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The Transformation of Traditional Book Editors' Mindset in the Context of Media Convergence: From Book Editor to Product Manager in the Post-Print Era

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Abstract

This article, by integrating the transformation trend of editorial thinking in the context of media convergence development, analyzes the significance of book editors' transformation into product managers in the omnimedia era, explores the mindset transition process from editorial thinking, development thinking, publishing thinking, and linear thinking to product thinking, marketing thinking, iterative thinking, and three-dimensional thinking, thereby providing reference for practitioners.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: Transformation of Traditional Book Editor Thinking Under Media Convergence: From Book Editor to Product Manager

Abstract: This paper analyzes the significance of the transformation from book editor to product manager in the all-media era, examining the shift in editorial thinking under the background of media convergence. It explores the cognitive transition process for book editors from editor thinking, development thinking, publishing thinking, and linear thinking to product thinking, marketing thinking, iterative thinking, and three-dimensional thinking, thereby providing a reference for practitioners.

Keywords: media convergence; book editor; product manager

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A product manager refers to the personnel responsible for product positioning, development organization, and related product management activities in new product development, coordinating product marketing, research and development, and other segments. Against the backdrop of media convergence, the internal organizational structure of the publishing industry has undergone significant transformation, and the book market environment has also experienced substantial changes. In light of this, many publishing enterprises have drawn upon successful experiences from other industries, particularly the internet industry's approach to creating hit products, and introduced the "product manager" model. This aims to facilitate the transformation of book editors into product managers, comprehensively innovate their thinking patterns, and enhance publishing capabilities, thereby better adapting to the rapidly evolving publishing environment, creating superior book products, and improving both social and economic benefits.

In 2014, the central government issued the "Guidelines on Promoting the Integrated Development of Traditional and Emerging Media," which emphasized "adhering to the complementary advantages and integrated development of traditional and emerging media, with advanced technology as support and content construction as the foundation, to promote deep integration in content, channels, platforms, operations, and management." The year 2015 marked the "first year of media convergence" for the publishing industry. In response to policy calls and following the trend, publishing enterprises undertook internal organizational restructuring and production process reengineering, while externally actively exploring opportunities, forming strong alliances with emerging media, and establishing new integrated media development platforms to propel the modernization of book publishing.

Unlike traditional publishing enterprises that centered on editorial work, modern publishing enterprises place greater emphasis on treating books as products to be developed, achieving the integration of various media elements and resources, enabling interconnectivity, and continuously innovating. In the context of media convergence, paper publications are no longer the sole content carrier. Audio, video, online courses, and other formats can not only convey larger volumes of information but also enable real-time, three-dimensional dissemination, thereby complementing the content of paper books. Given these changes in publishing organizational structures and book content carriers, the work content and thinking patterns of book editors must inevitably evolve through continuous innovation and upgrading. Only in this way can they adapt to the trends of media convergence and meet the demands of future publishing work.

1.2 The Transformation of Book Editor Thinking from the Market Environment Perspective

While the internal organizational structure of publishing houses is undergoing transformation, the book market environment has also experienced significant changes. On the one hand, today's book market sees over 200,000 new titles published annually, with the total variety of books reaching saturation, severe homogenization, and uneven overall quality. On the other hand, contemporary readers have increasingly sophisticated tastes and carefully select books based on their own characteristics and needs, creating a distinct "buyer's market." Consequently, the traditional book editor's focus on topic development and editorial processing, coupled with a lack of thinking patterns for reader demand analysis and precision marketing, has become obsolete. The result of working in isolation and pursuing quantity over quality is likely to produce more book inventory rather than truly satisfying the personalized needs of reader groups.

Against the backdrop of the continuously evolving book market environment, the positioning and thinking patterns of book editors likewise require transformation. In 2009, Motie Company pioneered the introduction of the "product manager" model in the book industry, transforming book editors into product managers who assume comprehensive responsibility for book product development, editorial processing, marketing, and promotion, becoming developers, managers, and operators of books. As personnel with direct and comprehensive access to firsthand information, book editors treat books entirely as products to be crafted, making decisions on topic selection, title choice, design and layout, and copywriting based on cutting-edge reader demand analysis and sales data. They must also arrange editing and proofreading schedules, printing timelines, and release dates, coordinate work across departments, and timely adjust publishing strategies in response to industry dynamics and resource conditions. After books are launched, editors need to strengthen product maintenance, clarify print runs, inventory, and market sales performance, and use this data for subsequent topic planning to achieve brand and series-based operations [1]. Consequently, book editors have essentially become all-capable product managers.

