



Association for International Broadcasting

SUSTAINABILITY IN BROADCASTING

June 2016

A BRIEFING NOTE FROM THE ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The global media industry reaches almost every person on the planet through radio, television and online broadcasting. With such reach and influence, there is both an implicit and an explicit need for the media industry to demonstrate leadership in the area of sustainability across all areas of their businesses. There are two elements. Firstly, how we manage our businesses in a sustainable manner and secondly, how we help to educate and inform our audiences about the issues of sustainability.

Over recent years, it has become clear that consumer-facing brands that demonstrate commitment to sustainability outperform those that do not. There is no reason to believe that the same will not apply to media companies.

With the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, there is now additional pressure on businesses to operate in more sustainable ways and to reduce the impact of their activities on the environment and the planet.

The Association for International Broadcasting recognises that this subject is of importance to its Members and the wider industry. Accordingly, it is establishing a Sustainability Working Group to allow Members to share information, expertise and best practice. As part of its work to champion sustainable production the AIB will work to develop tools and guidance to help broadcasters reduce their impact on the environment. The AIB's work will also build on the immense educational ability that the mass media has to communicate the fundamentally important issues of sustainability to global audiences.

This briefing note is an initial step in the AIB's work on sustainability on behalf of its Members.

Making media sustainable

It is estimated that the information, communication and technology (ICT) sector produces around 2% of total global emissions, broadly similar to the much-maligned aviation industry.

This demonstrates a need for the media industry to play its part in reducing its environmental impact.

There are a number of initiatives that have been started to help media companies – particularly in the area of production – to reduce the impact their day-to-day operations have on the environment.

For example, albert+ in the UK works to motivate and educate production teams to monitor and improve sustainability.

In the USA, Green Film Shooting presents approaches to sustainable operating methods.

LARGE AND SMALL

Broadcasters and production companies can adopt a number of low-cost yet high impact initiatives to help migrate them to a highly sustainable model of working. Some of these initiatives are inevitably large scale; others are on a far smaller scale.

Here the AIB presents some

▼ Scripts on tablets can be more sustainable than paper
 ► As well as 'bad news' stories, the media can inform and educate with positive, practical examples

simple examples.

As a starting point, it is vital that the leadership within every media organisation champions sustainability. It is essential that there is board level 'buy-in' to sustainable practices that are communicated throughout the business.

At the team level, there should be leadership shown by producers, directors and team managers. In many cases, this can be as simple as an internal memo to staff working on productions reminding them of their shared goals to work in as sustainable way as possible.

All productions should calculate their carbon footprint. Every activity within a business has an impact on the environment and it is important that teams are able to understand their impact so that they can develop strategies to reduce carbon emissions.

For example, producers should remind their teams to minimise the number of printed scripts and rely in their place on tablets or, when tablets are impractical or unavailable, ensuring that scripts and call sheets are printed on both sides of the paper.

On large-scale productions, there is an opportunity to cut out bottled

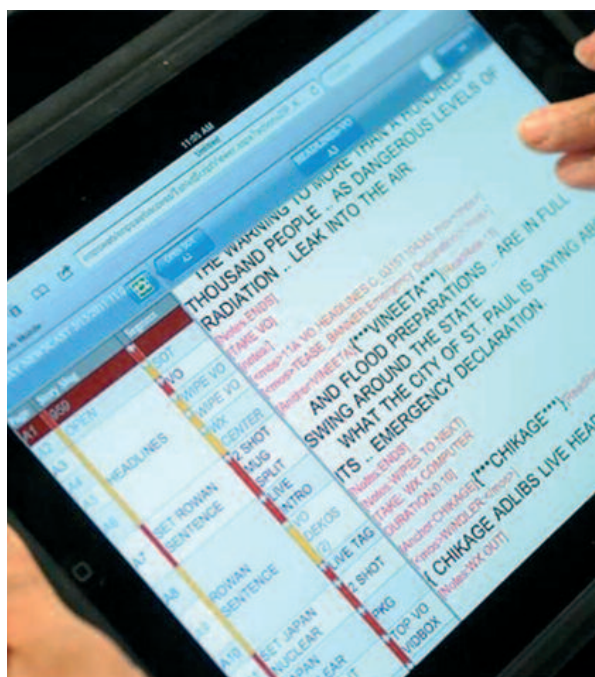
water for the crew and instead provide reusable water bottles that can be filled from a central supply. This is likely to reduce the number of partially drunk bottles that are discarded, since users will have 'ownership' of their personal durable water bottle.

In the area of technology, wireless microphones can use rechargeable batteries in the place of single-use alkaline batteries. This can have a significant and immediate benefit both in terms of environmental impact as well as on cost.

Ever cheaper solar panels can be used to provide the power to recharge batteries outside studio bases, helping to reduce the need for generators.

The obsolescence of tapes has already delivered significant benefits, although in some parts of the world tape remains as the backbone of production both in studios and on location. However, there is still a need to provide access to rushes and wherever possible these should be supplied via online viewing platforms rather than shipping hard-drives or discs via courier or taxi. This reduces carbon emissions.

The widespread availability of





LED lighting continues to grow and we see the use of LEDs in studios and at location shoots. LED lighting consumes far less power than incandescent lighting and produces virtually no heat. In turn this allows for air conditioning to be reduced or eliminated, further reducing a production's environmental impact.

When working away from base, broadcasters and production companies can hire local crews and equipment, instead of sending crews and kit hundreds or thousands of miles and creating significant carbon emissions as they travel.

In the future, IP-based production may allow remote live programmes to be produced without the need for Outside Broadcast trucks, with the programme mixed at a broadcaster's home base instead of on site. This will allow further reductions in carbon emissions.

DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

The AIB applauds the work undertaken in some markets to develop standards and processes that broadcasters can apply as they work to increase their sustainability. The AIB believes that

there is a need for these standards and processes to be developed internationally, allowing more broadcasters and production companies to start the journey to reduce carbon emissions and increase their sustainability. There is no intention to duplicate work already undertaken. Instead, the goal is to build on existing work and to promote this in other markets, ensuring relevance to each territory.

DELIVERING COMPELLING CONTENT

The role of all broadcasters and production companies is to deliver well-told stories to their audiences. It's what this industry does, from the smallest radio producer to the largest global TV network.

As part of this global story telling, it is essential that broadcasters and production companies support the SDGs, informing audiences and ensuring that the facts are presented in digestible and effective ways. The AIB has seen increasing amounts of work in this area, where the 'bad news' stories of rising ocean levels, soil erosion and desertification have been told in a way that stops the viewer or listener from switching off.

▲ Five of the world's leading ad agency bosses announce their co-operation on the SDGs with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon at Cannes Lions on 24 June - click on the picture to view the video

Broadcasters need to tell stories about what climate change means, perhaps making it personal, so that audiences pay attention without sensationalising the issues. Best practice and good examples can be communicated. For example, how about telling the story of the Dutch company that has started cleaning the country's canals of plastic waste that is then recycled into boats?

Some AIB Members have found that their highest audience appreciation scores come from content that delivers practical tips on sustainability, and those that break down complex issues into bite-size chunks

NEXT STEPS

We have seen the collaborative way in which the highly competitive advertising industry is approaching the Sustainable Development Goals. Now it is the media industry's turn to work together.

The AIB is calling on its Members to collaborate and share ideas, both in ways their businesses can become more sustainable and in how their programming can tell the story of the SDGs and encourage their audiences to play their part in making the SDGs a global success. ■



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD





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