

# INMA Innovation Award 2014

## Newsroom cultural transformation



# Basic Facts and Stats

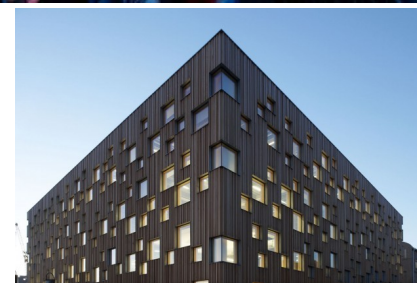
- VK Media AB— regional media group in North Sweden covering 180 000 inhabitants with various media brands: VK, Folkbladet, Daily Print, Totalt Umeå, Nöjesmagasinet.
- VK is the name of the branded newspaper and vk.se is the digital platform
- VK is a daily newspaper with six days publishing
- Number of staff: 200. Editorial: 52
- Print circulation: 30 800
- Digital reach: 170 000 unique user/week
- Revenues: 40 million USD
- Alive and kicking for over 114 years

# The story unfolds....

This story starts in the county of Västerbotten in northern Sweden. In the main city of Umeå, cultural capital of Europe 2014, there is a publishing house that has gone on one of the most remarkable and successful journeys of any regional press house in Europe. It has transformed its culture from a mono print oriented organization into one that thinks and acts digital constantly.

This year VK has successfully implemented a Paid For model which has WORKED REALLY WELL!

But none of this happened overnight. In fact the newsroom has



# Starting point – 3 years ago

- The 90's was golden days for VK. The circulation was peaking and there weren't many competitors in advertising. Locally VK was **the** media.

- At the same time VK launched their website, as one of the first in Sweden.

- We ran web in the traditional sense – a separate team of digitally minded people, 'dressing the web'; handling the uploading of copy and also being excellent at fast breaking news.

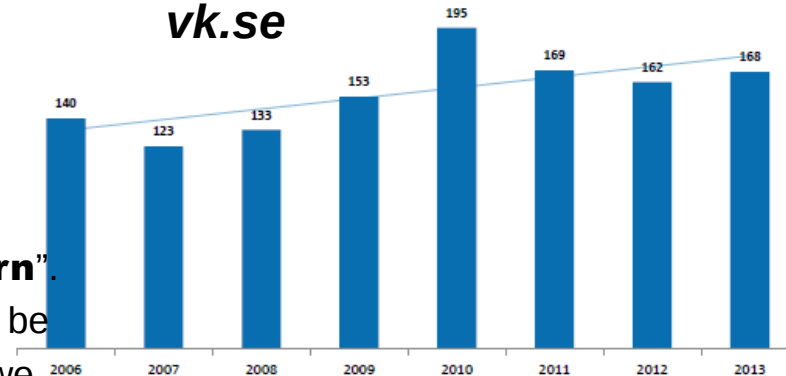
- But we were very careful. We only published 20 percent of our production digitally to protect the printed paper.

- Everything changed in 2011, this was our “**point of no return**”. Our analysis was simple: we needed to change our thinking to be more different between web and print. If we didn't act quickly we wouldn't have the resources to do good local journalism in the future

- **The company had to transform.** We had to give our readers a variety of choices, we needed more products and new offers.

- Print plus digital was our strategy for the future but first we needed to integrate the two and work out how to do that.

