

World rights are very expensive. But if we were to limit the programming across an entire schedule to those carrying "affordable" world rights, our audience would be drastically reduced and, perhaps, not justify the launch of such a network. The rights to French-language programming, by the way, are not as great.

In a focused, single program option, the narrow timeframe and the limited geographical scope might make it possible to include a whole range of top quality privately produced programs that, thus far, have a rather narrow distribution. The question of distribution is key, because it is imperative that any new Canadian programming initiative not weaken or reduce the commercial interests of existing Canadian companies.

A new strategy should not conflict with what the private television producers and distributors are already doing, or, just as important, ignore the value of their exports in that Canadian strategy. In fact, I would propose that the government use what already may exist to add even more clout to a communications assault. If, for example, Canada is targeting a particular geographical area, it would be beneficial to both the government and private industry to see what kinds of additional marketing dollars could be made available during that strategic launch (especially, since marketing was one of the areas affected in Telefilm's recent cutbacks). If a Canadian company sold more programs as a result, it would benefit, but so too would Canada.

Once the concept of layering is adopted, a whole range of different partnerships are possible with the technology companies as well as public and private program or internet producers. It would not be cheap. It should not be cheap. But it would cost less than a number of other options that would launch whole networks or try to reach too broad an audience. If we focus, focus, focus, we will add greater value to every dollar spent.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the changes are coming fast, and the players in both the international capitals and the corporate multinational headquarters are moving their pawns and kings around at a furious rate. Canada must move fast to make the most of the kinds of advantages it has established over the past decade.

We are well-positioned. The defining character of the new information age fits our values of access, pluralism, and mediation. And they can effectively promote our values of human rights, compassion and democracy. Combined with our sophisticated development of the technology, we can exercise a lot of "soft power" clout. We understand the success of the Team Canada approach to technical and industrial deal-making. Now, we should apply the same partnerships with the private sector to an international communications strategy.

What is needed is not government control, but government leadership. And we need a leadership that makes the difficult choices of priorities. We can no longer display the scatter-gun approach that is promoted in the Foreign Affairs internet site where an apparently random assortment of pages are listed from Prefabricated kitchen cabinets in new German states to a Colombian economy