewegungen, diese schnellen Schnitte, diese visuelle Deprivation, diese systematische Unterfütterung, ja er kriegt nie das, was er haben will. Ja er ist einer, der auf der Jagd ist, das Bild zu erfassen und schon kommt das nächste. Wenn ich diese ganzen Effekte wegnehme, dann kommt man zu einer Art bewegten Diaschau, Standbilder, wo sich im Bild komischerweise was bewegt. Sagen Sie das mal den Leuten in den Sendern, die diese VJs einsetzen und züchten, die werden die Hände überm Kopf zusammenschlagen [...] weil sie sagen: Ja Mensch unsere ganze Bildgestaltung im Programm basiert ja darauf, dass es fetzig ist.

[...]

N.: Da hab ich halt kein Laufbild dazu. Na und, ist das ein Problem? Ich muss auch nicht von jedem Stau auf dem Autobahnring in München ein Bild haben. Das ist eine Wortmeldung, denn jeder weiß heute wie ein Stau aussieht.

[...]

N.: Der ist nur einer. Ein Team kann sich gegen unmäßige Forderungen und unzumutbare Arbeitsbedingungen ganz anders wehren. [...] wenn man also größere Teams hat, dann hat man auch eine stärkere Kontrolle, was dort passiert, auch an sozialen Bedingungen, an Arbeitsbedingungen und an Ergebnis, verstehen Sie das? Das geht durch mehrere Köpfe durch. Von Arbeitssicherheit, von Arbeitsfairness, vom Durchstehen eines langen Berufslebens ganz zu schweigen. Deswegen sage ich: Aufspringen auf einen gnadenlos ökonomisierten Zeitgeist. Ich weiß wovon ich rede. Ich weiß wirklich, wovon ich rede. Ich kann jedem nur raten, lass die Finger davon, lass die Finger davon, werde nicht VJ! [...]

T.: Kann es vielleicht sein, dass das, was der VJ produziert, eigentlich ausreicht für den Zuschauer und auch die schlechtere gestalterische Qualität absolut OK ist?

N.: Das es für den Zuschauer vielleicht ausreicht, dass will ich nicht bestreiten. Das es für den Zuschauer OK ist, das bestreite ich. [...] Der Effekt von Medienkonsum ist auch ein gewisser Gewöhnungseffekt an Qualitäten. Wenn ich also Bilder sende, die im Prinzip stets mit dem "available light", also dem vorhandenen Licht, aufgenommen sind, dann kann ich die senden [...] Ob das gut ist für den Zuschauer, wenn er das sieht über 20, 30 und 50 Jahre [...]. Ich gehe davon aus, dass Bildgestaltung etwas anderes ist als Lohnbelichtung. Natürlich können wir alles qualitativ in den Orkus fahren. [Ich glaube], dass es einen gewissen Gewöhnungs- bzw. erzieherischen Wert hat, wenn ich Menschen bessere Bilder zeige oder bessere Sprache gebe [...] Ich würde sogar soweit gehen, dass wenn ich meinen Kindern sage, wir können jetzt 10mal in ein gutes Restaurant gehen oder 10mal zu McDonalds, dann würden sie sogar vielleicht sagen: Lass uns 10mal zu McDonalds gehen und ich gebe Ihnen recht, das reicht, aber das ist nicht gut.

7. Meincke, Carsten. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

Former cameraman **Carsten Meincke** is the founder of the public local station *Tide* in Hamburg, Germany. The station is a tryout area for students from the Hamburg Media School, who frequently switch between team and VJ productions. Meincke used to work as a one-man band when the big Betas were still state of the art. He sees video journalism as an interesting bridge to citizen journalism.

M.: Wobei es natürlich immer ganz spannend ist, aus welcher Richtung man kommt. Ist der VJ eher der „Technikmensch“, der die Inhalte lernt, oder ist es eher der „Inhaltsmensch“, der die Technik lernt und [...] das letztere ist der richtige Weg.