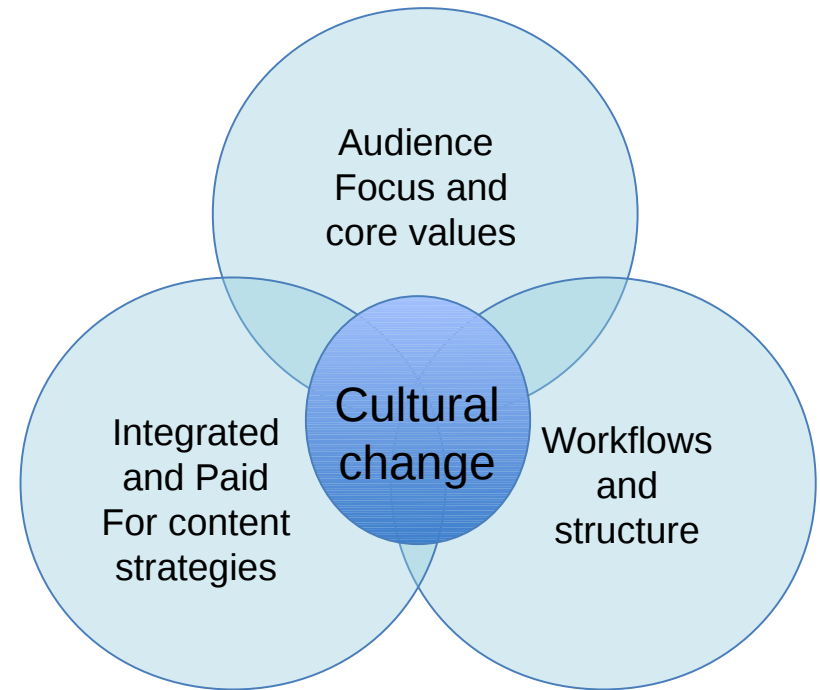
***The total reach of VK + vk.se***



# Three aspects

When we look back we can see that we went through three distinct aspects of innovation in the newsroom:

1. Changing our focus so we could reach the needs of our audience using our brand core values to provide better and different content for both print and digital
2. Changing how we work – our structures and our daily schedules to make that happen
3. Going to the next step – Paid For models



# The Journey of Amanda

Audience Focus and core values

Our goal was simple: **create a modern newsroom which would be fully aligned to its audience now and in the future.** We needed to integrate digital and print much more into our daily thinking

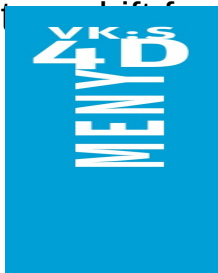
We had learned from the mistakes of many newsrooms, who hadn't seen it as a process of innovation but as a strategic chore. **Instead we looked at integration as a process of curiosity, experimentation and relationship building** internally and externally.

So we started Project Amanda. Amanda was a persona from audience analysis that would love our brand and our content but she represented an audience we weren't getting so easily. So we christened our innovation project Amanda in the **spirit of integration being about innovating what we do to reach new and exciting audiences.**

Amanda was not our only reader. To be able to make good and useful journalism **we also needed to know more about the different types of people living in the region** who would be interested in our content. We analyzed extensively seven distinct target groups, this was quite different from what we thought we had.



The real Amanda – the youngest subscriber of VK



1. Vilka läsigrupper är främsta målgruppen och varför?

2. Hur presenterar du storyn för dem på bästa sätt?

3. Finns det någon bra uppföljning?

4. Hur ska kors-hänvisningarna formuleras?

5. Tänk på våra kärnvärden:

- MÅNGFACETTERAD
- URBAN
- TROVÄRDIG

# 4D Thinking

We needed to change the **mindset** for thinking about audience and content. Instead of only thinking about how a story could be told on print and copying it directly to web (1 dimensional thinking) , we looked at **four elements** for relevant themes/stories:

1. How the **audience** target groups are interested in the theme/story and why

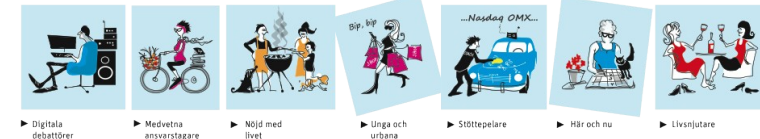
2. How to ensure a strong connection between audience target groups and VKs **core values**

3. How to translate those ideas into telling the story in a unique way **digitally**

4. How to translate those ideas into telling the story



## 1. Vilka läsargrupper är främsta målgruppen och varför?



## 2. Hur presenterar du storyn för dem på bästa sätt?

### I TIDNINGEN:

- Vinkel
- Utrymme
- Bild
- Grafik
- Illustration
- Enkät
- Tio snabba
- Fakta/Bakgrund
- Kronika
- Analys

► När kan materialet vara klart:.....

### PÅ WEBBEN:

- Alternativ vinkel
- Länkar
- Arkiv
- Sociala medier
- Bildspel
- Fråga
- Tävlning
- Debatt
- Rörigt/I.Jud
- Chart
- Läsarbild
- Livesändning

► När kan materialet publiceras:.....

