

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: THE CASE OF PRODUCERS, DIRECTORS, AND EXECUTIVES IN FILM AND TELEVISION

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ABSTRACT

Creativity and innovation are important for fulfilling organizational goals. In understanding ways to enhance creativity research has moved on from understanding individual creativity, to an organizational analysis of successful firms that encourage creativity. However, an additional source of creativity stems from direct and indirect leadership and the decisions leaders make to enhance creativity throughout the organization. This chapter examines creativity in film and television as influenced by leadership activities at the organization, team, and individual level and describes lessons learned.

Keywords: Ambidexterity; creativity; film and television industry; Hollywood; innovation; leadership

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... one thing I did learn in television a long time ago is that ultimately control belongs to the network. I have a voice. I have influence. But control in a collaborative medium like television or film, nobody really has that kind of control. And that is one of the reasons that I went back to novels after my 10 years in television because in novels, in prose, the writer has complete control. You don't have to deal with the network or studio. You don't have to deal with other writers, or producers, or directors, or actors.

George R. R. Martin,
Author and Executive Producer,
Game of Thrones (BBC4, 2014)

In a recent BBC4 interview, the author of the *Game of Thrones* fantasy-novel franchise captured tensions inherent in the creative process when he described his experience writing the novels versus producing the HBO television series based on them. In that description he acknowledged that control and freedom are limited by the need for collaboration with the many other creative individuals involved in the creation of content for film and television. Martin clearly understands the negotiated tension between competing creative goals: the director wants an exciting, interesting narrative; the cinematographer wants visuals that help tell the story; and the producer wants all of that, on time and under budget. This desire for creative control by competing interests in creative organizations must be negotiated and managed at every step during the process of creation. As Martin points out, compromise and conflict are inevitable; creative individuals want control of their creative products and freedom from rules and restrictions in that creative process (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). Organizational factors can determine how effectively those creative inputs are coordinated (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Anderson, Potocnik, & Zhou, 2014), but organizational leaders at all levels play a large role helping guide individuals embedded in creative networks as control and creative tension are negotiated (Perry-Smith, 2006; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). Many traditional models of leadership, however, look for general principles of leader behaviors and processes such as transformational (Bass & Avolio, 1994) or authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) to understand effectiveness, rather than attempting to draw lessons from particular contexts. And although leading creativity has been the subject of previous research (e.g., Basadur, 2004; Denti & Hemlin, 2013; Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009; Hunt, Stelluto, & Hooijberg, 2004; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002; Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Sun, Zhang, Qi, & Chen, 2012; Yoshida, Sendjaya, Hirst, & Cooper, 2014; Zhou & George, 2003), this

chapter uncovers specific examples of leading creativity in the context of Hollywood film and television production.

Within television and film production teams a number of different leadership roles can directly and indirectly enhance the creativity that is reflected in the final product. In this chapter I outline ways in which creativity is managed and enhanced in the U.S. television and film industry through a variety of different leadership roles and actions. These roles, as designated formal positions within these organizations, include studio executives or upper echelon leadership; production supervision as carried out by the showrunner; leadership in the writer's room, and leading and coordinating required in postproduction teams. After defining creativity, describing the film and television industry history and structure, I provide examples of leadership challenges across specific leadership roles within film studio and television network production organizations. This chapter is based on a review of selected relevant theoretical and research literatures in organizational creativity, the effects of leadership on creativity, and the television and movie production industries. In addition I use quotes from recent interviews with 10 individuals in film and television in different leadership roles, as well as conclusions from previous interviews with 20 individuals fulfilling similar leadership roles as television directors, producers, and executives (Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Ensher, Murphy, & Sullivan, 2002; Murphy & Ensher, 2008). Quotations are used to illustrate relevant leadership lessons rather than as a basis for a grounded theory analysis of creativity and leadership within this industry. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the implications for research and practice.

LEADERSHIP OF CREATIVITY AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL, TEAM, AND INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: AN OVERVIEW

Today's organizations pursue creativity and innovation as ways to enhance their competitive advantage in a global marketplace. Within research studies in organizational behavior, creativity is often defined as the production of novel and useful ideas in any domain (Amabile et al., 1996). Creativity is also typically conceptualized as an individual-level phenomenon, part of one's personality, that is commonly thought to be influenced strongly by genes and less likely as a skill that can be trained and developed (Simonton, 1999). From an evolutionary context, humans have used

creativity to make purposeful adaptations to their environments (Mithen, 1998). “Innovate or die” then is not just a slogan of high tech industries, but characterized how early human life on this planet faced new or harsh environments. Creativity has been shown to be improved through training and education (Scott, Leritz, & Mumford, 2004). Other research suggests that training and education can be improved by enhancing three components of creativity: knowledge and ability in a particular domain, intrinsic motivation to find solutions or to create, and certain cognitive activities that can help focus training and education, and learning from experience (Mumford, 2003; Shalley, 1991). Creativity is distinct from innovation, with creativity typically equated with idea generation or first phase of the innovative process, whereas individual innovation encompasses both the generation and implementation of new ideas (Van de Ven, 1986, p. 591). Implementation refers to the process of converting these new ideas “into new and improved products, services, or ways of doing things” (Baer, 2012, p. 1102). This chapter focuses predominately on the creative, or the initial stage of innovation, but also activities that enhance a continuous creative process found in television and film production.

