

BLOG

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The Integrative Strategic Move of "Doubling Down"

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In our work at the [Desautels Centre for Integrative Thinking](#), we've been studying integrative strategies and so far we've have uncovered three distinct types of integrative strategic moves. I will dedicate each of three posts to one of them, starting with Piers Handling of the Toronto International Film Festival's [decision to create a People's Choice Award, a move that went against much of the conventional film festival wisdom.](#)

It is an example of the integrative move that we call a **'double down'**— i.e. pushing down so hard on the key attribute of one model, that the benefit of the other model is produced. In this case, the integrative move converted the trade-off between inclusivity and buzz into a solution: inclusivity that produces buzz.

What was the thinking process Handling used?

First, he really understood the logical mechanisms that produced both models. And he didn't confuse them. He understood and appreciated both of them. So he fully understood the logical mechanisms that produced a feeling of inclusivity: the absence of

a jury of experts; lots of films to view rather than a small set of pre-screened films; easy access for the viewing public rather than velvet ropes keeping out the riffraff.

But he also fully understood what mechanisms produce buzz: a prestigious jury, preferably chaired by **Quentin Tarantino**; a focal point prize; stars and red carpets; and adoring press/paparazzi. Not only that, he took the time to really understand the economic value of buzz. Buzz creates a virtual spiral that brings together both the producers who want to sell their movies and who bring along their directors and stars to help sell, and the distributors who want to buy their movies and who bring along their checkbooks. Without buzz, producers and distributors don't come and the economic driver of a film festival withers. With buzz, the right people are there to create deals which make a festival economically vibrant.

With the thorough understanding of the logical structures of the opposing models in his head, Handling was able to ask himself: Is there any way that inclusivity could produce buzz and in particular the kind of buzz that reinforced the positive economic logic of the festival?

Note that very importantly, he didn't throw inclusivity overboard because it seemed to be a roadblock to buzz. Instead he asked whether there was a way to make inclusivity work for him rather than against buzz.

The answer lay in the economic logic rather than the artistic logic. Directors might want films that were artistic successes whether or not they were commercially attractive or even viable. But distributors wanted something that sold tickets. That was their economic motivation for showing up at film festivals. And if they didn't show up at all, there wouldn't be a high motivation for producers/directors to bring their films. Buzz of the sort that helped the distributors was a critical kind of buzz.

And that was the People's Choice Award. It created buzz — who was going to win the big award? But at the same time, it created a really useful barometer for distributors to judge whether the movie would be a commercial success because the Toronto film festival audience (unlike the Cannes Jury) was a great predictor of the broader audience.

Hence the double down: an inclusivity-oriented prize that would generate buzz in a way that triggered the best economic benefits — the People's Choice.

That is one flavor of integrative thinking. Next up will be 'decomposition' and then 'hidden gem'.

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