



Right: Beth Harris

BBC Drama Village: how using National Occupational Standards can improve efficiency at BBC Wales whilst helping the industry benefit from a transient workforce

Background

BBC Wales is the national broadcaster of Wales, producing a range of programming from news and factual to drama, entertainment and sport. BBC Wales is responsible for producing local and network output for the BBC and is home to several major drama series, which in recent years has included Doctor Who, Casualty, Torchwood, Upstairs Downstairs, Pobol y Cwm and The Fabulous Baker Boys. BBC Wales also delivers output to its radio and online audiences.

BBC Wales relocated its drama production base to Cardiff Bay in September 2011. This included moving from two sites with different drama output onto one site known as Roath Lock, along with the integration of the long-running Casualty series into the BBC Wales Drama production department from its long-standing Bristol base.

Using NOS

Endaf Williams, Head of Production Change, who is part of the team who managed the move to the new Roath Lock facility in Cardiff Bay, has been looking at opportunities for drama teams to work closer together, and for the recruitment process to be more streamlined:

“Making the move to Cardiff Bay has been a catalyst to using National Occupational Standards (NOS),” he says. “During this time we recognised that we needed to become more efficient and, also we needed to adopt a more standardised approach across production.”

Skillset (the Sector Skills Council, SSC), who set the standards in the television industry, have been the driving force behind the introduction of NOS at BBC Wales. Skillset have an affiliation with the BBC and have an agreed Memorandum of Understanding between both parties. One area that BBC Wales are currently using NOS for is in relation to the Apprenticeship Scheme:

“We have been liaising with Skillset on job specifications, training and the overall framework,” states Endaf. “We are also working with them on standardising the job roles within a drama landscape.”

“We anticipate that by using NOS within the BBC, we will ultimately simplify the recruitment process, further improve cost efficiency and the industry will use its time more effectively.”



Left to right: Beth Harris, Tom Morrey, David Palfrey, Lydia Ellis-Williams

NOS and apprenticeships

The 12 apprentices who will be appointed as part of the Apprenticeship Scheme will be working on many of the drama series that are made in Wales. Discussions started a year ago between BBC Wales and Skillset to review what the requirements were, and what skills were needed. The four categories of apprentices to be appointed will be in post-production, make-up and costume, craft and set design, and camera.

“Following our brief, Skillset developed the apprenticeship roles according to NOS,” says Endaf, “then we worked within that framework. By using NOS, a fair amount of standardisation has been created within the job roles. Such standardisation is important to us because roles within the industry are quite transient. We could have, for instance, somebody working in the independent sector moving to the BBC or ITV, so having standard skills which are recognised across the industry within different organisations is very attractive to us.”

To date the take up in applications has been significant, with several hundred applications for the Apprenticeship Scheme, which will provide 12 roles in the BBC and an aspiration to include a similar number in the independent sector:

“We have had a good structure from which to work and would hope that by using the NOS standards, in the future, we can draw candidates from all areas of the industry and be able to simplify the recruitment process and continue to raise our standards at the BBC,” says Endaf.

Improving production and output with NOS

BBC Wales Drama has rationalised job descriptions from 240 roles to just over one hundred roles; these have subsequently been organised into a job family. It is hoped that there will be industry-wide take up of the job family concept so that employers and the workforce are working in a recognised framework:

“In the past, we have been working where there are six or seven job titles for the same role, so this is where we want one standard industry job role – not half a dozen!”, states Endaf, “The BBC would prefer to know what is included in the job roles so that training and development can be tailored to employees when they are at BBC Wales. NOS will lighten our workload if we use one job specification across the industry and I can certainly see the benefits of applying NOS in the recruitment process.”

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