TÄNK PÅ VÅRA KÄRNVÄRDEN

- ✓ MÅNGFACETERAD
- ✓ URBAN
- ✓ TROVÄRDIG

## 3. Finns det någon bra uppföljning?

## 4. Hur ska kors-hänvisningarna formuleras?



*Desktop pad for all reporters*

# Transforming print content

Integrate  
d and  
Paid For  
content  
strategie  
s

We had noticed that print tends to get left behind when newsrooms go into more integrated thinking. But we combined the process of **4D thinking** into print

- We decided to **restructure the content** and design of the print product to be more aligned to the lifestyles and needs of our seven target groups
- Each day of the week holds something special for different target groups. Monday is for sports, Tuesdays for family, Wednesday culture and so on. **Surveys also showed that the readers appreciated the redesign and the content changes**
- We also ran a marketing campaign that actively involved the audience in **listening to their opinions of VK** and using that material in the run up to the content change in the newspaper
- Redesigning the newspaper brought us much closer to our seven target groups and

**KULTUR** Kristian Lundberg oförsonlig i En hemstad  
**SPORT** Stressfraktur stoppar Iksu-stjärnan

**TORSDAG 25 APRIL 2013**  
Vecka 17, Nr 96, Prenumerand: 8 kronor, Löshummer: 20 kronor,  
NORRLANDS STÖRSTA TIDNING

## Västerbottens-Kuriren



### Knivkastning på skola polisanmäld

**SKADEGÖRELSE.** Sju elever på Tannbergsskolan ordnade en knivkastningstävling på skoltid. Knivarna, som kastades i ett byggtält på skolan, orsakade skador för uppemot 80 000 kronor.

INLANDET-KUSTEN SID 15

### Tumme upp eller ned?

Med en ny mobilapp från Lantbrukarnas riksförbund ska konsumenterna lättare hitta svenska råvaror i landets matbutiker. Appen, som heter Ronde på köpet, skannar av produktens streckkod och ger konsumenten tummen upp om den innehåller svenska råvaror. Annars ned.

UMEÅ SID 9



### LÄS OCKSÅ I DAGENS VK



### Sponsoravtal bryts upp

Sponsoringbolaget Infront anklagas för att hitta sponsorer till kulturhuvudsädsåret. Detta har företaget misshandlat med, därför bryter nu Umeå kommun samarbetet.

UMEÅ SID 8



### Tambur ett V75-hopp

Anatorträneren Thule Jonsson har fem drävlingshästar hemma i Rökback och fyra av dem startar under Umeå V75-dagen på onsdag. Mest uppmärksamhet drar Tamara till sig.

SPORT SID 14



7 588156 602006

**VK**  
Västerbottens-Kuriren

# Changing the structure

Workflows  
and  
structure

- Around the same time we went through an experiment of combining VK resources with its sister title Folkbladet. We placed the newsdesks of Folkbladet, our sister paper, close to our VK newsdesk. We also combined production, photography and sports departments
- This forced us even more to work harder every day on keeping the brands separate on all platforms.
- *After going into 4D thinking and changes to print, we realized that we had to build on these **structural changes** to find more time in the newsroom to dedicate to creative planning and coordination. So we built new workflows to show how that would work.*
- VK went to a more design driven workflow to help save time and work closer to finishing print pages earlier. This got section heads and journalists more involved in how their stories would look on paper.
- These changes freed up more time to plan across all the desks with 4D model we had created.

# “Fram” project

Audience Focus  
and core  
values

- It took us several months of training, coaching, trialing, monitoring and learning from the changes to 4D thinking and new ways to share resource and build print pages
- In January 2013 we were ready to start thinking about the next level – going into Paid For models
- We established a cross departmental team; business development, Sales, IT.... This team had the responsibility over Project Fram. Fram was the vessel used by Amundsen in the Arctic exploration and because it had gone further north than any other vessel of its fleet and were built so strong it could handle the pressure from the arctic ice. This represented our ambition
- Our goal was not only to get people to pay, but it was to further develop the relationship we had with our audience by making high value content irresistible online and in print
- Our first questions were **‘How do we understand what people value, which of our audience groups would be willing to pay and how must we change our publishing strategy to accommodate that?’**

# Fram Research

Audience Focus  
and core  
values

***One of the most valuable lessons learned in Amanda was the value of using research effectively***

- At the start of Fram we were very careful to analyze
  - Lessons learned from the experimentation of others
  - Potentials in the audience groups for transactional relationships
  - What kind of content people valued enough to pay for
  - Where were our audience groups already paying for content in digital platforms
  - Which kinds of audience would not be interested in paying for content (just yet)
  - Different types of loyalty in audience and how this is relevant in Paid For
  - The best possible pricing model options
  - How to set special pricing offers and models to encourage more signing ups
  - Different kinds of technology options

