

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN A MULTI-PLATFORM

WORLD - MUST SMALL STATES MISS OUT?

1. "NEW PLATFORMS MADE THE NEWS"

In the past 12 months people around the world have witness on TV a series of shocking events-the horrifying acts of terrorism, the great tsunami that devastated large part of South-east Asia and the earthquake that rocked parts of India and Pakistan.

The world is watching TV and there seems to be a great hunger for up to the minute TV news. This is good news for broadcasters but one must realize that these major news events are actually just the sidebar to a more serious development that is making bigger impact in the global broadcast industry.

What is the biggest news in 2005 for the global broadcast industry?

The answer lies not in the up to the minute news content, or more enhanced SD or HD premium programming. The answer is where these offerings are being received, aside from the living room or the office.

In short, the news that most affected broadcasters is not found in the message, but in the new mediums where the message is being conveyed

The TV set is no longer the main purvey of news. The convergence of technologies that was being bandied about since the beginning of the 21st century is now enabling content to jump out of its traditional black box to mobile phones, PDs and computer screens.

Welcome to the world of portable TV-available anytime, anywhere and soon on any device with a screen.

All the major international trade shows this year held forums or conferences on these new delivery platforms. Much interest was generated, and success stories are now emerging. Many are waiting with bated breath on how the new multimedia platforms will impact the broadcast industry, especially with telcos now offering true triple-play services, including video-on-demand.

Prime-time TV may soon become a thing of the past as the new generation of viewers want to be in control of when they want their content, how they want it and from whom!

Thus, 2006 will be a watershed year for broadcasters. It will be a year of serious challenges. Content is flying out of the box- and, to survive, broadcasters have to think outside the box.

J Millette Burgos, Managing editor, ASIA
PACIFIC BROADCASTING.

2. Most progressive broadcasters are already experimenting with their own new delivery methods, whether streaming their programming on their websites or

producing programming for delivery by others. Some analysts see the IPTV and mobile-TV revolution as “once in a generation” opportunity for broadcasters to remake their business.

Mike Feazel, Asia and Pacific Broadcasting Magazine.

SALUTATION

MR. Chairman,
Secretary General of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association,
Distinguished Delegates of CBA,
Excellencies,
Leaders of Civil Society,
The Host Organisation,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

INTRODUCTION

It is a great honour to be here today in India to attend for the second time, the 2006 CBA Conference in my capacity as General Manager of the Tonga Broadcasting Commission in the Pacific ocean. I very much attach special importance to this Conference and its aim of bringing together people of diverse of cultures, values, social, economic and political situations. This is a mini AACP Conference in Broadcasting. I record with enthusiasm the effective links created and strengthened outside this Conference room. Tonga took part in the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis this year. The Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action for the WSIS laid a solid foundation for building a truly global, inclusive and development oriented Information Society, in support of the Millennium Development Goals. The role to be played by Radio and Television to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is of paramount importance to small island states like Tonga.

Statement by HRH The Prime Minister of Tonga

My Prime Minister reported the following to the recent WSIS meeting in Tunis this year –“As we are all aware, the successful implementation of the WSIS principles and plan of actions will require unremitting multi-stakeholder participations, cooperation and partnership, processed through in a well-coordinated system of follow-ups at an efficient timeframe, on national, regional and international levels.

Appropriate measures should also be put in place as benchmarking mechanism to provide us with a clear indication of where we are, and the progress being made so far, during the implementation stage. At this point, we acknowledge the launching of the ‘Partnership of Measuring ICT for Development’ initiative, and its efforts to develop a common set of vital ICT statistics on WSIS-related activities and their relationships to the Millennium Development Goals, for evaluation processes and to assist the policy makers.

This will serve as valuable tool for follow-up beyond the WSIS Summits, as well as the ‘Golden Book’ of initiatives launched at this Tunis phase.

As an essential tool which should be accessible to all, ICT has enormous power to change economic structures and greatly contribute to economic prosperity and a better quality of life, through providing greater choice and supporting social, welfare and cultural activities.

ICT is equally an important tool to assist in meeting the global challenges facing us today in terms of terrorism, security, climate change and trade. This would require global integration, calling for multilateral action.

Tonga has adopted the same set of principles driven by an understanding that expanded connectivity will stimulate domestic growth and will provide the scope for greater Tongan participation in the global information economy, guided by its prime objective which is “To improve sector performance to ensure domestic and global connectivity through the Kingdom of Tonga. This included improving quality of life, geographic coverage, service affordability and access to new service applications”.

This has resulted in the liberalization of the market and the introduction of competition. Within five years of implementing these policy decisions, tariff for almost all services have dropped significantly by more than 200 percent. Tele-density, the number of mobile subscribers and Internet users have tripled.

Indeed, ICT offered a historic and an unprecedented opportunity not only to bridging digital divide, but also to place its potential at the service of humanity to make our world a better place”.