[...]

M.: Wir sind hier bei Tide auch noch nicht an der Weisheit Ende angekommen. Hier wird sehr viel auch technisch gerettet, was inhaltlich schief gelaufen ist. [...] Du versuchst dann auch im Schnitt oder durch besondere technische Elemente eine Geschichte wieder aufzupeppen.

[...]

M.: Ich bin als normaler Redakteur groß geworden, hab dann aber auch [das] VJ Prinzip mitgemacht. Noch während meines Volontariates und habe auch als Auslandskorrespondent teilweise alleine gearbeitet [...]. Ich weiß noch, wie ich schweißgebadet mit zwei Lampen und Stativ und allem herumgelaufen bin um [...] Leute in ihren Büros zu interviewen, wo ich kaum herein gepasst habe durch die Tür. Ganz, ganz grauenvoll!

[...]

M.: Was mir hängen geblieben ist, was schwierig ist, ist diese Parallelität beim VJ. Wenn du dich auf den Inhalt konzentrieren musst. Du musst wovon noch ne Frage stellen, um nicht als Depp dazustehen.

[...]

M.: Wenn du eine irrsinnig komplexe Geschichte hast, die in kurzer Zeit gemacht werden muss, dann würde ich sagen, das ist vielleicht zu komplex für einen VJ, als dass er sich auf alles konzentrieren könnte. Es ist gelogen zu sagen, der VJ macht alles so eben aus der Hand geschüttelt, was vorher drei Leute gemacht haben. Das ist Quatsch. Wenn du dich auf die Kamera konzentrierst in dem Moment, dann bist du eben bei der Kamera und kriegst nicht mehr alles mit, was gesprochen wird. Dann wirst du auch nicht ein vernünftiges Interview machen.

[...]

M.: Der Ton, der wird ja von allen unterschätzt aber das ist eines der Hauptanliegen. Fast noch wichtiger als das Bild.

T.: Haben die Studenten-VJs häufiger Probleme mit dem Ton?

M.: Schwierig, weil der Ernst der Situation häufig nicht so wahrgenommen wird und dann wird häufig [...] das Atmo-Mikro genommen.

[...]

T.: Kosten senken oder Qualität erhöhen? Wozu werden VJs genutzt?

M.: Um Kosten zu senken. Ich glaube keinem Sender, und das wäre echt in die Tasche gelogen, der sagt, wir stellen VJs ein, weil die Qualität besser ist als [mit] einem bisherigen Team. Das fände ich so was von heuchlerisch [...]. Intimität: Ja, aber ich weiß nicht, ob ich das mit Qualität [gleichsetzen würde].

(zu Citizen Journalism)

M.: Der Hintergrund ist es, dass es für uns als Bürgerplattform schwierig ist Kontinuität [...] reinzubringen und wir auf der anderen Seite ein großes Bedürfnis haben an qualifizierten Sachen. Sei es freiwillig als auch Auftragsproduktionen. [...] Wir versuchen hier ne Truppe aufzubauen, mit der man kontinuierlicher arbeiten kann [...]. Wir gehen in ein Kulturhaus hinein und verbinden das ganze mit Ausbildung. [...] Wir werden eine Truppe aufbauen, die 10 [bis] 20 Leute umfasst und die [erhalten] eine ganz klassische Ausbildung als VJ / TV Producer / Kulturreferent. [...] Es ist noch nicht ganz das Prinzip: Jeder Bürger kommt zu uns hin ins gläserne Studio und produziert selber. Es wird so ein Zwischending sein, weil wir haben die Kapazitäten nicht und auch nicht die technischen Hintergründe um das dort zu realisieren. [...]

Meine Vision ist sowieso, du gehst morgens zum Bäcker mit deinem Gerät: Handy, Kamera alles in einem. Du Bürger und hast einfach Bock ein Interview mit deinem Bäcker zu machen. Darum geht es mir! Und das will ich aber auch nicht erst zwei Wochen später [...] totgeschnitten haben, sondern: „Zack! Wumm! Schick's mir rüber, so wie es ist.“ [...] Diese Plattform müssen wir aufbauen, [so] dass der Umgang mit Medien noch selbstverständlicher wird.

