

# CONCEPT - CONSTRUCT - CONNECT

A different way of looking at the creative media industry

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Traditionally the creative media industry is split into different categories - Film, TV, Radio, Photo Imaging, Publishing, Computer Games, Advertising, etc. The boundaries and divisions of these seemingly stand-alone sectors are based **output**; the final format or product. They have historically had their own supply chains, their own workforce, and their own audiences.

The merging of these sectors is often called “convergence”. But the true impact of the digital technology is much deeper and more profound than the meshing of content or platforms. The increasing ubiquity and shrinking cost of this technology is leading to a rapid merging of the processes, products and profits of these sectors.

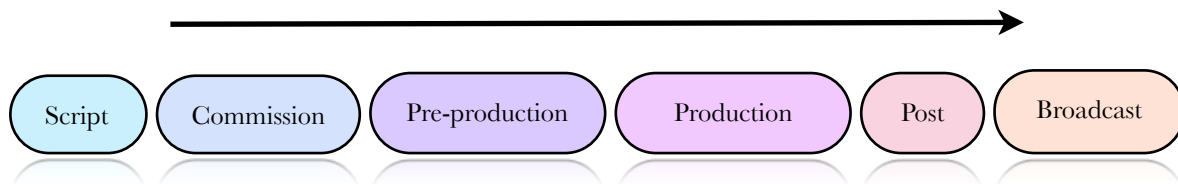
Here I describe a different way of looking at and describing the creative media industry to examine, explain and foresee these changes currently happening.

This work is the product of conversations with dozens of colleagues and friends. Discussions, thoughts, visions and debates with four key people brought it to fruition: Chris Chilton, Dan Gable, Andy Gibson and Fiona Kilkelly.

## 2. THAT WAS THEN; THIS IS NOW

The product of each part of the creative media industry has traditionally defined it - film, computer games, TV, etc. Each one of these had its own delineated “workflow”. As the product progressed through the workflow, new companies, people, skills and processes helped shape it. It also describes how the business model works – both in terms of paying for goods and services and for adding value to the product.

A typical structure in television might look like this:



Script to Screen, Idea to Audience, Lines to Living Room; a very linear way of working. It can also describes an “added-value” chain - each phase adding and enhancing the IP, and therefore hopefully the value.

The real affect of digital technology is disruptive. It disrupts this traditional, linear way of working and thinking. At every stage, the ease (and lowered cost) at which media can be transferred, manipulated, transported and trafficked has meant a step-change in the way the creative media industry works.

It is changing the relationships between each part (Film, TV, Radio, etc), between each phase of the workflow, between who owns, adds value and exploits the IP and between the content makers and the audience.

The term “convergence” is often used about this disruptive technology. It is a confusing term meaning different things to different speakers and listeners. Some view it as 360° commissioning – commission content that is robust enough to survive exploitation on many different platforms. In the Online world it is more likely about “multi-platform delivery” – how to squeeze and reshape content to fit as many possible channels of delivery. But convergence isn’t about merging platforms (the

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same TV show on the television, the iPlayer, the iPhone - clips of Eastenders on the radio; newspaper columns on the web) or merging content (TV clips on YouTube; radio on the TV; newspapers on the web). It isn't about the need to understand what different delivery platforms exists, or what shape a key idea needs to start at – it is a much bigger shift, and affects every part of the creative media industry. It is not just changes in what or how media is consumed.

To understand, explain and predict this change a new way of thinking about the creative media industry is needed.

## 3. CONCEPT - CONSTRUCT - CONNECT

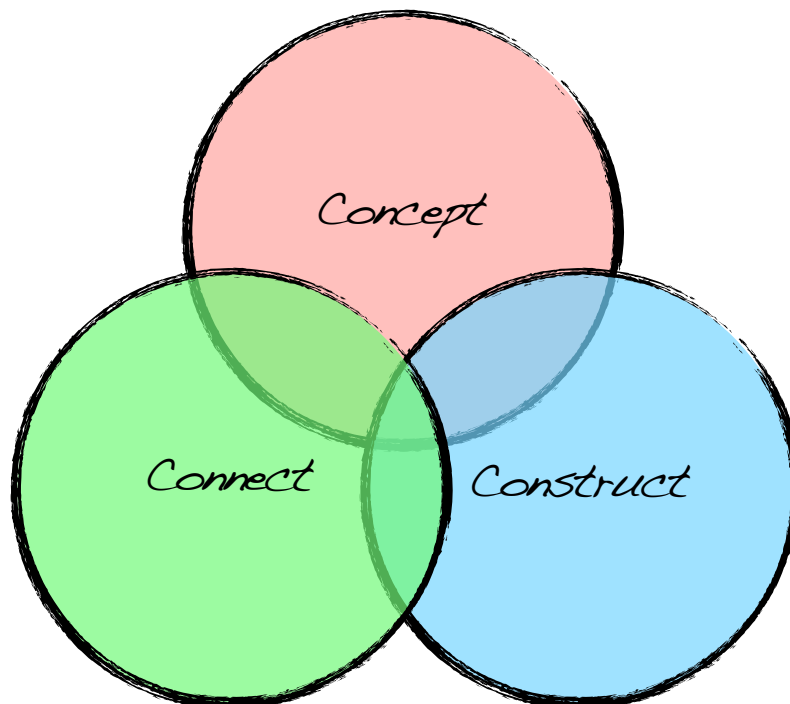
To make sense of this change a new map is needed. Instead of (output) sectors with different sequential phases, it can be described in just three blocks:

