Business managers and content providers

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Abstract
Creatives often need business managers to secure work, and managers need ‘content providers’ to keep their own business open, but mutual interest does not imply ‘plain sailing’. Naturally differing points of view (PoV) are likely to bring dissonance to the creation of joint plans, so it is interesting to explore the dynamics of the cooperation including compatibility conditions, compromises, and value.

1 Overview
Creative professionals (e.g. artists, artisans), including those in public services (e.g. healthcare, education, research), make a significant effort to master their art, either for the love of art itself or for being competitive and thus securing employment or patronage. As the ‘creatives’ focus on the technical or inspirational side of their work, they may need to delegate the management of the ‘business side’ of their work to specialised professionals — i.e. business managers — such as literary agents, music managers, department directors, or research coordinators.

On the other side, business managers act as brokers (Perdicoúlis, 2015, 2018) who need ‘upstream’ clients — i.e. content providers — who can offer products and/or services at a specific level (e.g. top-performance, entry-level) to meet the needs of ‘downstream’ or ‘end user’ clients.

Perceiving the situation and defining the problem (Perdicoúlis, 2017) from their respective points of view (PoV), each of the two stakeholders is expected to defend the interests expressed in their individual plans (Perdicoúlis, 2014) even as they embark on the creation of a joint plan.

2 Exploration
As an exercise, let us facilitate the two stakeholders in a particular case study to find out what they want by first having them build their respective plans: one for the content provider (§ 2.1) and one for the business manager (§ 2.2). With this material as the background, they should form a joint plan (§ 2.3) that permits the observation of the cooperation dynamics, including compatibility conditions, compromises, and value for both parties — e.g. how much each had to ‘go out of their way’, what compromises it takes to ‘go it together’, and whether it is worth staying in a partnership.
2.1 Content provider PoV

Thinking to delegate the ‘boring parts’ of the work to a business manager, the content provider can pursue their art con brio and free of distractions. Figure 1 presents the plan of a patisserie artisan, who is committed to a ‘pride and joy’ product of very high standards.

![Figure 1: The artisan’s plan](image)

The artisan starts with a vision ($Y_A$) — e.g. a ‘bliss pastry’ — which is then conceived as a product ($Z_A$) — e.g. kind, name, specifications, design, recipe. Production ($X_A$) contemplates all the logistics (e.g. sourcing of ingredients, equipment, staff, shifts) and obtains the precious outcome ($Z'_A$) exactly as intended by the createur patissier, due to appropriate care and control.

While the artisan is aware of the logistics of the production, and capable of scaling that to actual business conditions, such issues are to be defined in an actual business environment — i.e. after a business plan has been created and actual orders have been placed. All this lies within the jurisdiction of the business manager (§ 2.2), so the artisan’s plan allows for some flexibility in this respect.

2.2 Business manager PoV

A suitable business manager is expected to at least have some ideas about a relevant production environment (e.g. a ‘patisserie studio’), as an indication of motivation and, perhaps, basic knowledge or experience in the field. With this condition, Figure 2 presents a generic business plan in the particular business domain, ready to be adapted in order to accommodate the ideas of the new partner — possibly after negotiations.
From the point of view (PoV) of the business manager, there is an open field with potential content providers (i.e. artisans), one of which will end up being selected (e.g. by interview or recommendation) to operate within the provided conditions such as financial backing (e.g. direct or through ‘business angels’), marketing, and logistics support.

For business managers who do not intend to interfere in the creative part of the production, ‘having a product to sell’ would be sufficient (Z_M), permitting the business manager to focus on ‘what really matters for business’ — i.e. marketing (X_M).

2.3 Joint PoV

Without bias for the mutual selection of partners, nor emotional attachment between the business manager and the content provider, the exploration of the cooperation is likely to start off with their respective existing plans (Figures 1 and 2). With open minds and respectful negotiations, a joint plan should be capable of representing a single organisation instead of two dissonant partners.

Indeed, Figure 3 presents a joint plan that demonstrates the effort towards a close cooperation. At the top level, the two individual visions (Y_A and Y_M) are blended into one (Y_A/M), maintaining traces from both original sources. At the operational level, the two objectives (Z_A and Z_M) are amalgamated into a common one (Z_A/M), starting with that of the artisan and adjusted for business. The two ensuing actions (X_A and X_M) are coordinated and assigned to the specialist partners as necessary. Finally, the physical outcome (Z'_A) contributes to the socio-economic outcome (Z''_A/M), together with the action of the marketing effort (X_M).
3 Discussion

3.1 Dynamics

In the particular simulated cooperation example (§ 2.3), both partners had to ‘go out of their way’ to a certain extent, and this worked out well for mutual benefit. The psychological burden of ‘conceding’ depends on how strongly each partner wishes to ‘stick to their guns’, but in this case the compromise was overall balanced. In addition, the creativity of the artisan was not threatened by eventual up- or down-scaling of production.
3.2 Mutualism

The value of the cooperation in the exercise lies primarily in the complementarity of functions, especially when carried out in an integrated manner, and also in the resolution of the anticipation anxiety that resided in each partner before the cooperation (e.g. leaving options open until a partner is found).

The apparent requirements for a seamless cooperation — i.e. mutually shaping their visions, objectives, and actions (§ 2.3) — imply open-mindedness and good will from both parties to learn from each other, and let themselves ‘grow together’. Such qualities may come naturally (e.g. innate) or may be socially transmitted (e.g. by example).

Nonetheless, a cooperation between a business manager and a content provider is still possible even if the partners or their plans are not totally in tune, since the abstraction of funding and output is sufficient to maintain a functional relationship in the business world. This would be the equivalent of a ‘conventional’ marriage in the social context, sharing residence, finances, offspring, and ‘keeping the appearances’.

3.3 Sensitivity

For content providers who are able to — or habitually — function in a ‘mechanistic manner’ (e.g. industrial production), scaling up to meet market demands or the ambition of the business manager is relatively easy and innocuous, as was the case of the simulated exercise.

On the other hand, for content providers who are artistically or intellectually oriented (e.g. poetry, music, literature, scientific research), imposition of ‘technicalities’ such as deadlines and budgets may interfere with the quality of the ‘product’ or the ‘production’ (e.g. through stress on the content provider), with repercussions for the cooperation, its outcomes, the ‘end user’ client, and the community in general.

4 Conclusion

Cooperation between content providers and business managers for the benefit of complementarity is a good idea. Issues of compatibility and compromise are to be expected and resolved separately in each case, ideally confronted with open-mindedness and good will. Demand alterations should not be of particular concern to mechanistic processes that can easily scale up or down for business purposes, but artistically or intellectually oriented content providers may have their creativity jeopardised by business pressures such as deadlines, production volumes, or budgets.

References