The above report clearly showed that Tonga takes active part in any technology change especially on telecommunication as it takes part in global trade and information transference to uplift peoples’ standard of living. Mobile telephones are popular that are

available in the remotest island where television is not available. Mobile charge rates are the cheapest in the Pacific as Tonga has 2 operators : Government and a private company. Competition is healthy and whoever provides the best service get the most customers. ADSL has just recently been introduced in the main island. Can television programme be feed in into this ADSL mobile phones? The social and economic situation it gives no choice for small island states like Tonga to go into multi-platform media.

When you are in a small island like Tonga, competing with 3 other television stations for the same advertising dollar, we go to whatever platform our audience choose. In this regard, island small states have to keep up to date with what the audience want and what they do not like. This can become a problem when a public broadcasting is funded from its commercial activities. The public broadcasting mandate is submerged under commercial viability instruction from Government. Secondly, when capital is not available to be able to produce or obtain programmes preferred by our customers. Relationship with our Telecommunication is important so that mobile phone does not replace our Tv station now and in the future.

How small can you go?

Please refer to website, Planet Tonga to obtain information to show how small is Tonga. However, these are the characteristics for Tonga:

- Its smallness – only 100,000 in population
- Scattered islands
- Means of transport is boat to these islands
- People and the country depend on remittance from Tongans overseas to support them
- Depend on agriculture, fisheries and tourism
- Endowed with natural environment and resources
- HDI rank 54, Hong Kong 22, Timor Leste 140, (177 countries)
- HPI not available – 30% on poverty line
- Literacy rate 90%
- High migration rate

Tonga is so small that you can go around the main island in 2 hours. With this smallness, the profit is small, funds for investment is small - is it worth our while to go into multi-platform media or must small states or islands miss out? Because of costs? My answer to this question is – No, small island states should not be miss out on this multi-platform world development because:

Reasons:

1. The Prime Minister's speech quoted here clearly indicated why our connection with outside world will stimulate domestic and export growth. It will provide the scope for greater Tongan participation in global information economy and global trade as it joins World Trade Organisation (WTO) etc.

2. The most important one is satisfying our customers. Our customers are dictating to us what they want to hear and see.
3. Competition with other broadcasters that has forced us to deliver programmes that customers want and have that niche market that will put our station one step ahead from the others. In taking this step forward, three issues are important and these are:
 - Quality standard.
 - Cost effective.
 - Being local but think globally.
4. The change from analog to digital by 2015.

In the past, only the rich countries of the developed world would take advantage of the opportunities in technology change but this is no longer true. Broadcasters in small island states like Tonga has taken advantage of the developments in the rich countries. Worn out equipment can be replaced with IT solutions that provide the platform for little or no marginal cost. For island states we must make it our business to keep up or keep abreast with changes in technology. There is a need for a place or data storage where we can easily get these information or a person to advise us on this.

Recently Fiji TV and TV Tonga, implemented a regional co-operation and sharing projects – the other shared its resources and skills at cost. Tonga has no transponder to uplift visual pictures to our outer islands. Cost is expensive. It has terrestrial cable, satellite receiving signals from BBC, ABC, ESPN, French Tel etc. etc. and programmes can be downloaded at a cost. There is the question of trust and understanding of what we can do and cannot do. There is the issue of copyright. Fiji TV has done its homework on DTH TV with 16 channels. TV Tonga becomes its agency distributing Sky Pacific. This is all done at a cost while observing all code of ethics and conduct in broadcasting. We find this cheaper for us, our customers are paying for what they want to see in their own homes. At the same time, we are one step ahead from our competitors – getting advantage by getting a home share of commercials, sponsorship.

Sky Pacific:

Sky Pacific has revolutionized entertainment in the Kingdom of Tonga. Its 16 channels offer our customers the opportunity to be up-to-date with news, current affairs and sport, but also offer Tongan families quality “family” entertainment. Sky Pacific employs several staff and does contribute a significant amount of revenue to the economy by way of subscriptions. Its future potential as a platform for Pacific sharing is enormous. Fiji TV being bigger and wealthier continues to find ways and solutions to the ever-growing need to have small broadcasters like TBC to use their transponder space to deliver their own signals to Tonga and surrounding countries. The advent of Sky Pacific is the beginning of that process that might involve TBC or Tonga owning a fair share of Sky Pacific in the future or it can lead to a multi-pacific races channel.

It must be stated that we look at this as a temporary stage only because the plan for the future are:

- the acquisition of TV rights for Tonga.
- the sale of these rights to other broadcaster.
- the partnership with other small broadcasters.
- the establishment of an up link in Nuku'alofa with a downlink in other parts of the islands to minimize infrastructure costs.
- Internet Service provider (ISP).
- Wireless internet in urban areas.
- the leasing of transponder space to deliver services to the Kingdom of Tonga and other countries.

TBC seek to ensure its destiny is in its own hand and that TBC belongs to the Tongan for the Tongan and own by Tonga. TBC seek to own its own pay TV.

