

The Transformational Ability of an Incumbent Newspaper Publisher:

An explorative research on the role of boundary spanning in addressing differing or conflicting intra-institutional logics

Prof. Dr. Hans van Kranenburg*

Lotte Keij, MSc

Institute for Management Research (IMR)
Nijmegen School of Management
Radboud University
P.O. Box 9108,
6500 HK Nijmegen
The Netherlands
e-mail: h.vankranenburg@fm.ru.nl

Submission Abstract for World Media Economics and Management Conference 2021, Rome, Italy

Abstract

The news media industry is finding itself in a transition. Developments such as new digital technologies, changing news consumption of the audience, and the increased competitive pressure of new digital entrants, force incumbents to re-determine their position in this dynamic market. To successfully achieve organizational transformation, newspaper publishers need to navigate through a broad collection of institutional logics. This study explored the role of boundary spanning in addressing differing or conflicting institutional logics when contributing to the transformation of an incumbent newspaper publisher. The study uses the case of BDUmedia, an incumbent regional newspaper publisher. In total, 15 semi-structured interviews with organizational actors from different levels and across different departments were conducted. The results show that a hierarchical culture does not stimulate boundary spanning to be institutionalized as an organizational function and thus the organization initially relies on the boundary spanning efforts of managerial members to address differing institutional logics that hinder cooperation for transformation. However, managerial nominated boundary spanners are not the most effective boundary spanners to address differing or conflicting logics for transformation. Even though managerial nominated boundary spanners have the possibility to institutionalize and stimulate boundary spanning-in-practice this does not always happen. Therefore, institutional divides maintain and cooperation for organizational transformation remains off. To successfully address these divides, it is important to stimulate boundary spanning-in-practice by training of the current staff, changing processes and systems in favour of boundary spanning behaviour, and acquiring new personnel with the right skillset, competences, and progressive

mindset. Last but not least, the current corona crisis created an urgent need for change which made differing beliefs less important and increased the focus on the joint goal for survival.

Keywords: boundary spanning, intra-organizational institutional logics, organizational transformation, transformational ability, news media industry, newspaper publisher

Conference Topic: Strategic Management