Learning Needs of Lithuanian Media Organizations

Report

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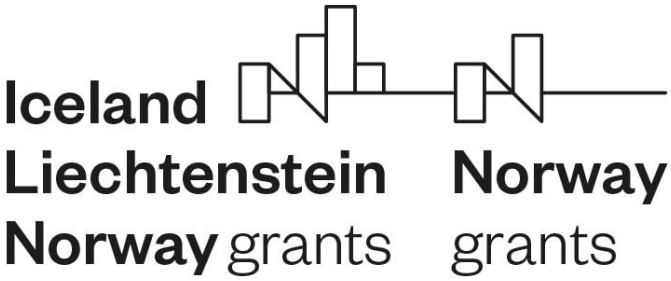

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A study was carried out for the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence and the Latvian Journalist Association

Summary

This study is aimed to identify the learning needs of Lithuanian media organizations. The research was conducted by interviewing managers and editors of media companies. The study results show that employees of media organizations need to improve their knowledge and skills in many areas, but priority is given to social media management and journalism, understanding of internet platform algorithms, television and radio journalism and data journalism.

1. Methodology

The study has been commissioned by the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence and the Latvian Journalist Association to understand what is the learning needs of Lithuanian media organizations. The research was conducted using a semi-structured interview in March 2020. The study included 12 interviews with managers and editors from 10 media organizations: public service media, national digital media, national commercial television and radio, publishers, regional media and media broadcasting in the Russian language. These media organizations run a total of 30 media outlets (Table 1). A selected sample of media organizations/outlets represents different types of media (website, television, radio and print press), coverage levels (national, regional and local) and media of minority language (Russian) as well. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or by phone.

Table1. Sample of media organizations.

Media organization	**Media outlets**	**Position of interviewed person**	**Coding of media organization/outlet**
Lithuanian national radio and television	Television channels: *LRT Televizija, LRTT Plius, LRT Lituanica* Radio channels: *LRT Radijas, LRT Klasika, LRT Opus* Websiste *Lrt.lt*	Director general Head of administration and development Editor-in-chief of the website[1]	PSM – public service media
Delfi	Website *Delfi.lt* (including on-line television *Delfi.tv* and Russian language sub-site *Ru.delfi.lt*)	Editor-in-chief	W1 – website 1
15min	Website *15min.lt*	Director general	W2 – website 2
Verslo žinios	Daily *Verslo žinios* (digital and print) Website *Vz.lt* Magazine *Verslo klasė*	Director general Editor-in-chief	DW – daily/website
Žinių studija	*LNK*[2]	Director	TV – television
Žinių radijas	Radio channels: *Žinių radijas, Easy FM* Website *Ziniuradijas.lt*	Director general, content manager	R1 – radio 1
Radiocentras[3]	Radio *Rusradio LT* Website *Rusradio.lt*	Program manager	R2 – radio 2
Diena Media News	Daily *Kauno diena* Websites: *Diena.lt, Kauno.diena.lt* Weekly *Vilniaus diena*	Director	DWR – daily/website regional
Gargždų banga	Newspaper *Banga* (2 times a week) Website *Gargzdai.lt*	Editor	NWL1– newspaper/website local 1
Gimtasis Rokiškis	Newspaper *Gimtasis Rokiškis* (2 times a week) Website *Grokiskis.lt*	Manager and editor	NWL2 – newspaper/website local 2

[1] Supplementing of certain answers
[2] Television channel of company Laisvas nepriklausomas kanalas
[3] Company Radiocentras also owns radio stations: *Radiocentras, Zip FM, Relax FM*

2. Results

2.1. Existing experience in continouos learning

The results of the study show that larger and economically stronger Lithuanian media organizations carry out planning activities for the continuous learning of employees. Planning of employees learning is most clearly formalized in the organization of the public broadcaster. Less economically capable media organizations do not systematically plan employees learning and focus on external learning offerings (Tables 2.1 and 2.2).

Table 2.1. Planning and organization of continuous learning.

Media	**Does your organization have a staff continuous learning plan?**	**How is continuous staff learning organized in your organization?**
PSM	Yes. There is a learning plan for managers at various levels. Planning of professional training is not yet as centralized as that of managers. There is the planning of budget for learning purposes.	A study was conducted according to the international methodology on employee engagement in 2019. The competence development plan is included in the annual employee plans. The employee analyses the competences he/she wants and how they will be pursued, whether he/she needs to achieve it independently or if some training is needed. The employee may submit learning requests to his supervisor and the administration will take this into account. There are external offers that can complement the organization's learning plan.
W1	There is no learning plan for all employees in advance.	At the beginning of the year, the training areas that are to be developed are identified. If employees themselves express a request to develop certain skills, opportunities are being sought to provide it as well.
W2	Planning is ongoing, but it is not documented.	The organization of the training is subject to staff surveys and unit heads' meetings. Employees attend seminars and conferences. There are invited professionals to conduct training for the organization.
DW	Planning is ongoing, but it is not documented.	The management staff is constantly monitoring what competencies lack and what competences need to be improved. The organization itself organizes management training, conferences. Employees are also provided with other training opportunities

Table 2.2. Planning and organization of continuous learning.

