

# Axes of Value

Colin M Wilding

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## We Are Not Alone

The idea started with a bad pun. While I was working on an amoeba for Jess and Alban I happened to be looking around the internet for examples of radar charts being described as spider-web charts. I came upon this example<sup>1</sup>:

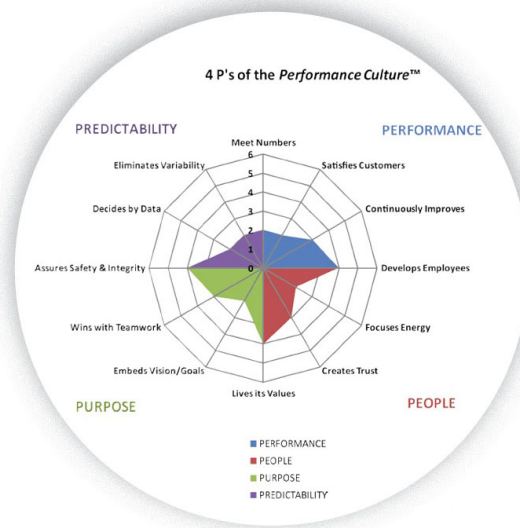


Figure 1: Performance Culture Spider Chart: Sample Data

Clearly the division of the chart into four quadrants with a number of components in each has a lot in common with the CV Framework. But there is an important difference: there are no separate axes – instead there are components at the boundaries of the quadrants. How was this

<sup>1</sup>[http://reliabilityweb.com/index.php/articles/creating\\_the\\_performance\\_culture](http://reliabilityweb.com/index.php/articles/creating_the_performance_culture)

achieved? Looking further, I realised that the boundary components reflected topics that linked the quadrants. So, for example 'Develops Employees' is a component relevant to People and to Performance.

Is this relevant to Cultural Value? I think it is.

## Common components

An aspect of the CVF which I have been uneasy about is the fact that some components are indeed relevant to more than one quadrant. Quality, for example, turns up more than once; and other topics appear in slightly different form in more than one component. At the moment the components are not arranged in any particular order, and it struck me that with a judicious re-arrangement it might be possible find components that would serve to link the quadrants. And so it proved. Not only that, I found that the four common components were particularly important ones.

**Reach:** The size of the audience (user base) has always been the single most important measure of performance to funders. But it is also the best measure of the extent to which users value BBC World Service (WS). Users vote with their feet. At present the idea is probably implicit in Utility (if people find WS useful they use it) and Distinctiveness. But it deserves to be mentioned in its own right as a measure of user value. So Reach unites **Users** and **Funders**.

**Engagement:** Producers want to engage with their audience. Users want content that engages them, that they can relate to and participate in. WS has often tried to identify within the overall user base a core audience that engages with the content. So Engagement links **Producers** and **Users**.

**Quality:** Producers are strongly motivated by pride in their work. They want to produce high quality output. Managers also strive for quality, seeking to make the BBC the 'best broadcaster'. So Quality links **Producers** and **Managers**.

**Mission:** The idea that WS has a defined public service remit is central to the relationship between it the FCO, and in discussions about WS (as, for example, in the Independent On Sunday article) there is a strong wish on the part of WS' advocates to preserve its traditional values. In the Funders quadrant the remit is largely expressed under 'Diplomatic'. For Managers we currently have 'Legacy'; 'Mission' retains the idea of continuing to hold to what is most important, but is perhaps more forward-looking. So 'Mission' links **Managers** and **Funders**.

## Axes

The four linked components therefore form the axes of the CVF:

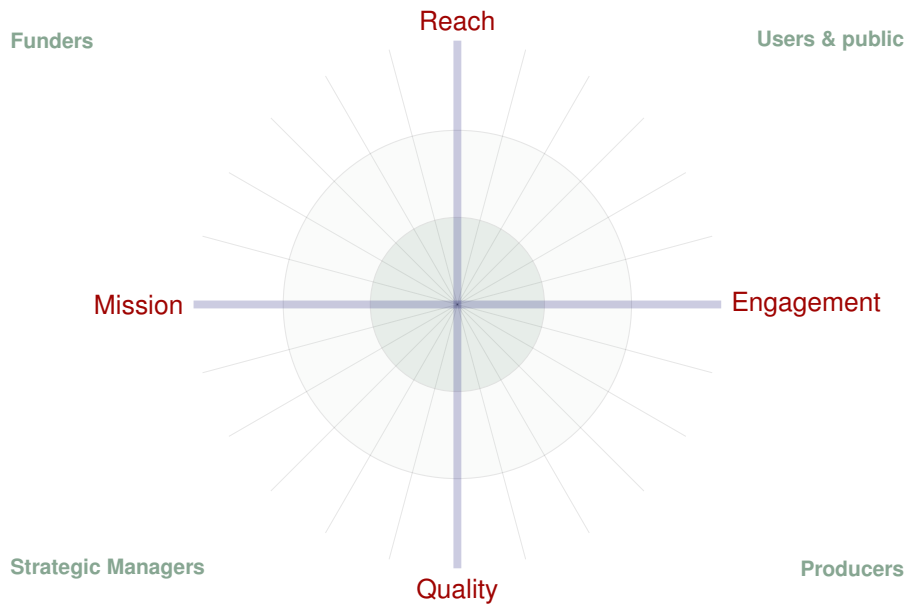


Figure 2: Axes of CVF

Once I had pulled these components out separately I realised that these were in fact arguably the four most important components. Reach, Engagement and Quality have long been the key concepts in performance assessment, along with Trust. The need for WS to fulfil its remit (purpose, mission) has always been fundamental to its relationship with its funders and other stakeholders; and as ‘being trusted’ has always been part of its remit the concept of Trust finds a place here.

Further, the value pairings that frame the quadrants also make sense:

### **Users – Reach-Engagement:**

WS seeks to maintain and expand its large audience; at the same time it is widely recognized that counting heads is not enough; it is important to attract a core audience of people who engage with the content and with the organisation.

### **Producers – Quality-Engagement:**

Producers want to communicate with, engage with, provoke a reaction in, their audience. At the same time they have an uncompromising commitment to high quality journalism and professional standards.

**Managers – Mission-Quality:**

Senior Managers bear the responsibility of ensuring that WS fulfils its mission, and they are committed to it (despite what their detractors may claim). They recognize that the way to achieve that is through high quality output.

**Funders – Mission-reach:**

Funders have always regarded reaching a large audience as a key measure of the success of WS. But large audiences are not an end in themselves, it is essential that the content delivered to these audiences serves the overall mission. Some funders, e.g. advertisers, may be more interested in the reach than the mission but it would be wrong to suggest that they would be happy to see WS compromise on its values for the sake of increased audience.

**Other components**

Once these four components are moved to the axes we need to re-configure the remaining components. Here is a first attempt to do that.

**Users:** Engagement would replace Participation; Reach could possible replace Utility with some re-working.

**Producers:** Quality would replace Professional; Engagement remains.

**Managers:** Mission replaces Legacy; Quality remains.

**Funders:** Mission replaces Diplomatic; Reach remains.

The main need for reconfiguring is in Users, where Reach becomes the measure of Utility. Perhaps some of the other aspects of Utility could be built into Quality.

It therefore becomes possible for the total number of components to be reduced from 20 to 16 – 4 shared and 4 x 3 separate:



Figure 3: Axes and components

## Example: 100 Women

On this basis the 100 Women amoeba might look like this:



Figure 4: 100 Women (16 components)

It is also interesting to see what happens if you plot just the shape of the main axes:

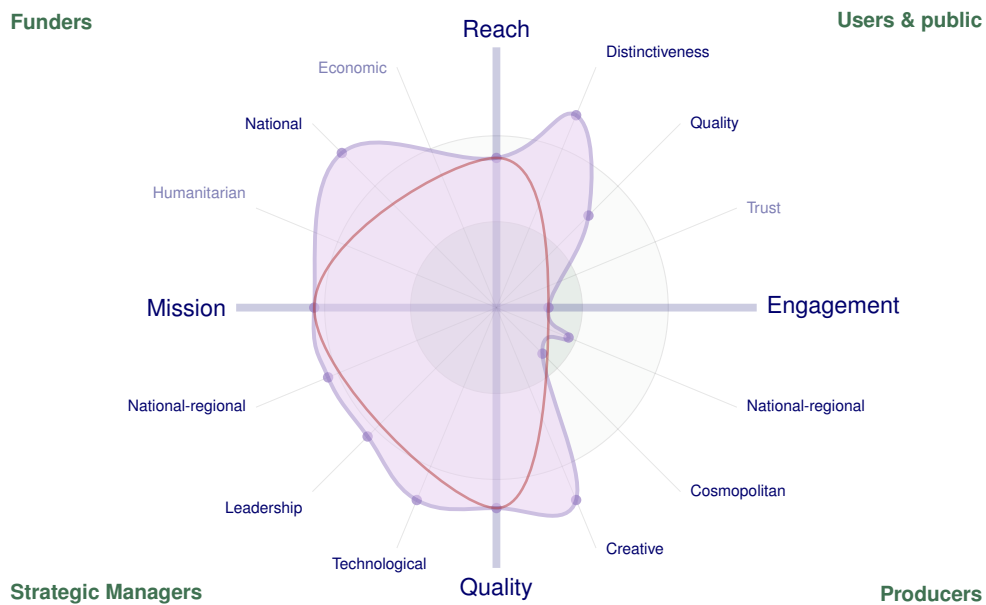


Figure 5: 100 Women (16 components) with axis plot

Whilst the axis shape loses some of the nuances it is broadly consistent with the thrust of the full amoeba and provides an accessible summary.