Even if we accept that many individuals can become creative through training and development, oversubscribing to a “heroic” view of creativity in which creativity only resides in the individual negates that creativity typically is a result of “a lengthy process of hard work and negotiated within a set of complex social relationships” (Schaffer, 1994, p. 16). A number of theories have looked at the broader organizational context for increasing the level and frequency of creative behavior and take into account the social aspects of creativity that occur across an organization or within teams and social networks (Anderson et al., 2014; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Taylor & Greve, 2006). Specific organizational factors affecting the level and frequency of creativity activity include: encouraging creativity (occurring at either the organizational, supervisory, or work group level), allowing autonomy or freedom, providing resources, applying or removing pressures (which can either be positive or negative in the form of challenge or overload) and removing organizational impediments to creativity (Amabile et al., 1996).

In its simplest terms leadership has been defined as a role filled by an individual with the capacity to influence the direction of others (Yukl, 2006), the systems, structures, and social aspects of creativity are therefore affected by leaders throughout an organization, both indirectly and directly (Zhou & George, 2003). Traditional theories of leadership tend to focus on the characteristics and actions of the leader rather than the resulting effects on followers. More recent leadership theories, however, provide additional

insights into the leader's role in increasing creativity because they focus on developmental relationship between leaders and followers in addition to identifying leader behaviors that may increase creative thinking of followers. These theories include shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003), authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and more established theories such as transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994), charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), and leader member exchange (Graen & Scandura, 1987).

Leaders have been found to encourage creative problem solving for organizational members through a number of direct mechanisms such as encouraging creative thinking (Basadur, 2004), motivating and inspiring creativity (Mumford, Connelly, & Gaddis, 2003), as well as more indirectly through training and rewards that support creative behavior (Mumford et al., 2002; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Supportive relationships characterized by high quality leader member exchanges (LMX) have been found to increase innovative behaviors (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Liao, Liu, & Loi, 2010; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Transformational leadership has been found to have a direct, positive relationship with follower creativity (Shin & Zhou, 2003), and an indirect effect through follower creative self-efficacy (Gong et al., 2009). However, abusive supervision has been found to reduce the creativity of technical engineers, which trickled down from abusive department-level leadership (Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012).

Leaders can also affect creativity in the team context. One study found that individuals and teams showed more creativity when leaders were seen as supportive through both instrumental and social emotional factors (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004), and studies have shown positive relationships between transformational leadership and group creativity (Sosik, Kahai, & Avolio, 1999). Sung and Choi (2012) found that team knowledge management by leaders affected both performance and creativity in addition to financial performance. Building on work by Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko, and Roberts (2008), a recent study showed that servant leadership worked to enhance creativity to the extent that leader behavior was prototypic for the group and encouraged followers to identify with the leader (Yoshida et al., 2014).

Leaders, therefore, contribute to the creative process in two main ways. First, directly in interaction with the creative individuals, and second, indirectly through the decisions they make with other upper echelon leaders to design organizational structures and systems. Within film and television production both direct and indirect leadership has the potential to influence creativity. After providing a brief overview of the creative context of

Hollywood film and television, the next section of this chapter will describe specific leadership roles that occur in television and film production. Although these are not the only roles tasked with managing the creative process, they are ones that have the capacity to strongly affect the creativity embedded into the artistry of the final product.

FEATURES OF THE CREATIVE CONTEXT: HOLLYWOOD FILM AND TELEVISION

Hollywood is defined as a geographical conglomeration of many large and small firms located primarily in and around southern California that produces and distributes content for television and movies to domestic and international markets (Scott, 2005). These practices began around 1900 with fairly independent production companies that later moved to a more formalized studio system (Jones, 1996), although the film studios' strong monopoly on production was broken by a 1946 consent decree. Television became a commercial industry in the late 1940s and soon consisted of three major television networks that started mostly in New York and eventually moved production to Hollywood (Bielby, 2009). Since that time Hollywood has consisted of production companies, television networks (both broadcast and cable), film studios, and contract employees who belong to specialized guilds (or craft unions) such as actors, directors, editors, producers, and musicians and work interdependently to produce creative content. Production companies facilitate product innovation and adaptation within the uncertain and dynamic environment of film and television production and the success of these products are to a large part dictated by consumer tastes (Jones, 1996) and the eventual commercial success (Zaheer & Soda, 2009).

A few studies have examined factors that have implications for creativity in film and television, or related artistic industries such as dance companies (Harrison & Rouse, 2014), orchestra companies (Hunt et al., 2004), and comic book publishers (Taylor & Greve, 2006). For example, Elsbach and Kramer (2003) studied the creative process in Hollywood pitch meetings to uncover what methods creative individuals used to convince investors of the importance of their ideas. The informants in their study defined "creativity as the potential to create original, unique, unexpected, and/or emotionally moving phenomena and uncreativity as the lack of such potential" (p. 288). Other studies focused on the importance of role-based coordination for work performance for film and music video crews (Bechky, 2006);

the unique features of networked careers of Hollywood project team members (Jones, 1996); the networked collaboration of production teams and creative performance of key crew members in Hollywood (Cattani & Ferriani, 2008); and the creation of variable network structures in Italian television production (Zaheer & Soda, 2009).