# Publishing strategy: 4D to 5D

Integrated and Paid For content strategies

- The research results showed us that we could easily build on the work we had started with 4D integration. So we looked at adding another dimension to the model – whether to charge for aspects of the content or not is essentially our ‘5th dimension’
- We developed the 4D strategy to include what kind of content should be free/premium. We got together pilot groups from across the newsroom and each section worked through hundreds of stories, themes, events etc and planned for which aspects would be free or paid for.
- All of this was documented in our Publishing Strategy which provided guidelines to all staff about the best way to go about paid for/free
- Like in 4D work, staff were trained and coached for a period of time to help them understand and adjust to 5D thinking

- What's really important is content and ensuring content



- about the value of paid use premium

# Website redesign

Integrated and Paid For content strategies

- Fram gave us a wonderful reason to **redesign the entire digital platforms.** We created a team from staff across the organization and students from Umeå university who worked on the new structure and design. We also launched a new mobile version.
- With the website we went for a much more streamlined, opened up design making more of images, video, accessibility to content.
- We created a site that could handle all our journalism. **160 articles per day is published.**
- We also made more of our brand and our strong news stories



Before



After

We also innovated our  
marketing campaign for  
introducing Paid For

Västerbottens-  
Kuriren



På fredag lär du bli förvånad.  
För då lanseras nya VK.

Västerbottens-  
Kuriren



På fredag lär du bli förvånad.  
För då lanseras nya VK.

Västerbottens-  
Kuriren



På fredag lär du bli förvånad.  
För då lanseras nya VK.

Västerbottens-  
Kuriren



På fredag lär du bli förvånad.  
För då lanseras nya VK.

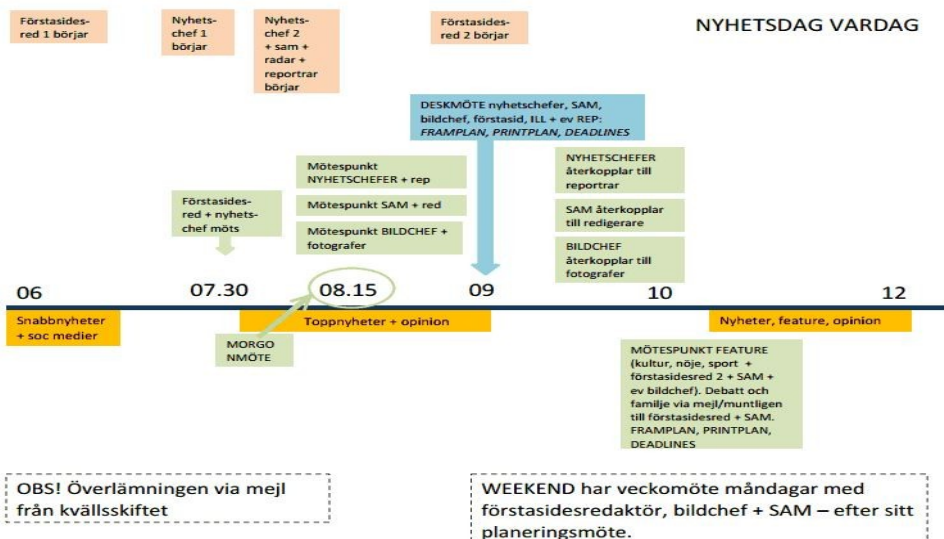
**This wrap from the day  
before the redesign says: “  
You’ll be surprised by what  
we will launch this Friday”**

# Changing how we work

Workflows  
and  
structure

- Our section heads became responsible for deciding which content should be free and paid for.
- The web team work alongside our section heads supporting them in that decision and executing them.
- All journalists are responsible for generating ideas, suggestions and ultimately ensuring free/premium content is uploaded.
- We rethought all of our meetings to ensure we had enough time to work out how to handle web and print.
- We transformed all of our shifts to ensure requirements of a full day.

