

# The Management of Media Organizations from Theory to Practice

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**Abstract:** Media organizations have become a barometer in the development of a society. The way these organizations are managed depends on the context they can be placed in. Media organizations can be assimilated with a social and economic context. I attempted to emphasize the importance of good management that takes into account the basic principles and which can be integrated into a media organization. Leadership should be concerned with combining the specifics of management with those of human nature. The need for management is real. As it is the interdependence between the media organization and an efficient management. Despite their shortcomings, today's managers are able to manage a newspaper, a radio or a television station. They can be divided into three categories, namely: managers of a media organization, having no knowledge of management; managers having the necessary training but unaware of how to implement management rules and finally, managers with very good training but lacking interest, who let things run by themselves.

**Key words:** Management, media, management style, leadership styles, free market economy, strategy.

## Introduction

As with most organizations, the media ones are of a bureaucratic nature. In my paper I tried to stress out their characteristics but what really differentiates them is their

name of unbureaucratic bureaucracies. For the manager of a media organization, it is a greater or a lesser effort of management. I mean that in case of a lack of hierarchy the participative management appears, where the employees' need for self-achievement is

encouraged. In fact, the leadership style that should characterize the behavior of today's managers resides in combining the priority of production with the interest for human resources.

The managers in Argeş are highly interested in what is happening in their neighbors' yard, in the publications of the competition as well as in their own profit. This is so because newspapers such as *Societatea argeşeană*, *Observator argeşean*, *Top*, but less in the case of *Argeşul*, are owned by people who are involved in other businesses that can sustain, despite of losses even, the business called newspaper, just for the sake of the social position or other important advantages deriving from it. Such managers are not interested in adding value or improving, meaning that they do not make efforts for improving their leadership style.

Placing a media organization in a suitable environment allows it to develop. The more dynamic the environment the more differentiated its structure should be. The more differentiated the structure of a organization, the more difficult the task of coordinating the employees' work. This shows how important the different aspects are for the management of a media organization.

### Literature review

*Argeşul* is the oldest daily newspaper in Argeş area, whose first issue was published on December 23, 1989, continuing the tradition of the first publication, with the same title of March 31, 1876.

The newspaper in tabloid format does not indulge in scandal stories, has a general audience for its general contents, targeted mainly to the rural audience (subscription-based).

The daily offers general political, cultural, sports, miscellaneous and advertisement information. Cultural and political information comes first. Different other types of stories are approached but mainly when the other types of information are scarce.

The strong point of the newspaper lies mainly in its highly stable pool of editors that write for the paper. It is one of the few publications that did not know major fluctuations of personnel. The professionalism and stability of the editorial group translated into the possibility of assuming and publishing articles that had an unusual impact and were a first for that region.

*Argeşul* is a serious newspaper brand that does not promote scandal stories, observes ethical principles and has a leadership aware that credibility is one of the greatest assets of the newspaper.

The long-term strategy of publishing only credible information and not resort to sensationalism proved beneficial. On the Argeş area market, *Argeşul* newspaper is considered the most serious as compared to other four existing newspapers which, with almost no exception, compete in promoting on their front pages, information on crimes, rapes, sex, incest, pornography, showing less interest for the major problems the local community faces.

The daily has been given credibility due to the information it offers, the attitude it has and the fact that it is considered traditional, with a ballanced but firm voice. It is a daily with a personality that constantly increased the number of its readers.

*Top* daily, with 6.000 daily issues, is edited by Media PIC, part of the PIC group of Piteşti. *Top* was launched on the market on April 1, 2003 as a weekly publication.

Ten issues later it appeared twice a week, Tuesdays and Fridays.

Six months later, the need for information of the people in Argeş area led to the daily publication of the newspaper, starting with October 1, 2003. Everything contributed to an increase in sales. Top daily is edited in very good graphic conditions at the Gutenberg publishing house in Craiova. Top defines itself as an information and publicity daily, guided by the interests of PIC group. At present, it advertises the products of PIC group. Top is a rather new product in the media market. It presents political, social, economic, cultural, sports, society and miscellaneous information.

All categories are treated fairly to cover most of the public's interests.

The editorial policy of the newspaper aims at bringing the readers general information on all aspects of the social life in Argeş County.

The newspaper targets not only the readers interested in local information but also those interested in events in general. For the last category, the paper brings the latest and most important national and international information.

The Argeş County daily, Observator, was first published in January 2000; it appeared in an already crowded market strongly inclined to enrich the genre.

Observator is an independent daily of the Argeş County, published in a 16-page format with an additional daily real estate supplement. The Argeş media market can be said to target the lower class of society. Crime is the topic of excellence for all the newspapers in the area, most of the front page features dealing in this subject. Since day one, Observator intended to approach the whole

range of social topics, focusing on those targeting the largest audience. News in brief are presented side by side with economic, social or political information, each according to importance. This was the way the newspaper tried to get as many readers as possible.