TBC Development:

Programming Preference

The audience survey done in 2004, it showed that audience preference were as follows:

- | | | | |
|----|----------------|---|---|
| 1. | Informing | : | News, Current Affairs etc. |
| 2. | Entertainment | : | Films, Sports |
| 3. | Education | : | Community projects to achieve Millennium Goals, Primary, Secondary school broadcasts, Out of School programmes. |
| 4. | Local Scenes : | | Local Events. |

To achieve customers requirement TBC owns the following:

1. Free to Air Station – TV Tonga – 18 hrs transmission with multiple programme mix : local, ABC, BBC, Sky Pacific, TVNZ, ESPN, Cartoon Network. We look for other signals.
2. CCTV 9 – 18hrs transmission and the balance of 6 hrs for TV sponsored programmes.

Radio:

1. AM 1017 – Radio that reaches all the islands including other countries, 18hrs transmission.

2. FM 103 Nuku'alofa 24hrs transmission of Radio Australia.

FM 90 – Local Youth station – 16hrs local programme – 8 hrs BBC.

TBC Needs

- (1) Up-to-date with technology change, its costs to smaller islands. Technical Assistance is expensive. We need to have our local, professional engineer in broadcasting technology. Developed countries etc. can assist by inviting local engineers, IT specialists to be attached to some of these organizations eg. BBC, ABC, CBS, TVNZ.
- (2) **Funding:** Lack or insufficient fund may not allow small island states to take part or take advantage of what is happening in the Multi-platform world. What options are there for smaller countries that is cost-effective.
- (3) **Training:** This covers both long and short-term training. For the Tonga Broadcasting Commission:-
 - a. Staff needs to be exposed to new technologies for news reporting
 - b. Exposed to equipment that combine 5 or more tasks into one i.e. a Lap-top or PC capable of doing this in the field reporting or transmitting live to the newsroom
 - c. News reporter to be her or his own cameraman – training is required
 - d. Training in non-linear editing
 - e. Link with Reuters – how is this done
 - f. Perhaps Technical Experts in Tonga for 2 years to upgrade skills of our reporters
- (4) **Music and Archive:**
 - g. Transferring all reel tapes of all sizes to CDs and archive work – we need exposure of our staff in a well organized TV/Radio Archive department.
 - h. Networking – linking from newsroom archive to the main studio downloading to PC.
 - i. General editing processes in television and graphics with special effects.
- (5) **Links and Contacts:**

We need information on who to contact eg. CD, VHS, DVD duplication equipment that can produce 10 – 20 items per duplication time.
- (6) **Local Production:**

We need information on who to contact eg. CD, VHS, DVD duplication

equipment that can produce 10 – 20 items per duplication time.

(7) Digital Management:

TBC is looking at digitizing the news room and as part of a multi-platform media linking to radio and television broadcasting with web and wireless services. These require advice on digital equipment and content management fundamental and options. How can journalists focus on journalism think creatively and collaboratively imagine new digital news products. Lastly, managing newsroom in terms of our business and managing people.

(8) Legal Update:

TBC Act needs to be renewed to separate out three issues:

- j. Public Broadcasting Mandate.
- k. Commercial Operations.
- l. Digital Law Update – to take into account the multi-platform world. Eg. Wireless Internet, Interactive TV, Convergence Broadband etc. TBC look for assistance in the area of legal advice in broadcasting.

(9) Audience Research:

Skills are required in doing such a research accurately and analytically.

(10) Rights:

Due to our infancy in television arena and insufficient fund TBC is unable to buy rights for films, series, programmes, etc. It is cheaper and easier to link with multi-platform companies. Also, ownership of Tonga rights on all major products. This is vital in order for TBC to have any strength in negotiations with regional or larger broadcasters. This will mean power to negotiate for transponder space to all TV & Radio Tonga to use Sky Pacific dishes to downlink its own services at its transmitter sites.

(11) Major Issues

- 1. Funding or the lack of fund for Public Broadcasting
- 2. Manpower Resources
- 3. Threats from mobile media players

(12) Summary

Multi-platform media is the use of several platforms or media to transmit ideas to inform, to educate and to entertain our customers. Multi-platform provides choices to our customers and creativity to the broadcasting world. Digital radio and

television must be implemented by TBC before 2015. Small islands states like Tonga can not be left out in this multi-platform world. It is not a choice but a means of survival in the broadcasting world. Tonga joins world organizations and therefore it cannot be ignored and must take part in the multi-platform world. Small island states will therefore seek assistance from the Develop countries and international organizations.

(13) Acknowledgement

I therefore would like to take this opportunity to thank the following for introducing TBC to the multi-platform world and ask for their continuous assistance in the future:

- BBC
- ABC
- CCTV
- FJTV
- ESPN
- Radio Australia
- Radio New Zealand International

I thank you for your indulgence.