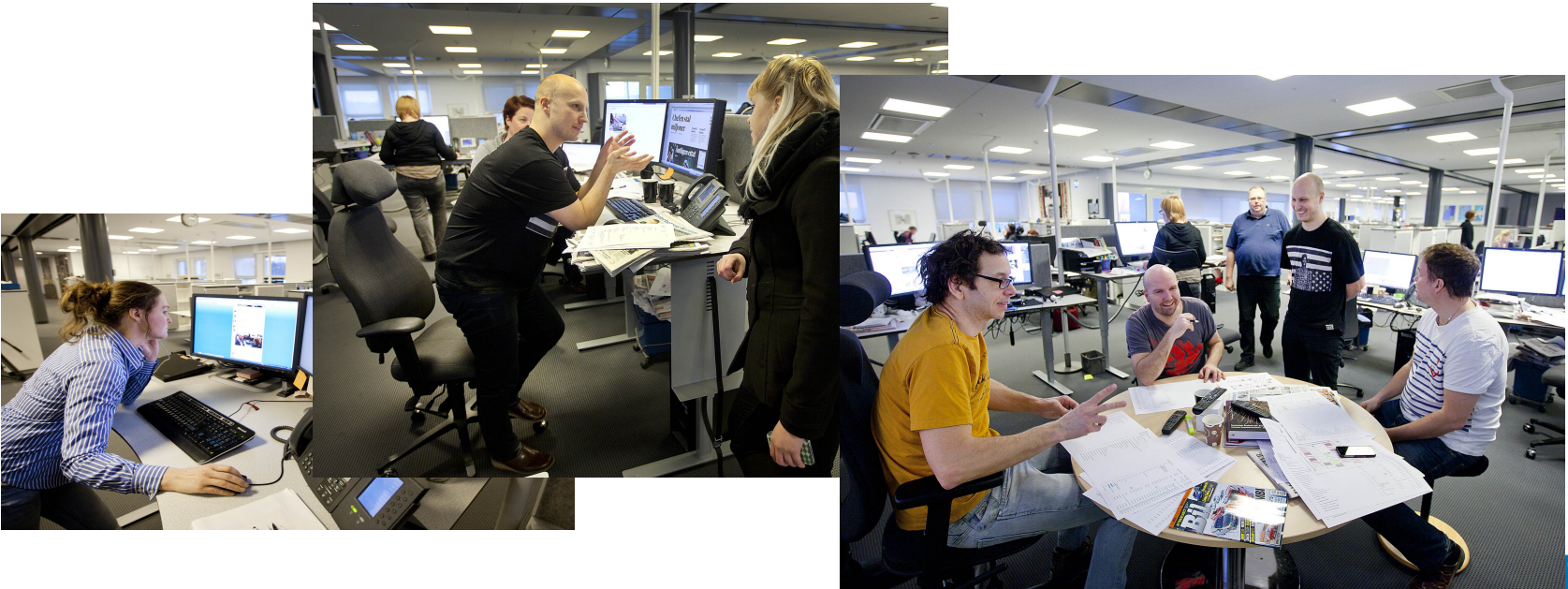
## Beslutsmodell



# Working together better

Workflows  
and  
structure

- We introduced new roles to help ensure a more balanced **focus on fast**, action content and planned more **longer tail material**
- One of the best things is that our decision makers now sit much more closer together and **work together** throughout the whole day
- We have created continuous improvement measures such as teams of editorial staff called **‘Quality Circles’** who are responsible for monitoring and improving how we work



# Results

*After 15 000 working hours we launched Paid For at the end of October 2013*

- Now with integration and a digital pay model we can **offer almost our entire production to our readers**, that gives them the opportunity to consume when they want to, on the platform of their choosing.
- That also gives us the possibility to publish our content when the interest is at its peak.
- Before we had 2 products, we now aim for 200.
- We have also maximised our options to **reach totally different groups we didn't think we could beforehand**
- Within the first few weeks we reached all of our targets
- **60 percent** of our subscribers on print is now also use our premium content online.
- **85 percent** of the readers that took the offer to pay 1 krona for a digital subscription is now paying full prize.
- The decline in number of subscribers overall has **stopped.**

# We learned that innovation....

... doesn't have to be fancy, separate process which only involves a small amount of people locked away in a room miles away

... needs to **involve everyone** at some level

... must be seen as an experimentation process where **mistakes are welcome**

... is a growing process of leadership - you discover your **high potentials** during innovation exercises

... doesn't have to be expensive

... needs facts and stats and good diagnosis of **analysis** to get it going in the right direction

... innovation is a series of small wins that gets us closer to our goal of being audience focused

... enabled us to integrate first and this prepared us well for Paid For.