Curierul Zilei is the daily with the largest public in the area. It was established in August 1994, at the initiative of two businessmen in Piteşti, Mrs. Marilena Baraţă and Mr. Constantin Neguţ. The first issue was published on September 15, 1994. The editorial office started with a team consisting of young people, mostly with no previous experience with the media work. Paradoxically this proved to be an advantage, which soon translated into an increase in circulation.

Mention should be made that at the time of its first publication, on the Argeş media market there was an audiovisual channel, namely STP Piteşti, radio and television station, and Argeşul Liber daily. The direct, concise, dynamic language used by the Curierul Zilei, alongside its attractive layout, made it a vivid experience that quickly won the sympathy of the local public. Just to show how this worked we shall say that one of the rules in writing the articles was „Write it as you would tell it.”

Curierul Zilei is a daily tabloid, consisting of news that are 99 percent of local interest. Its contents is varied (news in brief, social, economic, political, sports, publicity) with a focus on miscellanea and publicity. The articles are written with professionalism, easily readable, presented on pages that are modern, clear and attractive.

Its distribution is 91 percent urban and the remaining 9 percent rural, only in Argeş County. Due to its high circulation and lower publicity costs per one thousand readers,

Curierul Zilei is the best media tool for publicity messages in the Argeş County. This is shown by the fact that Curierul Zilei is used as a publicity carrier by famous clients in the area.

Curierul zilei has its own loyal audience, due to the debatable cases it has always presented. At present, this daily is the most popular one in the county, the one with the fastest development after 1989.

Societatea Argeşeană is a complete one, according to its own description. It was first published on December 1, 2003, in an already highly competitive media market. Along the years, the newspaper adopted different editorial policies, according to the other actors existing in the print media market of Argeş.

Societatea Argeşeană grew its own loyal public, very much like the Curierul Zilei by publishing debatable cases, original stories and journalistic investigations that have more than once triggered true political and administrative earthquakes in the Argeş County political class.

It created true information breakthroughs in once considered taboo areas, such as police, magistrates, clergy, finances and the business community.

Societatea Argeşeană is a daily bringing a large volume of information, whose management changed quite often, which presents a diversity of political, social, economic, sports, cultural, ads and publicity, miscellaneous information.

The publication is disseminated all over Argeş County, through its own as well as other distribution networks. As a conclusion, Argeş County continues to be a strong economic center still, people afford less and less buying a newspaper. The lack of cash resulted in the print media consumers' desperate

ability to cope. People would buy one paper that would be read by several people or they would resort to radio or television.

Of the five daily newspapers we talked about, Curierul Zilei and Societatea Argeşeană cover mostly miscellanea, tragic and shocking cases, presented with photos. The other daily newspapers do not focus on this kind of information but it is nevertheless present.

Economy is the less covered topic by the newspapers of the county, while crime takes precedence on the front pages. Integrating a media organization into the free market economy requires both good training in the field and the implementation of an efficient management style. As for the publication management, the only publications that preserved the manager position are Argeşul – the oldest daily newspaper in the area, managed by Mihai Goleşcu – and Curierul Zilei – with Constantin Neguţ as general manager, as well as Marilena Baraţă, ex-wife of Cristi Neguţ, as founding chairman, which allows us to say it is a family newspaper. Top was created for the purpose of promoting the interests of PIC group and not so much for the sake of successful journalism. It was managed by Marian Jînga, who was removed from leadership as he created his own publicity company.

The owners of PIC group considered there was a contradiction of interests and accused the manager of lack of loyalty. At present, manager of the newspaper is Mr. Iustin Angelescu, who does not interfere with the editorial policy of the newspaper, merely managing the business newspaper Top represents.

According to the development of the internal life of the newspaper, we can say it was dictated by personal ego and financial

interests. The newspaper is meant as a support for the publicity business of the PIC group.

Observer daily has its own publishing house (S.C. Tipcomp S.R.L), just as Argeşul (Argeşul Liber S.A.), which is a great economic advantage.

Marcel Proca, chairman and owner of the newspaper does not interfere with the editorial policy. In 2005, Adrian Ştefănoiu was assigned editor-in-chief. He managed the newspaper well, increased the newspaper circulation, won new segments of readers, improved the editorial team and their working conditions and signed monthly publicity contracts of over 50 million lei. At the same time, there are interesting management positions, such as strategy director Cristi Bumbenici, administrative director Roxana Matei. That looks like there is an editor for each director, which may seem quite funny for the editorial office of a local daily newspaper.