Media	Does your organization have a staff continuous learning plan?	How is continuous staff learning organized in your organization?
TV	No.	Employees sometimes take part in educational projects such as conferences, seminars (but these are not professional development courses).
R1	No.	In the case of external offers, employees are sometimes given opportunities to attend some training.
R2	No.	In the case of external offers, employees are sometimes given opportunities to attend some training.
DWR	No.	In the case of external offers, employees are sometimes given opportunities to attend some training.
NWL1	No.	In the case of external offers, employees are sometimes given opportunities to attend some training.
NWL2	No.	Learning is organized rarely (depending on the needs of the organization).

Table 3 and 4 suggest a trend for economically stronger organizations (and more focused on training planning) to guarantee greater diversity of learning for their employees. The public broadcaster offers the largest range of training to its staff. Part of the learning consists of consultations or seminars organized by the state, the EU and regulatory/self-regulatory institutions on legal, ethical and other topics. Additional learning opportunities for media organizations are provided by international and national media and journalist associations such as the European Broadcasting Union, the European Newspaper Publishers 'Association and the Lithuanian Journalists Union. Other non-governmental organizations also play an important role in the employees learning process.

The content of learning is better appreciated by those organizations that plan employees training more consistently. Organizations that focus solely on external supply rate the quality of training less well.

According to the representatives of the organizations, there are quite many proposals in the training supply market to improve the general competencies and management, marketing skills of the organizations. However, there is a lack of specialized training to develop journalistic competencies.

Table 3. Training activities of the public broadcasting company in 2018–2019.

Media	**What training did your staff attend in the last two years (2018–2019)?**	**What was useful in this training?**	**What was useless in this training?**
PSM	- Training for middle management on how to perform employee evaluation - EBU strategic training for executives - EBU conference on television and radio development - Economics, management conferences for executives - Modern Media Management Programme (Centre for Media Studies at SSE Riga, Re:Baltica) - Skills training on working in the television news service - Language skills training for radio journalists - Law and ethics training for journalists - Law courses for the unit of investigative journalists - Training of investigative journalism at SSE Riga - Visual media (short video on economic topics) training organized by BCME - Short specific course provided by a non-governmental organization (how to communicate with disabled people) - Learning in media coverage of political election campaigns - Training on corruption prevention - An in-house training program designed to train universal reporters	All the training was useful	–

Table 4. Training activities of commercial companies in 2018–2019.

Media	What training did your staff attend in the last two years (2018–2019)?	What was useful in this training?	What was useless in this training?
W1	- Modern Media Management Programme (Centre for Media Studies at SSE Riga, Re:Baltica) - Various training with a scholarship of the parent company - Language improvement courses - Courses on technological updates (training of social media companies) - Training on specific of reporter work (BCME) - Courses on public speaking skills - Law and ethics training for journalists - Learning in media coverage of political election campaigns	All the training was useful	–
W2	- Law and ethics training for journalists - General learning about different media - Training on paid content creation - Marketing training (for marketing unit)	The rise in the quality of work	–
DW	- Annual conferences on management, economics, market development (organizer – Verslo žinios) - Events organized by the SSE Riga - Events organized by the European Newspaper Publishers' Association - Events organized by EU institutions - Continuous training of marketing, finance, sales specialists	All the training was useful	–
TV	- Events (conferences) organized by EU and national state institutions, foreign embassies	All the training was useful	–
R1	- Management training organized by Verslo žinios	All the training was useful	–
R2	- Few conferences	–	There was no great benefit
DWR	- Seminar on threats to national security - Training for marketing staff - Training for journalists organized by the Lithuanian Journalists Union - Law training for journalists	All training brings some benefits	Sometimes it is just training for training
NWL1	- Training of Lithuanian Journalists Union and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation on investigative journalism, problems of regional newspapers - Training on how to present information in media (organized by the BCME)	Mediocre assessment of training	Mediocre assessment of training
NWL2	- Courses on editing, publishing	It was helpful	–

2.2 Strengths and learning needs of employees

Managers and editors of media organizations evaluate the competencies and abilities of their employees quite highly, often emphasizing professionalism and experience. The answers to the question of what knowledge and skills to develop are most important, quite different, but the most highlighted areas were technological knowledge (PSM, R1, R2, NWL2) and skills of using social media (PSM, R1, NWL2). The need to develop journalistic skills working on television (PSM, W1) and radio (PSM, DW, R2) was also highlighted. There is also an important need for analytical work and data journalism (DW, DWR). Finally, the need for knowledge on paid content (W2), on how TV news production can get audiences from the internet (TV) and the need for discussion on changes in journalism (NWL1) was emphasized (Table 5).