Project networks in Hollywood require team interdependence and high-level mutual, role-based coordination (Bechky, 2006; Jones, 1996) that can be facilitated by those in the leadership role. However, only a handful of studies have looked directly at how leaders influence and manage individuals and teams in Hollywood film and television (Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Ensher et al., 2002; Murphy & Ensher, 2008). Jones, Hesterly, and Borgatti's (1997) work examining networked forms of governance in the film industry has implications for the role of leadership in both film and television. Network governance structures use organic informal social systems to coordinate interfirm relationships rather than formal contractual relationships (Gerlach, 1992). Four aspects of this networked governance structure have direct implications for the type and amount of leadership influences on creative processes and outputs (Jones et al., 1997): (1) Shared power in television and film occurs because contractors have specialized expertise that is difficult to replace and is central to the production of content. In this regard then, leaders trying to affect these power relationships might have less power in the day-to-day production than they would have in more bureaucratic forms of governance; (2) Macrocultures also diminish the need for leadership. Macrocultures are defined as industry-specific, occupational, or professional knowledge that guide actions and create typical behavior patterns among independent entities (Jones et al., 1997). Again, professional groups who are highly skilled have less need for leaders for coordination of work except at higher levels of a project; (3) Collective sanctions also reduce the need for leaders to control employee behavior. Instead, group members punish others who violate group norms. In Hollywood, individuals who do not follow the norms of the macroculture find sanctions in the form of difficulty in booking their next job (Jones et al., 1997). However, producers are able to make hiring decisions to bring back an individual for a subsequent project, or are able to dismiss an individual when collective sanctions were ineffective; and (4) Reputational forces are strong within these networks. Individuals are only rehired again when their products are successful and they are professional in their approach to the work during production. Hollywood is a small town with a dense, extremely interconnected network where reputational capital is very important (Murphy & Ensher, 2008). Leaders too have access to these

networked sources of information, so therefore, could also have gatekeeping ability. In summary, although film and television production teams have many self-organizing features indicative of network governance that lessen the need for typical leadership, there remain potential areas in which leaders affect portions of the creative process.

Important Leadership Roles in Television and Film

Studio and network executives, producers, directors, and postproduction supervisors fill critical leadership roles in the production of television and film content. These individuals are tasked to lead and facilitate both artistic and technical creativity, keep productions on schedule, and to deliver the product promised within budget. Specific duties for these different roles can vary between television and film, and between specific projects. Just as in non-entertainment industry organizations, the role requirements can be negotiated and sometimes are set up to capitalize on an individual leader's strengths. Of course not every aspect of television and film production is meant to be a creative process. Functions such as accounting, finance, and human resources will focus on standard practices for those functions. Even on the film or television show set, some functions require little creativity. However, creativity does occur in areas other than storytelling, or what would be considered artistic creativity. In fact, like many other industries, technical creativity is required because of tight time lines, budget issues, and coordination demands, as well as technological advances.

Individuals in leadership roles not only have the responsibility to facilitate creativity in their organizations, they too are tasked to utilize their own creative skill set through their cognitive and interpersonal skills. Creative cognitive abilities help leaders anticipate the consequences of a new idea, which includes: others' reactions to an idea, the resources and plans necessary for implementation, adjusting for problems that occur during implementation (Mumford, 2003). In addition, the implementation phase requires social interaction skills and abilities to persuade others about the merit of particular ideas and to gather resources.

One example of leading creative teams and being a creative leader within Hollywood comes from the particularly interesting role of television director. Using charismatic leadership theory (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) and interviews with 21 television directors, Murphy and Ensher (2008) found numerous examples of charismatic leader behavior in the directors' descriptions of their leadership interactions on the set during production. One of

the main goals for directors is to communicate their vision for the episode shoot, which they try to achieve by gaining respect, liking, and the crew's confidence. For episodic television, either dramas or situational comedies that have multiple episodes per season, a different director is brought in every week to direct that episode and work with an existing crew. The interviewed directors described ways that they set the vision for a shoot and the importance of vision for their method of directing. The research also showed that the directors' self-schema for leadership appeared to be an important prerequisite for demonstrating shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Further analysis of the interviews showed that the directors tended to use optimistic and collective references in describing their leadership. Although the study did not look at the effects of the directors' leadership behavior on team creativity levels, the presence of charismatic leadership, optimism, and reference to the group as a collective most likely help to facilitate creativity.

Directors represent one of the many leadership roles within television and film that directly enhance or have the potential to reduce creativity. In the following section I will overview the ways in which other leadership roles in film and television affect creativity at the individual, team, and strategic level. Not only are leaders at these levels tasked with facilitating a creative environment, they required to work as exemplars of creativity, whether as demonstrated through their business sense, their creative tastes, or their early recognition of technological trends. Leadership in this context, regardless of level, requires managing the paradox of simultaneously making money and encouraging creativity. Furthermore, a number of skills are desirable in managing tension and conflict within and across groups, negotiating schedules and resources, coordinating processes and time lines, while maintaining the creative vision of a project require leadership across groups or intergroup leadership (Hogg, Van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012).

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AT THE UPPER ECHELON LEVEL: BEING AMBIDEXTROUS IN ORDER TO MANAGE PARADOX

Strategic leaders are tasked with the strategic direction of an organization (Carpenter, Geletkanycz, & Sander, 2004; Ireland & Hitt, 2005), make decisions that affect structure, strategy, and culture (Pfeffer, 1998) as well as provide a collective purpose that binds organizational members (Bernard,

1938). Although CEOs and strategic leaders at the executive level, or commonly known as upper echelon, have been shown to affect organizational outcomes (Bertrand & Schoar, 2003; Crossland & Hambrick, 2007; Lieberman & O'Connor, 1972), the strength of that effect is determined by certain environmental contingencies such as low growth rates, uncertainty, and scarce opportunities (Wasserman, Anand, & Nohria, 2010) as well as recent succession events (Hutzschenreuter, Kleindienst, & Greger, 2012).

Formally, "Strategic leadership is defined as a person's ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable future for the organization" (Ireland & Hitt, 2005, p. 63). Boal and Hooijberg (2001) argue that strategic leaders are "Unique because [they are] embedded in ambiguity, complexity and informational overload" (p. 516). Strategic leaders then play an important role in ensuring that their firms engage in effective decision-making and therefore are required to have both the adaptive capacity to lead change, which is enhanced by high levels of cognitive and behavioral flexibility, and the absorptive capacity or the skills required to lead organizational learning (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001).

