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Adam Crozier issues warning over diversity complacency

19 January, 2016 | By Lisa Campbell



ITV chief executive Adam Crozier has welcomed the progress made by broadcasters on diversity but warned against celebrating victory too soon.

"If this is a five-day Test Match, we're halfway through the first morning," he told the audience at Channel 4's diversity conference today (19 January), adding that projects demanding significant cultural change take five to 10 years.

Crozier, who appeared on the panel alongside BBC director general Tony Hall and Channel 4 chief executive David Abraham to discuss each broadcaster's diversity initiatives, stressed the commercial importance of the issue to ITV.

"We pride ourselves as being at the heart of popular culture, and to be successful commercially, we want to attract the largest possible audience, and if we want to do that, we have to reflect modern Britain today," he said.

Crozier singled out ITV initiatives including linking senior executives' bonuses to diversity targets; widening its recruitment pool by using organisations such as TriForce; and delivering more than 40 hours of training to 100 creatives.

"We've made huge progress on the drama side, and the soaps continue to drive storylines," he said.

He conceded however that the least progress had been made around disability.

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"People talk about disability, but often what they mean is physical disability. As the father of a daughter with learning difficulties, I know it's not portrayed well – and is often quite rude and very backward. I'm determined to make progress on it. People are very fearful of doing and saying the wrong thing. We have to collectively find a way of addressing it."

BBC strategy

Tony Hall revealed he was extending the BBC's £3.5m investment in on and off-screen black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) talent, and said that the scheme to train 30 young people had resulted in 70% finding permanent jobs.



First Dates

Hall also singled out the importance of social diversity, highlighting the BBC's ongoing apprentice initiatives in the nations and regions.

"I'm a big believer in apprenticeships and we hit our target early," he said. "Every local radio station has an apprentice and they work because you can live in your area, but can make contacts and networks to build a career."

Hall highlighted that the gender split of the corporation is "more or less 50/50" with 42% of managers being female. Local radio, which previously had a male presenter bias, is now split 50/50. "It shows that the organisation responds when we say this matters to us," he added.

Channel 4: reflecting young audiences

David Abraham said that progress on-screen was already well underway as part of Channel 4's Diversity Charter, with a commitment to feature more diverse casts and contributors in mainstream shows such as Humans [pictured] and First Dates.

"Channel 4 aims to appeal to the tastes of younger audiences – they are significantly more diverse than the over-65s so it's only right we reflect this natural diversity," he said.

Abraham also singled out talent days, C4 PopUps, as a way of addressing social mobility issues nationwide, and said the broadcaster would "remain very focused on in-house diversity" by working with recruitment agencies and headhunters.

The chief exec claimed that improving diversity levels required investment, with C4 committing £5m per year, as well as an additional £300,000 for disability projects.

However, he raised concern that were the broadcaster privatized, "the remit would get sliced away overnight".

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Sky targets



Fortitude

Sky head of drama Anne Mensah offered an update on the diversity targets set by former director of entertainment channels Stuart Murphy in 2014 for 20% of on-screen talent and writing teams to consist of BAME individuals.

“The feeling was that it was important to be simple and direct and give clear and measurable objectives,” said Mensah.

She added that Sky was unafraid to dictate who indies should work with on a particular project, whether a BAME writer or a female director.

“It’s not worrying about the politeness of it,” she said. “If you can find people from Outer Mongolia to feature on shows, you can find people from different backgrounds to work on them.”

Culture minister Ed Vaizey encouraged broadcasters to push forward with diversity plans, particularly measurement system Project Diamond.

“I don’t want the best to be the enemy of the good,” he said. “I don’t want to be back in a year’s time and hear ‘we’re were almost ready, we just have to tweak it to make it good’.”