



**DRIVING INNOVATION AND CREATING NEW PATHWAYS FOR
EMERGING FILM PRODUCERS**

**REMARKS DELIVERED BY CAROLLE BRABANT,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TELEFILM CANADA**

LOCARNO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Executive Director of Telefilm Canada, it is my great pleasure to be with you today at the Locarno International Film Festival.

Over the years, many Canadian filmmakers have been honoured here, among them Philippe Falardeau with *Monsieur Lazhar*, and *Guibord s'en va-t'en guerre* [*My Internship in Canada*], shown in 2015 on the Piazza Grande; Louise Archambault, the director of *Gabrielle*; Andrew Cividino and his first feature *Sleeping Giant*; and, of course, Denis Côté, who has won five awards in five years for films including *Les États nordiques* [*Drifting States*] and *Curling*.

This year, I'm delighted to see Locarno present the Colombia-Canada coproduction *Mañana a esta hora* [*The Future is Here*], by Lina Rodriguez.

Today, I'm going to talk to you about three things: 1) our strategic vision at Telefilm, which will soon be turning 50 but is still on the cutting edge; 2) a program for emerging feature filmmakers that fully embodies our vision; and 3) a few learnings from our innovative approaches to audience engagement.

In the words of Michael Gubbins, a British expert on the digital economy: "More choice is going to be a permanent fact of life."

We live in a changing environment led by digital revolution. This presents challenges but also myriad possibilities for our national cinemas.

Strategic vision

Telefilm's vision for 2015-2018, set out in a strategic plan titled *Inspired by Talent. Viewed Everywhere*, is a change maker. This vision is both demanding and exciting. I share the opinion of Margaret J. Wheatley, an authority on leadership in chaotic times, who said: "The things we fear most in organizations – fluctuations, disturbances, imbalances – are the primary sources of creativity."

Creativity – for me, that's the key word. Yesterday's best strategies and practices have to be reinvented.

Public agencies like Telefilm must take multipronged action – acquiring new expertise and sharing it; fine-tuning funding sources; adapting their programs and making them flexible; and forging increasingly creative partnerships. That is what we have done and what we continue to do.

The first priority of our strategic plan is to relentlessly promote and market first-class Canadian productions, including the coproductions we make with you.

The second is to provide stakeholders with relevant, forward-looking research and metrics to help them make well-informed business decisions.

Among other things, we publish reports, studies and surveys on new consumer trends and on the habits of heavy movie consumers, giving producers and distributors effective tools to refine their marketing strategies.

Since 2011, Telefilm's Success Index has annually measured the commercial, cultural and industrial performance of the films we fund. This gives us a more complete and accurate picture of how the portfolio is evolving – in terms of domestic sales, foreign sales, sales on different platforms, festival selections and awards, as well as the proportion of private and foreign investment.

We constantly refine this tool and will soon be incorporating data on viewership and on digital marketing, which have become key conditions for success.

Thirdly, we encourage innovative marketing practices.

Our fourth priority is industry financing. In order to diversify the funding sources, we established the Talent Fund, a private donation fund backed by major companies such as Bell Media and Corus Entertainment, but also by individual Canadians eager to support homegrown film. This fund primarily targets emerging filmmakers and international promotion.

Lastly, and this is our fifth priority, we encourage an ecosystem of companies that can deliver a wide variety of productions, from experimental films to big-budget movies.

Micro-Budget Production Program

Speaking of which... investing in emerging talent, supporting it in a risky environment by sharing the risk, helping newcomers develop digital promotion and distribution expertise as well as build an audience was a gamble that paid off, largely thanks to the Micro-Budget Production Program, which funds first feature films.

Before I tell you more about it, let's watch a short video with the teams of the projects the Program selected in June 2016.

You'll be seeing many of them at festivals, I'm sure! And who knows, they may work with you one day on coproductions!

We created the Micro-Budget Production Program with several partners across the country four years ago.

We're working to find the next Louise Archambaults and Philippe Falardeaus, and we're also striving to create a sense of pride in homegrown cinema among Canadians from all regions of the country.

So far, the Program has funded 55 debut features with budgets under \$250,000. Its three components support a wide variety of projects, including films by Aboriginal talent like Adam Garnet Jones (*Fire Song*) and Sonia Bonspille Boileau (*Le dep*). This program ensures a healthy talent pipeline.

I'm happy to note that gender equity is a reality among this new generation, with women occupying their rightful place in one or more key positions as director, writer or producer on these films.

The 37 features funded by the Program have taken home a dozen awards. And recently *The Space Between*, by Amy Jo Johnson, and *The Devout*, by Connor Gaston, were in competition in Shanghai. Not bad for micro-budget films!

This program is a collective Canadian effort to support the country's up-and-coming filmmakers. It works with a nationwide network of more than 40 training institutions and film co-ops that annually recommends projects by their most promising students.

Seventy-seven percent of the Program is funded by Telefilm's Talent Fund, which enables the work of even more new talent to be produced, seen and recognized.

Among other partnerships, Technicolor offers free digital distribution encoding services for the selected projects.

