pat allison and i post 2004 - elections coverage and lack of cooperation in independent prog media

coordinated coverage and timing increases impact. ex: plan b, media policy reporting project

june:

been in conversations with tmc for some time. media reform, impact of media. we are a small foundation, coming together around repro interests and comb of interests with coordinated efforts around repo work is really important and strategic. really about the right project and fit for them.

john

doesn't see this happening without the constant nagging to distracted news organizations etc.

grantmaker back in 2005

opportunity and urgency around convening independent voices. particulaly in the aftermath of the elections. invisible coordination to raise issues in the broader media enviornment. can we gauge the impact? could not happen without an organization to convene the network.

allison: wealth global fund

comments reflect what has kept her invested in the media consortium. comprehensive issue planning. weaving together content and outlets, but also providing infrastructure. laid out in the strategic planning material. to be a laboratory for the practice of sharing and creating conditions in which innovation and learning can thrive and prosper. to think about the things that drive interest are things that the media consortium is about right now. thinking creatively and drawing on the resources of the tmc community. funding infrastructure is never as sexy as we want it to be, but it should be.

jo ellen:

on question is around unique values: the role of tmc plays? how do you name that?

progressive, independent, advocacy, solutions?

i always use the word independent--progressive independent depending on the audience. muckraking. advocacy based. something where everyone...all so journalistic in their approach. solutions based kind of conveys collaboration on ideas:policy fixers, "x" issue, and then promoting it. it isn't traditional objective journalism.

objective was never real--much more accepted now that that concept was before. funders have a tendency

john

if just think of tmc as a pure trade association. not a good sign that the organization is funded by members. should label ourselves as the members see fit, and members should pay a larger percentage of the cost. raise membership dues.

jo ellen: explains that she cannot raise dues or members just won't join.

questions:

does that mean that business related opportunities and materials are? how is that assessed in terms of value? it sounds like content helps with the mission agenda, but from the business perspective, is it less valuable?

jo ellen: explains that most members have budgets of $200,000 - $500,000. strapped for cash. need business advice. but just simply running incredibly tight budgets.

larger orgs do get marketing and networking. but still hard to justify paying a higher rate. vast majority of groups don't belong to any other organizations than the media consortium.

response:

so much value in the network for funders and donors. finds it shocking that there isn't more support going to TMC along the lines of plan b or campaign cash stuff where for funders, it's one stop shopping--fantastic. also walk away with the feeling that you've had more impact and generated more stories/buzz about whatever it is you're trying to do. wonders if they can shore up more funding to this end--foundations talk all the time about need for progressive infrastructure--and surprised that these organizations don't fund TMC--why is there a disconnect there? what are the barriers?

jo ellen:

TMC doesn't have a big public profile because jo ellen can't make big public statements because she is a FNP project and would have to run anything she says past the board. not a 501c3. if they were they might be able to advocate within the media space in a stronger way. would that draw more attention from funders? doesn't know what this looks like, just knows she can't do it.

response:

it's time to grow up and have your 501c3 is not something she likes. likes orgs that are supported by larger orgs.  personally wouldn't be more attracted to funding TMC if there were stong policy positions. value added is when issues are elevated through coordinated coverage.

june:

two things come to mind. everyone at this funding meeting heard of FNP and MJ, but not TMC. there is cache attached to being related to these two big names. that's why some people came to this funding meeting. everyone who came appreciated TMC, even though plan b was insular, but appreciated the idea of TMC being able to talk to multiple media outlets. where does advocacy overlap? where does work and the advocacy/justice groups funded overlap with TMC work with independent media folks?

can we see how we align with what we're giving already to what you're doing?

response:

one of the things talking about is how most of the programs are very broadly covering a range of topics, enviro, edu, almost agnostic to the point of which issues they cover, but in any given program, might be easier connecting with people who want to organize on specific topics and not the broader issue of independent media.

Jo ellen: doesn't think TMC should be sunsetting, clear value in coordinating impact. sustainability problem. idea tmc has been toying with. convergence with associations and journalism world. spending time with alt weekly ppl, discovered they're all digital and 24/7, losing a lot of audience for peripheral needs, having to focus more and more on content.

AANW have a 501c3 they're not using, talking with director tiffany about possibility of a merger and do coordination and impact work and they could provide trade association materials that members actually need. strong interest among group on more collaboration, want to work national-local relationships, important news gathering there. what do you think?

reaction:

very intriguing idea. devil is in the details. losing the cache of the brand could be an issue, but it does sound promising. interesting to explore. is this the association of alternative news weekly's?

skepticism: quick thought is create an identity for an organization--tmc has been acting somewhat invisibly for funders. to extent that you're creating identity, worried about diluting what you've established by associating with a different set of actors. might be a great idea, just a concern.

jo ellen:

can you have TMC as a brand, but have more of a real-world/implementer arm. financial sust issues would lessen and the work of TMC would be more on a project basis.

**broad agreement on call**

**jo ellen:**

anyone else suggestions/recs for next steps?

m

ost-likely affinity group conferences. is there an opportunity to work into a panel/briefing call with an ega or repro group/issue based culture.

advantage to working with media organization, have media personalities to bring to the table, stirs up interest that you might not otherwise get with a topic.

with any infrastructure organization, want to engage the voices of those who benefit from it to talk about why it's value added. who can speak to this stuff within tmc?