Table 5. Knowledge and skills of employees.

Media	**Which of your employees' knowledge and skills meet the needs of your company? What are the strengths of the employees?**	**Which knowledge and skills development would you highlight as most important?**
PSM	- News service (and radio news service 24/7) - Highest competence in audio work - Radio documentaries - Highest competence in creating cultural content - Unit of investigative journalism - Unit of decision-making journalism	- Presentation of video content on the internet - TV journalism skills - Radio journalism skills - Using social media as sources - Usage of artificial intelligence
W1	- Professionalism and experience - Ability to select and verify sources quickly - Knowledge on the topic covered	- Multiplatform application in media - TV journalism skills
W2	- Professionalism and experience - Analytical and investigative journalism	- Knowledge on paid content (how to create it and how to attract audience)
DW	- Data analysis - Analytical content	- Data journalism - Podcast journalism skills - Knowledge of economics, business, politics
TV	- Knowledge on the topic covered - Professionalism of journalists, cameramen, and installers	- Knowledge (successful examples and results) how TV news production can get audiences from the internet
R1	- Experience of staff - Knowledge of economic topics - Skills to communicate with audience - Variety of radio shows	- Technological knowledge - Knowledge on social media communication and management
R2	- Mobility - Multifunctionality	- Radio development on the internet - Technological skills
DWR	- Regional news and reportages	- Analytical and investigative journalism
NWL1	- Professionalism of journalists	- Discussion (knowledge) on changes in journalism, peculiarities of message construction
NWL2	- Competences of staff - Multifunctionality - Knowledge about audience	- Technological knowledge - Knowledge on social media networks and apps

Representatives of all media organizations argued for the need to improve social media management knowledge and skills, and almost all pointed to the need to improve social media journalism skills. Most media organizations need to improve management knowledge (including time, information and data management), editorial work, multimedia storytelling, mobile journalism, understanding of algorithms, understanding audience data and behavior (except regional and local media). Two-thirds of organizations should expand knowledge about data journalism and innovative media production. For half of the interviewees, deepening knowledge of design, web architecture and/or programming would be relevant. For the least number of organizations, it seems important to improve general knowledge of politics, law, and economics, and for some, specific knowledge in the relevant fields is more important (Tables 6.1 and 6.2).

Table 6.1. Improvement of knowledge and skills.

Which of your employees' knowledge and/or skills should be improved?						
Media	**Management**	**Editorial work**	**Multimedia storytelling**	**Mobile journalism**	**Social media journalism**	**Data Journalism**
PSM	Yes (time management also)	Yes (especially on the website)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
W1	Yes (for journalists)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
W2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DW	Yes (need for information and data management)	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
TV	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
R1	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
R2	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly
DWR	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NWL1	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
NWL2	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Table 6.2. Improvement of knowledge and skills.

Which of your employees' knowledge and/or skills should be improved?						
Media	**Social media management**	**Understanding of algorithms**	**Understanding audience data and behavior**	**General knowledge of judicial issues, economy, politics**	**Design, web architecture and/or programming**	**Innovative media production**
PSM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
W1	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (need for specialized knowledge)	No	Yes
W2	Yes		Yes	No (need for specialized knowledge)	Yes	Yes
DW	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
TV	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes (video graphics)	No
R1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
R2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
DWR	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
NWL1	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
NWL2	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

2.3. Forms of learning

There is an acceptable form of learning for all organizations – targeted courses for selected employees, and for almost all – courses for many media professionals. Training with an editorial consultant or training for only one organization would not be appropriate for few organizations (Table 7).

Table 7. Forms of leaning.

What kind of learning would be appropriate for your organization?				
Media	**Editorial consultant**	**Courses for your organisation only**	**Courses for many media professionals**	**Targeted courses for selected employees**
PSM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
W1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
W2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DW	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
TV	No	No	Yes	Yes
R1	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
R2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DWR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NWL1	No	No	Yes	Yes
NWL2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

3. Conclusions

Economically stronger Lithuanian media organizations grant greater diversity of learning for their employees if to compare to smaller organizations (especially those developing niche media products and acting in the regions). Among all media organizations, the Lithuanian public broadcaster offers the largest range of training to its employees.

There are many proposals in the training supply market to improve the general competencies and management, marketing skills of the organizations staff. However, there is a lack of specialized training to develop specific journalistic competencies.

Media organizations prioritize the following areas of knowledge and skills development: knowledge and skills of social media management, social media journalism skills, technological knowledge (understanding of algorithms), television and radio journalism skills and data analysis knowledge and skills.

Media organization generally are open to all forms of learning but pay close attention to the subject matter of the learning offered.