And Telefilm continues to innovate.

Recently, we increased our per-project financial contribution to cover the cost of a digital marketing and social media expert. And all funded projects will have to be made available on Telefilm's online channel, which will be featured on the National Film Board of Canada's paid streaming platform.

But what are some of the things we've learned from this program?

I am pleased to be launching *Case Studies on Marketing, Distribution and Audience Engagement Using Digital Channels* at Locarno, studies of three films from the Micro-Budget Production Program, and to tell you about a few learnings we can draw from their experiences and from our surveys and research on the subject. You can read the studies on our Website and learn a lot more.

You're all marketing experts; so the learnings I'll be talking about aren't new to you. But what's interesting, even for lower budget indie films, is that the new platforms allow you to engage fans right from the start and to keep boosting their interest throughout the process.

Un film de chasse de filles [Girls on the Hunt]

First of all, *Un film de chasse de filles*, in which Julie Lambert recounts the stories of female hunters aged 14 to 77, tells how her own prejudices about hunting changed as the production advanced.

Her film has been translated into 20 languages and shown in over 200 territories by TV5 Monde.

More than 25% of the film's advertising budget was tied to Facebook and the pro- and anti-hunting debates ran hot and heavy. Google AdWords and banners on geolocated hunting and fishing Websites were also beneficial.

The Editor

The Editor was inspired by the Italian film genre called *giallo*, which was popular in the 70s and 80s. It is the story of a famous editor handicapped by a workplace accident. When his collaborators die, one after the other, he becomes the prime suspect!

The film has played with success at some 20 Canadian and foreign festivals.

The target audience for Adam Brooks and Matthew Kennedy was the young generation that thrives on irony and lives at an online pace.

Fan support was so strong that the film came up on the first page in Google searches. And the crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo was a success, exceeding expectations by nearly 15 % – a good way to involve fans in the making of a film.

Cast No Shadow

Cast No Shadow is the story of an eight-year-old boy who escapes a difficult home life through imagination.

The film was released in Canadian theatres and on several platforms. It won praise at the Pusan and Berlin festivals as well as earned six awards at the Atlantic Film Festival.

Cast No Shadow demonstrated that theatres, digital platforms and festival play complementary productive roles when it comes to marketing: it was enthusiastically hailed at the Toronto International Film Festival and the Atlantic Canada community rightfully embraced it as a regional treasure!

A few learnings on digital marketing

The best way to get people talking about a micro-budget film is through successful digital marketing. I'll sum up in five points the learnings we have drawn from our experiences. They are applicable to all types of film.

Content of the marketing experience

To engage audiences we need to speak their language. The first rule to achieve this is to define the target audience not in a generic manner, such as all horror-film fans, but to define what are called *personas* according to their favourite media, their income, marital status, preferred sports, the online sites they visit, and the tone and voice that touch them most.

Speak directly to your target public, be they hunting or *giallo* fans. Gathering and using information about your market gives you an important advantage.

Engage in conversation with your fans right from the start. Provide constant updates on the project and engage your fans with well-planned information that keeps them coming back for more and fuels the conversation.

Channels

Being everywhere to everyone is impossible and ineffective; you must be selective, targeted and shareable.

You need to ask yourself these questions: On what online distribution channel does my audience consume videos, where do they go for film reviews, and who are the bloggers and influencers they follow most?

Great content needs to be supported by calls-to-action. All stakeholders should play a role in marketing activities – producers, directors, cast, crew and fans. Whenever possible, meet your fans in person, organize Q&As, and don't forget to bring cast members along!

Your fans will be your best partners! Users who engaged socially with film content were found to be six times more likely to purchase movie tickets.

Timing

Audiences are not willing to wait. The *when* is just as important as the *what*.

Trailers should be released close to the premiere. Forty-two percent of shares of a trailer release occur on day one, with 62% occurring within three days.

Resources

Don't hesitate to incorporate a paid advertising campaign into your organic advertising on sites that interest your audience if you want to reach that public quickly.

Consider related advertising. For *The Editor*, the team had Graham Humphrey (an illustrator famed for horror film art) create several related pieces that fans snapped up.

Digital marketing is complex and ever changing. Call on outside experts, PR or digital marketing specialists, for example, if you don't have in-house expertise. And do it on day one!

Metrics

And finally, never forget that metrics are important. They allow for real-time adaptability of tactics, which serves as a guide to do more of what is working.

Telefilm began by requesting metrics that would measure key performances indicators relevant to digital marketing, such as trailer viewership, number of fans on Facebook and Twitter, crowdfunding campaigns, etc. In fact, we also want to measure fan engagement right from the start. This will make it easier to evaluate the impact of digital marketing strategies and to promote best practices. A lot of knowledge can make up for a little budget!

One thing is sure: we must continue to support emerging feature film talent in an ever-more fragmented environment. And we all need to become more agile and more creative in distribution in order to make the most of the momentum building around audience engagement.

Thank you for your attention. I hope you will continue this conversation on the wonderful world of digital!