## A more modest proposal

The idea of the four main components does seem to me to be useful. There are advantages to simplifying the chart, but we may feel that this represents too big a change. There is a way to modify the existing chart so that it retains the detail but better reflects the relationship between some of the components and allows for the concept of the main axes to be developed as well.

By re-ordering the existing components we can place certain components either side of the axis that they relate to:

- Reach:** Utility on the Users' side, Reach on the Funders' side.
- Mission:** Diplomatic (Funders) and Legacy (Managers).
- Quality:** Quality (Managers) and Professional (Producers).
- Engagement:** Engagement (Producers) and Participation (Users).

This is what the 100 Women chart would then look like:

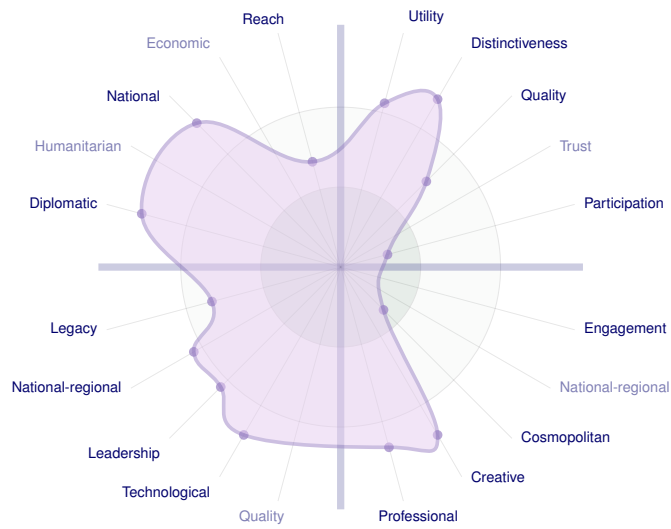


Figure 6: 100 Women (20 components)

The overall shape of the amoeba is like the one in Figure 4 above, but you can see the difference between the scores for Reach and Utility, and between Diplomatic and Legacy.

With this arrangement we could represent the main axes using the average of the components either side:

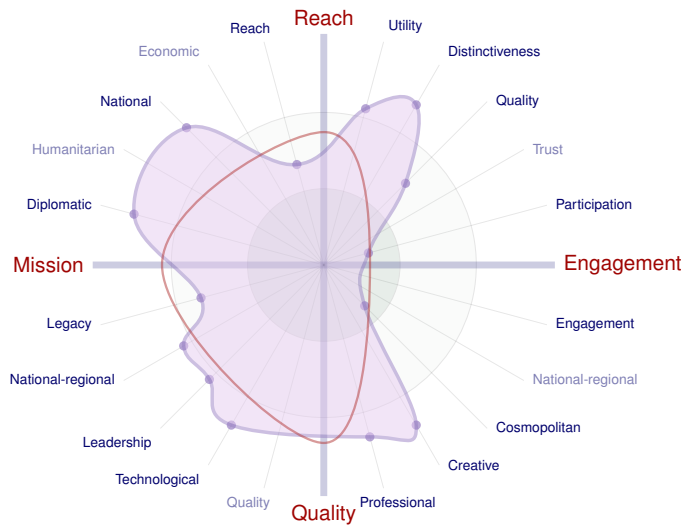


Figure 7: 100 Women (20 components) with axis plot

Again the simpler shape gives useful information and is in line with the overall thrust of the more detailed picture. It suggests that where it is not practical to populate the full framework there is potential for gleaning valuable insights using a reduced version based only on the four main components.

## **Conclusions**

The idea of common components does seem to reflect the reality of the relationships between the quadrants, and the axes that are produced bring out what are arguably the four most important components.

A simplified amoeba created by combining common components still has the power to show the range of different measures. However, if we wish to retain the full 20 components then it makes sense to re-order them to place the linked components next to one another.

There is also the possibility that a plot of just the axes might serve as a proxy where the full range of metrics cannot be established.