*CONCEPT* - The original idea, whether for a game, a TV programme, a magazine article. The very first originator of IP.

*CONSTRUCT* - A process that takes that original idea and makes it into a reality virtual or actual.

*CONNECT* - And finally a way to monetise that IP and get it to the (hopefully fee-paying) audience.

But these are not linear processes. The consequence of the digital revolution means that all of these phases are linked. As are the unique jobs and functions that happen within them, the companies that provide the specialist skills, the products, art-forms, ownership of IP, etc:



By examining the creative media industry through this lens, the issues that face them are more apparent. Common issues between different parts can be seen and explored.

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## 4. HOW TO READ A MAP

What use is this map? What can it show us? The use of any map is defined by the needs and skill of the reader, but here are some suggestions.

### The Learner

Many traditional pathways for students have been to focus on one part or other of the creative media industry – a Photography GCSE, a Performance HND, studying Interactive Media at college or Television at University. These specialisms allow the learner to develop their skills and knowledge of a chosen field to a high degree, but will they be useful when the learning has stopped? Education and training needs to be gearing learners up for tomorrow's work. By creating curricula based on this map and ensuring that all learners have some understanding of the processes and roles required in each of the three areas, the future workforce will be more adaptable and fluid – which will suit tomorrow's work.

### The Worker

Attempting to navigate a career in the creative media industries is difficult. The walls between traditional sectors can seem impenetrable. Job roles seem tightly specialised, with clear career paths. Even the language used can be different.

Take a traditional sector (say animation). Take a job role (say producer) Plot where the main job roles fit onto this sector map. Repeat this for other sectors. Overlay them one on top of the other. By looking through this model you can see what roles in other sectors are most applicable to your own skillset. A path can now be seen through different industries, guided by your own talent and experience.

### The Company

The size, scale and speed of change affecting the creative media industry can be bewildering. This map can be a useful tool to explore and explain transition.

For example, many post production companies believe that they are a single part of a linear workflow. Prosaically, the product arrived on a van, was modified, and left on a van. However the influence of post production is now far greater. Take Big Brother - the very fabric of the show (multi-camera, quick turnaround editing creating narrative from nothing) was created by post. By using this model it is easier to see spot potential new areas of focus for the company. It becomes clearer that the company no longer sits isolated in one part of a workflow, but has different things to offer at different times.

### The Audience

The audience of the past was firmly relegated to the tail end of the process. Most advertising still feels that way, but the single greatest affect of digital technology is the new positioning of audience. The speed with which it can interact, the empowerment to challenge, the influence it has in promoting (or panning) products – all have seen a step change.

Whether it is the sudden growth of two-way communications channels (like Twitter and Facebook), the opportunity to bypass business models (whether skipping adverts through Sky+ or downloading files from a torrent site), the ease with which to create and broadcast their own media, the use of crowd-sourcing to discover new media that “people like you like”, the ability to break (and create)

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news stories far quicker than the traditional news outlets – it is now true that audiences are at the heart of all of creative media.

## 5. ARE WE THERE YET?

These are just some uses. At Skillset we are exploring the use of this model for a new creative media Apprenticeship, making sure we give the future talent of tomorrow the right start to their career. We are examining how we can map the traditional job roles and occupations onto this to attempt a more holistic (and perhaps realistic) description of what happens. We are using it to explain to our own industries what changes are facing them and how they can best respond.

I am sure there are many more uses. What could you do with it? It is originally meant as a discussion piece for Skillset, Sector Skills Council for creative media industry in the UK but it is given here in the spirit of Creative Commons for a much wider discussion. I welcome any further thoughts, conversations and growth - [tristonw@skillset.org](mailto:tristonw@skillset.org) or on twitter (@triston).



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