Until the fall of 2005, Societatea Argeşeană was managed by Gheorghe Smeoreanu. The businessman financing the newspaper dismissed him for abuse and financial disorder, though he was the manager under which the newspaper started its activity. Societatea Argeşeană is considered a branch of Curierul Zilei, because Gheorghe Smeoreanu was first manager of Curierului Zilei. The newspaper focused on topics of local interest and had no characteristic style: it was an odd mixture of miscellanea, political, sports and moral lessons from His Holiness Calinic, Bishop of Argeş and Muscel.

### **Theoretical Background**

The purpose of this paper is to identify the context in which managers of local

organizations work. I considered them to be the most important actors in the media. The research is based on the results of questionnaires conducted from September to December 2006, addressed to managers of print media publications in Argeş area, a total of 21 managers of the newspapers Top, Societatea argeşeană, Argeşul, Observer argeşean and Curierul Zilei.

The questionnaires focused on the perception, opinions and management style in terms of media organization treatment.

The questionnaire results correlated with theory led to the following conclusions:

The opinions of the interviewees were objective but their analyses and comments showed they did not have thorough knowledge of the approached topic. I talk here of the management of the media organization, which was treated superficially. This conclusion resulted from the managers' tendency to be more concerned with profit rather than competition. The reason they give is that profit-driven means customer (reader)-driven but this led to bad management. This is not how it should happen, as one of the most important roles of a manager is to translate potential into reality. This means that a manager is expected to always act as a factor of change, progress and innovation and not just to passively react or adapt to what has already happened. All the interviewees promoted the notion that the means of information co-exist peacefully and complementarily for the purpose of information, an idea that should be discouraged. This image should be replaced by another one taking into account the fact that the means of information are generally the result of another profit bringing business. As for the management style an acute lack of concern for this

aspect was noted. The capability to manage a media organization is the capability to efficiently implement one's own management style. Integrating and maintaining, of course, a media organization into the existing media market requires good media training which, at present, does not exist.

Most media organizations in Argeş need certain investments, need exploring new interest areas as well as bring journalists capable of writing with style into their editorial staff.

The editor-in-chief of *Societatea argeşeană* is worried that some newspaper managers, whether local or central, tend to overestimate the way their newspapers sell and to underestimate the competition. This is an observation that makes me state, as in the theoretical part, that management is truly needed. The fact that unimportant things such as overestimating the circulation of a publication are points of concern for a newspaper manager shows that integrating and maintaining, of course, a media organization into the existing media market requires good media training which, at present, does not exist. An optimal motivational climate should be created, in which the interests and needs of each person could be integrated into those of the organization, so that one's own goals should be best achieved.

Interviewed managers tried to define the strategies of the organizations they lead, but it was all talk. Goals were not clearly defined, here and there just the financial ones, leaving the impression they lacked knowledge on strategy.

One of the greatest problems managers of media organizations have to face is the legal framework and there was a consensus in this respect. Economic issues come first with

almost all daily newspapers we approached, while the management struggles to get the selling price that makes the newspaper as affordable to the reader as possible. Peaceful and complementary co-existence of the means of information for the sake of information is an idea that should be discouraged. This image should be replaced by another one taking into account the fact that the means of information are generally the result of another profit bringing business. For any businessman, media should be a profit-oriented business.

Based on the answers I got, I considered the following conclusions should be pointed out:

*Societatea argeşeană* – the goals of the media organization are correlated with the interests and the respect of the employees. Top – the newspaper management has a management style that resembles that of other publications and takes into account the employees' need for a social life. Hence, an increased interest in the human factor.

Based on the questionnaire results it becomes apparent that most media organizations in the Argeş region need certain investments, should identify other areas of interest and bring journalists capable of writing with style into their editorial staff.

### Paper Content

According to editor-in-chief Daniel Barbu, the manager of *Societatea argeşeană* tries to adopt the typical behaviour of today's managers. The goals of the media organization he manages are correlated with an interest and respect of the employees.

The newspaper is not managed in a profit-oriented way, even if profit is one of the main targets.



The interpretation of other newspapers' managers of the competition is criticised and he sustains the idea that the public is the only one aware of how things are and the only decider on the success or failure of a newspaper. An important role in producing information is played by technological change, which goes for most fields of activity. In Daniel Barbu's opinion, today profit is the most important thing. Management and quality depend on the financial resources. Dumping prices of the newspapers (for instance, at one time, *Societatea argeșeană* had the price of 1000 ROL), which was harshly criticized by the most circulated newspaper in Argeș, *Curierul zilei*. On the other hand, Daniel Barbu admits that the journalists' recruiting system plays a crucial role in the success of the business, of the media organization.

Good management should combine readers' satisfaction and profit. Those who hold the secret manage to make a name and maintain it on the market.