The role of the studio and network executives at the upper-echelon level exercise strategic leadership in the creative process in three ways: First these individuals must directly affect the decisions that are made with respect to which products to pursue and then how the production is carried out. There are multiple places in which artistic and technical creativity can occur and multiple points in the process where a project would be deemed a failure. As in other organizations, leaders need to know the tastes of the consumers. What is going to be funny? What presents compelling drama? What romantic comedy will attract both men and women to the theaters or make the effort to download the movie? Strategic leaders communicate the company's vision and set marketing strategies that affect the projects that are pursued. A former president of one of the major studios I spoke with recently fully recognized the complexity of the strategic leadership role. As he said,

"There are many creative elements in movie or television; it is not like manufacturing tires," he joked. "There you are dealing with efficiency and more basic elements. In dealing with the arts, even more simple things like books, don't require the collaboration of numerous creative elements that are required of film or television. And the finished product can be unpredictable. Even if it starts out well with a great script and great crew and cast, the outcome is very unreliable."

The second major leadership role of studio and network executives is to focus on the external environment anticipating new competition and leveraging new technologies in their industry that will affect profits and market share. Important shifts in the industry can be traced back to technological changes since the industry began in the early 1900s. These technological disruptions, or punctuated equilibrium, have changed fundamental aspects of the industry (Gersick, 1991). An important innovation shifted the industry from producing silent films to “talkies,” other technology allowed a consolidation of players that resulted in the move from small entrepreneurial production companies to the big studios. Eventually video rather than film allowed for distribution for home rental and home ownership of product (e.g., video, DVDs); while cable and satellite television allowed for distribution of additional content across more cable networks including players such as Showtime, HBO, and others. The movie theater experience has continued to evolve with better sound, 3-D, large screen IMAX theaters as well as ways to enhance the movie-going experience. A former president of a cable television network interviewed for this project discussed how her role in cable was driven by the possibilities she saw in the technology. Her ability to imagine a much bigger future where satellite and cable television played a dominant role propelled her to the top of her profession.

More recently, the video and mobile games industry has become a strong competitor for traditional television and film, while other platforms have appeared that stream traditional film and movie content for mobile devices, desktop computers, and others. These developments have attracted new market entrants such as Amazon.com and Microsoft (Ovide & Schwartzel, 2014) as well as afforded increased revenues for established providers such as Netflix and Hulu who do not only stream existing content from their own or others’ libraries, but produce their own content tied to their other activities such as in the case of Microsoft, video games. The video gaming industry worth \$93 billion in 2013 has the attention of television (\$365 billion industry 2014) and movie (\$10.8 billion 2014) studios.

At the end of the day, various forms of entertainment compete with each other for screen time. Studios such as SONY, Warner Brothers, Universal, Pixar, and Disney as well as television networks look for ways to secure some of this market through cross-platform promotions and sponsorships, pushing their creative content in front of the consumer. One former CEO of a large production company discussed how film companies are under tremendous pressure to spend money and produce product that

competes with these new competitors in streaming television products and video games, as well as increasing their online presence.

Honestly, [our reaction to this competition]? [We are] staring at these profits and saying we want that money! We understand that these video games are very big franchise hits now.

He went on to say with respect to competition:

[We are] trying to be more nimble, trying to do things cheaper, and spend less on marketing. We feel like we have to go for big budget, or work on small independent film productions made for less money. TV is moving in the complete opposite direction as they are experiencing increases in per episode budget.

Strategic leaders, therefore, must anticipate these opportunities, capitalizing on them before their competitors.

A third task for strategic leaders is to manage contradictory organizational goals. In film and television there are a number of tensions including that of collaboration and control (Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003), as well as exploration (radical change) and exploitation (incremental change to meet existing markets; Benner & Tushman, 2003). Combining both types of activities calls for organizational ambidexterity, resulting in multiple and often conflicting goals (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Managing these paradoxical tensions represent a major task for the film and television industry and its leaders. Organizational members with high levels of cognitive and behavioral complexity are said to handle this situation effectively by confronting the paradox directly. That is, they can hold two conflicting ideas in their head (the definition of paradox) and are able to change their behaviors to address these issues rather than experiencing fear, anxiety, or other overwhelming negative emotions (Smith & Lewis, 2011). One study found that senior executives and strategic leadership teams using transformational leadership components of shared vision and contingency rewards were able to reconcile conflicting demands by combining high levels of exploratory and exploitative activities (Jansen, George, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2008).

The former CEO of the production company also weighed in on successful top leaders, he said,

They play well in both worlds. They have to develop a creative product that people will like with high level talent associated with it. But these leaders also have to know how to pay the bills.

This former CEO had worked in two different media companies and contrasted the balancing strategy of the top leaders and said,

Leadership in the industry takes clear ability working with creative people. [You need to] find a way for them to execute a decision the way in which they want, and even though we don't want something that is out of control, [we want to] avoid squashing the creativity.

He went on to say that in the previous organization, the CEO was trying to change the culture and reduce the bureaucracy, but the employees were not empowered. He contrasted this with the other company with a culture more conducive to creativity where decisions were made from the bottom up as opposed to top down.

One way to deal with paradox too is to develop an overarching vision. Robert L. Johnson (Lapchick, 2004), the founder, and until 2006 chairman and CEO of Black Entertainment Televisions (BET) demonstrated how his strategic leadership focuses on the selection of a management team that supports the vision of BET to be the pre-eminent African American media voice for entertainment and information.

