

Film; television; magazines, newspapers. They are part of what we call the creative industries. And they make an easy target for attack by any group that is itself under attack. When your reputation is tarnished it is easy to blame the messenger, and give lectures on their failure to see your good side.

That is always how I have felt about business complaints about the media. Until this month. Two things have changed my mind and confirmed to me that there is an issue here in the UK and probably continental Europe too.

First there is the new leader of Britain's biggest business lobby group - the Confederation of British Industry - who also happens to be the former editor of the Financial Times, Richard Lambert. In his first major speech he talked about the usual things - the challenge of globalisation, high taxes, and corporate responsibility. But surprisingly, as an ex-journalist, talked about the media and admitted that he thought that they failed to tell the real story of business.

Secondly, there is the story I heard from a redoubtable entrepreneur, Christopher Sawyer of Deltron Electronics. Among other things Christopher was the founder of the UK's Young Electronic Design Awards. The Young Engineer for Britain competition (a product of Young Engineers), annually attracts over 700 of the most talented school age engineers in the UK and rewards their achievements. People like Jeremy Siddons who entered the competition in 1987. After university he could get no commercial backing for his invention, so he developed the idea himself setting up his own company in 1995 operating out of a cellar. He now employs six people in his growing business using the company's expertise to invent products for others.

During 2004 the Electronic Designers Award merged with the Young Engineers Award. The UK winner that year was an eighteen year old from Cumbria - Richard Entwistle who had designed a device that enables a user automatically to adjust the height of their wheelchair. This entitled him to go on to compete in the 2005 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Phoenix Arizona. He scooped the top prize. He was flown to New York to take part in the NBC Today Programme.

That should have been enough to earn headlines in the UK press - a British triumph against international competition. Surely this story, in its way, had equal significance to the collapse of Rover and the eventual sale of its intellectual property to various Chinese interests.

He returned to the UK. The Young Engineers organisation did exactly what their international counterparts had done. But in the UK there were no stories in the press and no radio or television interviews. Just one small story buried in the middle pages of one broadsheet newspaper.

Why? Here we have the largest engineering curriculum enhancement organisation in Europe. It supports an award that annually attracts 700 of the most talented and creative young engineers in the country. It helps sustain a network of 1,200 young engineer clubs which promote creativity in schools. It gets no government funding - in spite of the fanfare of trumpets surrounding UK governments increase on enterprise education.

Think of the business items that capture the attention of the front pages. Trends in house prices. The US extradition of the Natwest Three. Takeovers.

Or think of the equivalent story in film - another part of the creative industries. A British actor winning an Oscar would be front page news. Why is a young British inventor winning the equivalent of an Oscar not news at all?

The critics are right. There is a bias in the creative industries and distortion in our mindset. When we talk about the creative industries we think film, sport, and perhaps graphic design. We don't think engineering and making things.

In 20 years manufacturing will be somewhere else. For the mature economies in Europe nothing will matter as much invention and skill in deploying it to global advantage. What a pity we are so bad at communicating that.

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