2.1 From Editor Thinking to Product Thinking

Traditional book editors primarily focused on desk work, concentrating their energy on book creators (authors) and emphasizing the "editing and processing" of book content to enhance overall quality. Marketing and promotion efforts largely depended on the author's fame and influence, with selling points concentrated on "renowned authors" and "knowledge points." For traditional book editors, although market information needed to be considered during the topic selection stage, their actual work in this area was quite limited, creating a certain disconnect between editors and the market, and between editors and readers. After book publication and release, the editor's work was essentially complete, with little genuine feedback on market performance, and editors failed

to truly attend to readers' reading experiences and needs. However, in the era of media convergence, people have access to increasingly diverse information channels, and reader demands have become more personalized and segmented. Book editors must recognize that books, as products, share the same intrinsic attributes as products in other industries—namely, fully satisfying consumers' practical needs. Therefore, book editors need to complete the transformation from editor thinking to product thinking to break through the limitations of past inertial thinking, approach topic selection from the reader' s perspective, proactively understand market demands and consumers' reading psychological expectations, and thereby develop bestselling products that lead the market [2]. To this end, book editors must ground themselves in the broader context of media convergence, strengthen communication with marketing departments to genuinely grasp market trends and selling points, and timely integrate and process various types of information to serve book planning. Considering reader psychology, book editors can also adopt new service methods to extend product value, such as providing value-added services for book consumers like developing book VR systems, thereby attracting more consumers to purchase books.

2.2 From Development Thinking to Marketing Thinking

In book planning, traditional book editors placed greater emphasis on “development” while neglecting “marketing,” habitually relying on past experience and logic for topic selection and editorial processing, becoming more self-centered and easily falling into self-indulgent isolation. After book publication, the main tasks were distribution and stocking, with most books having only scattered marketing strategies and measures, or even no marketing at all. As product managers, however, they should comprehensively strengthen the application of marketing thinking, ensuring that marketing thinking permeates the entire book publishing process. On the one hand, during the initial topic selection stage, they must thoroughly research reader needs, segment readers, and then consider marketing possibilities for each group based on their preferences and characteristics, while simultaneously developing a general marketing plan by leveraging author resources, industry resources, channel resources, and media resources. On the other hand, during editing and processing, cover design, distribution, and promotion stages, they need to maintain market sensitivity, timely absorb new information, continuously integrate resources, refine and improve book marketing plans, and select appropriate marketing channels and strategies according to the preferences and characteristics of different reader groups. Against the backdrop of media convergence, as book editors transform their marketing thinking, they must also adopt a “return-to-zero” mindset, continuously learning and upgrading their skills, particularly paying attention to new marketing models representing future trends, such as community marketing, WeChat marketing, and e-commerce, to ensure that book products can precisely reach readers and be accepted by them, thereby achieving multiplier effects.

2.3 From Publishing Thinking to Iterative Thinking

In traditional book publishing workflows, book editors participated in book planning, manuscript solicitation and review, editorial processing, and other tasks until book publication and distribution. Once published, books basically underwent no major content changes, with only reprints to extend their life cycle, such as changing covers, pricing, binding, or making minor necessary revisions. For readers, since book content and knowledge were not updated, they basically would not repurchase, resulting in weak book vitality. For book editors, they would not spend substantial time further exploring published books. However, in the era of media convergence, along with the digital transformation of the publishing industry, the limitations of book publishing have been broken through. As book editors, they should also establish product iterative thinking to achieve further development of existing book product value and facilitate product updates and iterations, thereby providing readers with more services and meeting newer demands.

Therefore, after book publication, book editors can obtain reader feedback through various channels such as WeChat and Weibo to clarify reader preferences and genuine needs. Relying on quality book publishing resources, book editors should also conduct project integration to achieve linked development of various products including paper books, digital reading products, cultural and creative products, and film, television, and animation products [3]. During the development of different products, book editors can make improvements based on market feedback, continuously updating book content and knowledge and strengthening interaction across all product formats. Only in this way can precise marketing be achieved, reader group loyalty be enhanced, book promotion channels be broadened, and a larger market be created for book sales.

2.4 From Linear Thinking to Three-Dimensional Thinking

As traditional book editors, they previously always employed linear thinking to conduct point-to-point work, which easily led to one-sided thinking when understanding various issues, failing to achieve three-dimensional, cross-cutting analysis and lacking systematic consideration of book editorial work. As book product managers, however, they must complete the transformation from linear thinking to three-dimensional thinking, considering book publishing strategies not only from perspectives of content, theme, and design but also from the standpoint of the entire industry and industrial development. Today, the book market has entered a buyer's market and quality-driven market, with similar books abundant and competition increasingly fierce. Book editors who continue to use traditional linear thinking to develop books will find it difficult to achieve satisfactory results. At this stage, as book product managers, they need even more to apply three-dimensional thinking to achieve multi-party coordination among authors, media, channels, printing houses, distributors, critics, libraries, and relevant management departments. Strengthening communication and contact with all parties and establishing a sound collaborative system can better

open up the book industry chain, achieve rational resource allocation, and maximize book value.

Furthermore, they can rely on quality publishing resources and book brands to strengthen target reader positioning analysis and develop book derivatives. Simultaneously, through rational planning for product international output, they can expand into international markets and better promote the internationalization of domestic publishing.

3. Conclusion

In the era of media convergence, the publishing industry has embraced a completely new policy environment and market environment. How to achieve sustainable development in the all-media ecological environment has become an active concern for practitioners. To accomplish this goal, book editors, as the core of book productivity, need to strive to become excellent product managers and complete the transformation from editor thinking, development thinking, publishing thinking, and linear thinking to product thinking, marketing thinking, iterative thinking, and three-dimensional thinking. By adapting to trends, they can better promote the development of the publishing industry.

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