As a successful strategic leader in Hollywood, Walt Disney was very effective at managing paradox of creativity and the bottom-line through the stories he promoted about the world of Disney. For example, Walt Disney's focus on animation both touted it as the creative heart and soul of the organization, but he took a "Tayloristic approach" where drawings were done as efficiently as possible to keep costs at a minimum once the initial design ideas were presented (Boje, 1995). Here then creativity that was portrayed to the outside as the dominant identity of the organization competed internally with a cost saving identity, however, this presumed conflict did not interfere with success throughout most of Disney's history. One animator recently told me that in his mind the Disney "magic" or high-level creativity still exists. In describing his fulfilling work experiences on *Frozen*, the 2013 Academy Award winning and top grossing animated film at the time of writing this chapter, he felt that for *Frozen* the animators believed that the studios trusted their judgment in making this movie the best it could be. He said that he had other examples of past productions where this was not the case, and this recent increased trust allowed the animators to work at their creative best. The animator talked about working almost around the clock some weeks and on weekends to perfect his work. As he said "*The idea is boss. That takes any spotlight in the room off of the project leaders. [Their job is] to direct the team toward the idea.*" This animator speculated though that this runaway blockbuster means that his team will face increased pressure on the next project and he expects that possibly the freedom to make another movie as good may be diminished. The artist and Disney Animation employee in him though understood the reasons.

In summary, strategic leaders affect a broad range of activities within organizations, whether the direct effect internally affecting decisions about projects to pursue, focusing externally on technology or competition, or balancing the paradoxical needs of allowing for artistic and technical creativity while making money.

LEADING TEAMS AND INDIVIDUALS IN TELEVISION AND FILM

Most film projects start with the purchase of the rights to a script or novel, after which money is sought to produce the product. For films, studios engage in a number of different arrangements to produce a product and represent their level of control. According to one informant with about 15 years in the industry representing independent film,

Percentage of ownership (and, thus, percentage of control) on a project is often determined by percentage of investment. Studios try to balance risk and control. The more money they put into a project, the more they can control it. But that also means they have a higher exposure if the movie flops.

A television show may start similarly with a treatment, which is a synopsis of a concept for the television show, to use to communicate to decisions makers whether there is a viable idea for a show and to see if others should become involved in the project. These ideas can come from individuals internal to the network, or from production companies outside of the network. Once the idea is given the “green light” (approval) to be pursued, the writers and producers then typically work on a pilot episode for the show, hoping that a network will order further episodes or a full season (often 20–23 episodes).

Individuals in a number of formal positions are tasked with leading the production of films and television shows. This next section focuses on three examples: production supervision as carried out by the showrunner; leadership in the writer’s room, and leading and coordinating required in postproduction teams. Instances of leader behavior gathered through interviews are discussed using current leadership theories and associated leader behaviors from management and organizational psychology literature to highlight important lessons learned regarding creativity in the context of film and television production.

The Showrunner

In television, the showrunner is a pivotal leadership role in the production of creative output. The leadership task is one of encouraging creativity from the team, as well as fulfilling the leader's own creative vision for the product. A typical television production team can range from about 50 to 125 cast and crew members (Murphy & Ensher, 2008). The showrunner, who is typically credited as an executive producer, take charge of the writers' room in addition to the day-to-day operations of the television series. This includes many decisions about writing, editing, casting, art direction, etc., as well as motivating, influencing, and coordinating roles. Similar to other industries, executive producers as showrunners also may demonstrate a full range of leadership behaviors from delegative to directive or be seen as the cheerleader, task master, or babysitter. One informant used the metaphor of a Knight to explain the characteristics of an effective showrunner. As she described it, the person appears presentable in court (to the studio executives), yet will make tough decisions to make the best possible show, and save the day when necessary. She went on to compare her experiences serving as an assistant for three different types of producers.

They each had very different styles. One was very competent, well respected, and just smart. People trusted him. Another had a more hands-off approach that sat well with some of the crew and not so well with some of the others. And finally another one had a style that really seemed inauthentic. He befriended everyone, but really was in over his head and got nothing done easily. The last two worked on the same show so traded off weeks, which really confused everyone.

Another informant, who had served as first or second assistant director (AD) on more than 70 episodic television or film shoots also talked about how different showrunners have vastly different approaches to leading their crew and said:

There are usually two types of showrunners/EPs. The first type are usually in the writing room most of the time, but will meet with directors, and give them their notes on tone, style, intent for the episodes. The second type are usually a combination of hands on "on set" and prep for productions and the next episodes by trying to find locations and keeping the style and focus of the show intact. He or she may read the script and immediately tell the writers that we can never afford to shoot XYZ, or will work it out with the network if it is something the writers really want and will find a resolution for it.

The description of these different ways of fulfilling the showrunner role seem to represent leaders who had a single-minded focus on telling the

story as compared to those who could simultaneously balance the creativity of the story and the vision for the shoot by facilitating the entire crew working together as a team. These differences in leader behaviors may come from different ideas of what it means to lead on television productions affected by either differences in their leader identity or their implicit theories of leadership (Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, & Chang, 2012).

For a television series, the executive producers may divide up a season (in the U.S. ranging from 22 to 24 or so episodes) taking the lead on only half of the episodes. Therefore, large differences in leadership style can provide challenges for the crew. The most effective type of showrunner in the AD's opinion was the leader who balanced creative storytelling with facilitation of the work. He said, "*We have time and budget restraints to abide by, and I need their [the showrunners'] help and approvals to change what's being written to make the day.*" The phrase "make the day" refers to completing the shooting scheduled for the day. He described the first type as not sleeping, and trying to be everywhere in nurturing "their baby" and being afraid of letting go. He said then over time though they learn that the teams and crew are hired to fulfill their visions and they begin to trust that if they give their notes in prep that will happen on the set that day. He went on to say:

That is when they are at their best – molded and trusted in the teams/departments they have hired, and that everything then becomes "shorthand." I just came off of a show where just the opposite was happening ... they were new first time creators of a show. They had notes for every single take, about every single thing on set, which drove the director, ADs and crew insane.

