

Can George Entwistle save the BBC?

Asked to name a key challenge for his successor, outgoing BBC Director General Mark Thompson **earlier this year** said it was all about finding a way to allocate the organisation's diminishing resources to advance the BBC's remit. A day after taking office, the new BBC chief, George Entwistle, **revealed** just how he intends to make this happen.



New BBC Director-General George Entwistle

The first step is increased operational efficiency. Confronted with an uneasy mix of financial pressures and growing commercial targets, Entwistle announced that he plans to halve BBC's management board—from 25 to 12. He will also merge its operational wing, which includes its marketing and human resources departments, with its financial division, thus putting it under the guidance of the BBC's chief financial officer.

By focussing on structural simplification, Entwistle appears to be addressing a longstanding criticism that has only grown stronger as the public service broadcaster continues to take on more spending cuts: over-management. Another object of press scrutiny, the exorbitant fees of its big-name performers, has not escaped his notice. An **interview with Radio Times** found him defending BBC's roster of top stars but also acknowledging the need to be on the lookout for emerging talent.

The second step is creativity. Production of high quality content has long been a stated priority of the BBC, but with a licence fee level frozen until 2016 and a 20% slash—equivalent to £700 million—on its pre-existing £3.5 billion annual budget, this is proving to be an increasingly difficult task. Amidst incessant detractor comments about the BBC's industry-distorting size, Entwistle has promised to maintain all of its existing TV and radio services. He also promised to make the BBC's output worth every payer's license fee; hence the stress on creative thinking and programming to meet heightened viewer expectations.

These measures are also part of the long preparation for the next round of negotiations for the BBC charter – which must be completed by 2016. Entwistle will have to take the lead in justifying a funding scheme that will only become more questionable as competitors continue to bite into the scope and influence of the Corporation. The new director-general has begun the hard task of convincing the Government and the public of the BBC's public value.

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