Emilian Zamfir, editor-in-chief at the *Top* daily newspaper believes media organization should not be placed in the commercial area where businessmen's ideas and orientations prevail, as this impedes on presenting the true image of journalism. He sincerely admitted that most times, performance translated into survival, meaning you have to continuously adapt to change, to requirements, to the team you're working with. As in Argeș region competition in print media is extraordinary, (six daily newspapers, and four weekly ones) maintaining a direct and objective contact with readers could be the key to market success.

The newspaper manager has a management style that takes into account the

employees' need for a social life. So, there is an increased interest of the manager for the human factor. Emilian Zamfir thinks a good worker is the first step to making profit, an idea shared by his colleague at *Societatea Argeșeană*. This means an evolution at managerial level because it requires an integration of the employees' needs with those of the organization. Newspaper self-management means the financial aspect is very important. The profit is set at the same level of importance as the readers' satisfaction. The leadership of the editorial office also takes into account the tight competition existing on the media market in Argeș. Unlike Daniel Barbu, the editor-in-chief of *Top* thinks the media market is too often seen in terms of commerce and competition.

As for the economy of the newspaper, a balance is sought between the funds from publicity, the costs of production and the newspaper selling price.

He values much the honesty of the publication and of those managing it, as it is crucial that correct and authentic information reaches the public, which would result in the failure of manipulation attempts.

Unlike other newspaper managers, the chairman of the *Observator argeșean* is keen on the economic aspect. He has a higher level management style, where reaching goals takes precedence over the interest for the other employees.

Marcel Proca is politically involved, which has advantages and disadvantages for the newspaper. Nevertheless he tries to keep a balance so that his political activity does not have undesired effects on the publication.

He tried several styles of management; first with management teams consisting of the journalists having different positions in

the editorial office, but because of misunderstandings he gave it up and assigned one manager, namely Adrian Ștefănoiu.

According to his employment contract, Adrian Ștefănoiu pledged to increase the circulation by 30 percent over the following six months, publicity with 50 percent whereas the editorial team was supposed to write better articles.

On the other hand, notice should be made of the continuous effort to integrate new technologies.

What the management of Observator argeșean seems to forget is the competition. The lack of other newspapers that could at least equal the performance of the newspaper made them so sure of themselves that they do not take competition into account.

As for the profit, it can only be said that it has a leading role in a media organization. It can signify the existence and also the development of an organization, even if in local media we talk of small profit. Economic issues are important even if a balance is sought after between expenses and income (mostly from publicity).

All this is important for attracting a larger audience while bearing in mind the needs and requirements of the public.

Mihai Golescu, manager of Argeșul, considers as most important the good relationship of the media with the public, as the only one responsible for keeping media alive.

He believes that in today's environment, where the laws of free market economy and the spiral of industrialization rule, a place apart is held by print media.

According to the manager of Argeșul, a healthy strategy of a media organization lies in its awareness of the role technology plays in its present but also future activity.

Today's media is characterized by sensationalism, hence the effects, unprofessional media, lack of objectivity, a false media.

For Mihai Golescu, being competitive means covering information in a correct, accurate and clear manner.

Argeșul has become a natural and normal presence in the media environment of Argeș, to whom everybody resorts.

### **Conclusions and implications**

By sheer definition, the strategy of a society consists, in economical terms, in establishing costs that allow establishing the selling price of the newspaper, in setting a price for publicity correlated with the circulation so that by balancing expenses and costs, a minimal profit is obtained so that the organization can function and the reader can buy the paper. If such a strategy does not exist, the rest is just talk.

I wanted to emphasize that free market economy compels media organizations to have not only a good management but also benefit from the new technologies. They do not only reduce the working time but also contribute to simplifying different operations in both print and audiovisual media. The manager has an important role here, knowing how and when to implement technology.

Another aspect of media management is concerned with the legal frame the media organization works in. Most media managers complain of the limits it sets to their activity. Moreover, they accuse the administration and the political class for that!

Different management styles mean augmenting the role of the human factor. Of course, the manager cannot do everything by himself. An efficient management speaks



of the manager's capability to integrate and coordinate the efforts of all members of the organization so that to achieve the desired outcome. One can say that the achievements of a leader are a reflection of his own achievements combined with those of his employees.

In sum, media organizations are successful when they are managed effectively. It is only in such circumstances that they can benefit from public recognition. In terms of quality, there can be noted a lack of reference

to the managerial context. The image of the organization is mirrored by the manager's achievements.

If he is able to provide the organization with the necessary resources and if he manages the human factor correctly, he should be able to reach his goals. Otherwise, if the media organization is used in the absence of a strategy, of professionalism, he will disappear and so will the respective media organization eventually.

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