The AD observed through that there was learning curve that the other type of showrunner had to experience before they learned what worked and performed effectively. In some ways this again traces back to leader identity issues. These novice showrunners see themselves as leading the project by focusing more exclusively on the creative story, rather than thinking of what will work best for the collective crew (Lord & Hall, 2005). He went on to say how the inexperience of these producers cost time, money, and energy for the crew and therefore they were not creating forward momentum. Everything was the same priority, in other words, "*they did a poor job of picking their battles on the set, and by battling everything they could potentially lose the scene or shot that matters most because they have run out of time.*"

Research shows that the uncertainty often accompanying crisis causes followers or team members to look to their leaders for sense-making and

anxiety-reduction (Shamir & Howell, 1999). In the example above, the inexperienced showrunners probably did little in helping the crew make sense of the situation, nor likely reduced anxiety as they had caused the crisis situation. However, Bechky and Okhuysen (2011) found that during film shoots crews used role shifting, reorganizing routines, and reassembling the work (basically technical creativity) to deal with surprises. These surprises included things such as unexpected schedule changes, issues with weather, or a host of other unexpected events. Working under an inexperienced showrunner most likely led to more surprises on the set, but most experienced crews were able to maintain the artistic creativity of a project.

In the analysis of what these informants experienced on different shows and shooting specific episodes captures what happens when individuals are promoted into leadership roles based on artistic skills, rather than management skills. It shows to some extent that maybe good leaders might have only a minimal effect; bad leaders can be disastrous as shown in one study on leadership and creativity (Liu et al., 2012). Although many leadership behaviors may be useful in leading creative teams, Hackman and Walton (1986) purposefully focus on the types of specific behaviors for team leaders including: Envisioning, inventive (problem solving), negotiation skills, decision-making skills, teaching skill, interpersonal skills, and implementation skills (getting things done at all levels of complexity). All of these skills are applicable to the showrunner's role.

Therefore, the showrunner's job also requires a unique set of leadership skills to inspire, coordinate, and motivate in the specialized context of film and television production. There is less likely a need for directive leadership, or even transactional leadership, but instead a need for leaders who give freedom to the crews to use their skilled judgment. Neocharismatic leadership is likely to be utilized. This refers to a view of leadership that has moved beyond merely a focus on vision and building culture, and instead looks toward emotional reactions, relationship building, and the role of context in understanding charismatic leadership (Nahavandi, 2014). For example, producers who show a good degree of self-confidence, strong conviction to their goals and values, high energy and enthusiasm, expressive and good communications skills, and activity would be more likely to be successful (Nahavandi, 2014). Another aspect of leadership that would have implications for successful producers and showrunners would be a good degree of authenticity. Authentic leaders are said to be self-aware in understanding their own emotion, abilities, and inner conflict (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). And finally, the type of leadership necessary in film and

television production may support the tenants of shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

Leading the Team in the Writers' Room

One place where the social process of creativity flourishes is in the writers' room. This is where the showrunner and the various writers for a show hash out the story and script. The leadership task is one of encouraging creativity from the team, as well as fulfilling the leader's own creative vision for the product. When asked to describe a typical writers' room, individuals offered metaphors such as a backyard treehouse, a brain, a clearinghouse, and a nursery school to explain what takes place in the writers' room for television. Below are a few additional descriptions from a number of individuals involved in writers' rooms (Bernardin, 2010).

It varies from show to show. A writers' room is a way for the head writer to collect all the writers in one place, hear their ideas, comment on them, have the other writers contribute and share ideas, and assemble them into not just scripts but an overall feeling for what the year's worth of stories are gonna be. (Quoting John Rogers)

As one informant for this project described it:

I suppose running a writers' room is a bit like wrangling a dozen toddlers at a playground. The end goal is to have fun. But it's chaotic and stressful and dangerous, and you never feel like anything is under control. You do your best to foster a safe environment where the kids can be creative and hopefully not kill each other. (20-year veteran Writer/Producer Television and Film)

Not all shows have traditional writers' room, and the more hectic ones might be reserved for comedies. Details of the inner workings of a writers' room of one popular show was shared in a sexual harassment suit lawsuit against Warner Brothers Studios brought forward by a personal assistant for the television show *Friends*. The work environment included sexually demeaning jokes, nude photos, and drawings degrading to women. The writers of the show at the time argued in court that this environment, which in other workplaces would meet the definition of hostile work environment, was said to be a "creative necessity," akin to a business necessity, to accomplish the writing that needed to be done for a show characterized by sexual innuendo and adult themes (Reisert, 2006).

The time pressure, budget constraints, and conflict over creative direction can occur during production. In the writer's room a good

showrunner handles conflict over story effectively. As one producer/writer mentioned:

All conflicts are decided by the showrunner. It helps if there is a consensus on a story point or joke but at the end of the day, it's the showrunner who writes what they want into the script.

This individual had worked in film for most of his 20-year career as a writer and more recently in production and directing. He also shared how the writer's room on the comedic television show he created was very different from that of a film.

I can't think of an equivalent to the writer's room in film ... In features there is one writer [or co-writers] working on the script. He or she collects notes [suggested edits on the script] from the studio, the producers, the director, sometimes the cast, and then tries to write the best script he or she can write. There is no creative collective. And then when it comes to feature, the director is pretty much the final word on all creative decisions. They're the dictator.