8. Hoock, Kolja. Personal interview. 30 May 2006.

Kolja Hoock is a trainee at Tide who recently took a one-week video journalism class at AZ Media. He has mixed thoughts on video journalism and would prefer to become a traditional photographer.

T.: Macht es Dir mehr Spaß als VJ zu arbeiten?

H.: Wenn Du so willst, bin ich ja seit mehr als einem Jahr so unterwegs. Ich hab mir [eher überlegt], was brauchst du für den Beitrag. Ich bin sicher auch mal in dem Stil rausgegangen. Aber auch wenn ich allein bin, nehme ich mir lieber ne große Schulterkamera, ein Stativ und drei Lampen mit [...] und gehe dann allein mit einem Assistenten oder einer Kollegin los. [...]

T.: Was findest Du an der Arbeit als VJ schwierig?

H.: Man kennt das Problem, wenn man wirklich alles alleine gemacht hat. Diese Aufteilung hat sich ja nicht umsonst entwickelt. Das heißt, du überlegst dir ein Thema. Du drehst es ab und dann sitzt du im Schnitt. Der Abstand fehlt einfach ein bisschen. Das ist das einzige Problem. Aber ich denke, das ist auch eine Erfahrungssache. [...] Redaktionell das auszuarbeiten und umzusetzen. Das finde ich sogar teilweise angenehmer.

T.: Wenn Du dieses einwöchige Training noch mal rückblickend betrachtest, welche Eindrücke werden bleiben?

H.: Rein technisch war das jetzt nicht so der Aha-Effekt. Ich meine, dass ist ja auch relativ naheliegend. Das sind ja schon die praxisnahsten Lösungen, die da auch entwickelt wurden. [...] Was ich einfach als persönliche Erfahrung beeindruckend fand. Klar gab's auch im Ton Mängel, gab's auch mal ne Blende, die zu weit offen war [...], technische Sachen, die halt so vielleicht nicht durch die Abnahme bei einem CVD gegangen wären. Aber generell fand ich's eigentlich schon krass, dass die generell so keine Vorbildung hatten auf dieser technischen Ebene und dass Redakteure [...] in der Lage waren Beiträge zustande zu bringen, die theoretisch sendbar waren. [...] Nach einer Woche, das fand ich schon krass.

T.: Was für Beiträge waren das?

H.: Zum Ende hin [...] sollte ein 3-Minüter [produziert werden]. Wobei das natürlich auch immer Zweierteams waren. [...] Es gab dann schon immer jemand, der das Mikro gehalten hat und jemand, der gucken konnte, ob das Framing stimmt [...] und die Ansage war auch: „[...] oft gehen VJs dann auch zu zweit los.

Du willst ja in diesem Bereich bleiben. Würdest du lieber VJ oder würdest du lieber spezialisierter Kameramann werden?

[...]

H.: Ich würde mich [...] im Idealfall schon lieber lichtsetzender Kameramann mit redaktioneller Kompetenz nennen wollen. Der VJ, so wie er von AZ Media definiert wird, ist halt [...] ein Redakteur, der in der Lage ist Bilder mitzubringen und die auch aneinander zu schneiden.

Appendix B

Confidentiality note: Please note that this part of the thesis, is only readable to the supervisors of this study: Professor Claudia Aymar from the University of Applied Sciences Wiesbaden, Germany and Professor Samuel Roberts from the University of Miami, Florida, USA.

Versicherung

Ich versichere hiermit, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe.

Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus veröffentlichten oder nicht veröffentlichten Schriften entnommen sind, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Die Arbeit ist in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form noch nicht als Prüfungsarbeit eingereicht worden.

Chemnitz, den 31. Juli 2006

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