To understand how to run a writers' room, up and coming producers can watch and learn from effective and ineffective examples, as well as participating in informal mentoring relationships (Ensher & Murphy, 2005), or attend film school taking courses that cover the comprehensive nature of the job. UCLA Film School offers a course specific for producers running a half-hour comedy that covers activities such as "community building, collaboration, and leadership skills needed to successfully function in writers' room, as well as breaking stories, writing, and rewriting television scripts" (UCLA, 2014).

One informant who works as an Assistant Director in television and film saw another way the writers' room is arranged:

When the writer-type, executive producer working as showrunner assigns certain script concepts to each individual writer, yet there is still a team mindset. But every day in the writers' room as each writer reports in, outlines, or works on a scene, they throw their ideas on the table and everyone helps create better ideas, despite "writing credit" on the episode. That writer might though be invited to the set that week.

There are also issues of timing that might apply to effective writer's room management. For example, Wageman, Fisher, and Hackman (2009) showed that it is not enough to be able to demonstrate different leader behavior when needed, it is also the timing of different leader interventions. They spoke specifically about the need for leadership at the launch of team projects, somewhere near the middle, as well as toward the end either under time constraints or to take stock of lessons learned from specific successes

and failures in the process. The writers' room may be the place where these leadership interventions must be timed correctly.

In these examples for both showrunners or those who lead the writer's room, leaders are expected to set up environments within a production where creativity and art can thrive, the production comes in under budget, and the outcome will be something that will appeal to audiences.

Postproduction Supervisor

Another area in which coordination and leadership are important to creativity in film and television is that of postproduction. During postproduction the director's cut of a film is edited, and music, sound, and visual effects are added. Similar work is done for television. In many ways postproduction can be a smooth running portion of the production if the preparation during shooting was adequate. If not, there is a phrase that is used jokingly on the set, "Oh we'll fix that in post" to show to some extent how much the production trusts the men and women who are left to finish a film or television episode. The opportunity for creativity abounds, as the crew has to use what was given to them to now create something spectacular.

One informant, who had worked in postproduction for the last 15 years for one postproduction supervisor, as well as working with a film director in another capacity, shared first-hand observations of how the supervisor facilitated project completion. As he noted, the time pressure can be intense; the studio can decide to go for an earlier release date for the movie or the budget may be stretched thin. The individuals who work on postproduction are experienced professionals engaged in technical and artistic creativity, but often work in teams. The postproduction supervisor then must negotiate deadlines, resources, and coordinate work among the teams. Although work groups can work on different portions of a project simultaneously, many times one group is waiting on one or more additional groups to finish their portions of the project and that is where conflict and tension can arise.

The veteran postproduction supervisor is especially adept in setting the right circumstances for tasks to be accomplished and by framing important communication that empowered teams to come up with their own solutions when surprises arise. Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) define framing, which is part of managing meaning, as: "*the ability to shape the meaning of a subject, to judge its character and significance*" (p. 3). Framing seems to be used

throughout the production in many ways, but happens especially when the work is not things are not going well. Typically then there is a need to recalibrate what has to be done to complete the project, and a new direction or change in schedule is framed by reminding the teams of the bigger picture. This technique was mentioned in many stages of the production process by informants who said, “*This is not life or death. Just a movie, but it is the best movie we can make.*”

The postproduction informant relayed a specific instance of renegotiating workload and time lines in film postproduction because the studio had informed the producers that a movie’s release date must be earlier. His boss, the postproduction supervisor, called a meeting knowing he had to negotiate a compressed schedule and convince a group to complete their work ahead of schedule. In one instance of working with a visual effects team, the supervisor, who had a long resume, the respect of many in the industry, and had worked on many large budget successful films, first let the team vent. After an initial venting of frustration with the studio and the schedule and exclaiming that it could not be done, the group talked together to come up with ways of reworking their schedule without the postproduction supervisor saying much of anything. In the process, the group asked the supervisor to broker a deal with another group to ensure their work was done on time, or negotiated for extra money to hire additional crew to meet the deadline.

This example demonstrated a keen awareness of the need to allow the group members to release negative emotions of disappointment and then to turn their attention to creatively solving the problem presented by adjusting the schedule, hiring more people, or requesting budget increases. However, requests for additional people and money might not always bring what is necessary and the team has to be very technically creative to make the schedule. Emotions in the workplace have received much attention more recently, and in particular with the leader’s role in emotions (Humphrey, 2014; Johnson, 2008, 2009). For example recent theorizing suggests that structuring work tasks taking into account employee’s emotions is an important role for leaders (Kaplan, Cortina, Ruark, LaPort, & Nicolaidis, 2014). In the above example, the leader structured the group meeting to take into account employee emotions as well as the employees’ feeling of autonomy. Furthermore, the stress and bad moods experienced under tightening deadlines can also serve to increase creativity (George & Zhou, 2002; Zhou & George, 2001), while the leader’s emotional intelligence can assist in helping manage the crew’s emotions and capitalize on the creativity enhancing aspects of emotions (Visser, van Knippenberg, van

Kleef, & Wisse, 2013; Zhou & George, 2003). And finally, empowerment as shown in the above example is important in creative environments (Sun et al., 2012). For example, in a study of women producers in television and cable, many of those responses reported that to face a major important leadership challenge was to empower the creative process. This was accomplished by facilitating others' creativity, while at the same time ensuring financial success; the issues specifically faced by ambidextrous organizations. It also highlighted the need to empower teams to be flexible. As one participant described it:

It is important for people working in the industry to understand how to make adjustments and changes on-the-fly to make sure the process runs smoothly. I work to help new employees in the industry learn to multitask, set priorities and be flexible. (Ensher et al., 2002, p. 116)

Postproduction leadership also highlights the need for appropriate coordinating mechanisms (Bechky, 2006). The study of creative teams in modern dance showed how coordinating mechanisms both at times pulled the group together (more constraints) as well as pulled the group apart (more autonomy) (Harrison & Rouse, 2014). In postproduction, the increased focus on deadlines may increase the need for teams to pull together as a group, while allowing too for time to pull apart as individuals to do their best work in their specialities.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The film and television industries are facing intense challenges today. Alternatives to content provided by film and television are plentiful. Hollywood, therefore, is looking for ways to compete directly and continue producing creative content. In this chapter I have highlighted four leadership roles that directly and indirectly influence artistic and technical creativity. Although Hollywood is unique in many aspects, its reliance on highly skilled contract workers who function under network governance is similar to other well-established industries such as high tech in Silicon Valley. Moreover, the increased use of free-lance and contract workers in many industries, as well as specific requirements for managing knowledge workers also underscores the importance of developing new ways of leading. These trends call for more research into the leadership of creativity

specifically identifying the types of leader behaviors that directly affect creativity, as well as those decisions and actions that take to shape organizational factors that increase creative output. More comprehensive neocharismatic theories as well as those that deal with complexity become even more important (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009) and require new ways of thinking about creativity. The implications for practice listed below also point to future research.

The lessons learned from the creative context of Hollywood have implications for other organizations focused on increasing creativity and include the following:

1. Educate organizational members to view creativity as not exclusively an individual pursuit determined by one's personality. Rather than immutable, creativity is a socially determined process that can be enhanced by training and by providing the right environment for many different creative ability levels to flourish in a social context (Amabile et al., 1996; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). In the context of Hollywood, the interviews revealed that many individuals had no doubt that the people with whom they worked were creative, and that it was the leader's job to recognize specific ways to not interfere with artistic and technical creativity. Those being led and those leading others in the roles of showrunner, leading in the writer's room, and postproduction supervisor, mentioned this. Also enhancing creativity came from understanding that a leader can affect any or all of the three components of creativity, including knowledge and skills, one's motivation to be creative, and demonstrate ways to learn from training and experience (Mumford, 2003). Transformational leadership theory captures many of those leader behaviors used including inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Shared leadership underscores the importance of the social context and the idea that these professionals take leadership where appropriate.
2. Creativity cannot exist exclusively in a few organizational pockets (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2013). In television and film although the most salient example of creativity is the story and the visual representative of the story, multiple aspects of the production represent repeated instances of creativity. Although some of the creativity in Hollywood is required to be artistic, many crews are asked to provide technical creativity, and therefore a culture of creativity is key to producing successful products (Amabile et al., 1996). These creative solutions to technical problems were underscored as interviewed leaders and followers talked about

group and production culture that increased creative success. These aspects have been shown in previous research that examined the role of television directors (Murphy & Ensher, 2008) or explored the temporary organizations that characterize film production (Bechky, 2006). This work provides important lessons for organizations that have entrenched procedures and bureaucratic red tape that interferes with creative solutions for customer and market responsiveness.

3. Leaders as executives, producers, directors and crew supervisors must utilize specific skills and mindsets to balance the seemingly paradoxical creative outputs with the pressure to be profitable (Jansen et al., 2008; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Understanding relational aspects of complexity leadership theory also becomes important in adapting leadership to meet the need for organizational and team member creativity (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). For example, most leaders and followers interviewed gave rich examples of effective leaders who demonstrated both an understanding of the complexity of their environments as well as explicit understanding of the differing needs of various followers and stakeholders. Research on leader development notes that although knowledge and skills should be developed, the cognitive development of leaders is important to process complex and paradoxical information, but is often overlooked in many leader development efforts (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009).
4. Finally, understand the relational nature of managing creativity. Empowering team members was often mentioned as an important way to teach knowledge of the business in the examples in this chapter. Informants talked about showrunners and postproduction supervisors ensuring that they were doing their best for all by taking into account the motivations and skill levels of individuals involved in the production. Again, the transformational leader behavior of individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation were important. Also, the relational aspects of leadership were identified as being very important, rather than viewing leadership as a one-way influence process. Unlike other more bureaucratic organizations, network governance coordination within firms and across firms may result in the need for less direct leadership influence. However, when leadership is necessary, it needs to be relational, inspiring, and take into account the role of emotions. Also these leaders who were seen to be confident in their own abilities and authentic appeared to be most successful when they let highly trained individuals be creative.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Studying leadership roles, challenges, and behaviors within film and television provide a unique opportunity for leadership scholars to focus on how specific leadership context call for specific types of leadership practices. This context includes extreme pressure to make money while providing a product people will watch. This review has focused on the television and film industry most exclusively in Hollywood in the United States, and while it has some applicability to other pockets of film and television throughout the world, it still remains a unique context. Studies however, of Italian and UK television and film have revealed some similar patterns of organizing and managing creativity, albeit on a smaller scale (Davenport, 2006; Zaheer & Soda, 2009).

Encouraging creativity in organizations, once thought to be wasteful, is now an important aspect of organizational performance. Although research shows that creativity is important to improve organizational performance (Garcia-Morales, Jimenez-Barrionuevo, & Gutierrez-Gutierrez, 2012; Suh, Bae, Zhao, Kim, & Arnold, 2010), this increased emphasis on creativity is not only necessary to compete in today's global market, but may be necessary to address a perceived deficit of creative individuals in many organizations.

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