IR9 I hope I can be useful, I’m just not certain I will be able to be. And if I can’t be, I will try and give you some better informed people to talk to.

HK Thank you very much, that would be great. I am interested in ‘our strategy isn’t as well formed as it could be’ organisations. Because in a way I think that’s the reality, not that everyone is mining data and there’s a clear procedure with what happens to insights and action is always taken, I think it’s much more kind of chaotic and ad-hoc and informal and so on in reality. So I’m interested to find out about that. Shall we start by you telling me how did you get to be in the position that you’re in, working for [Media org 2], in relation to data mining?

IR9 I’m responsible for [Media org 2] digital products outside the US, so [Media org 2].com, our apps. Essentially what’s not on television outside the United States. I’m a journalist by background, I had 15 years at Reuters before I moved into the internet in around 2000, and I’ve worked at *The* *Financial Times*, *The Times* of London and the *Sunday Times*, Microsoft and now [Media org 2]. So I come at this from a journalistic point-of-view and a sort of product point-of-view.

The beauty of the web from a journalistic point-of-view, is that it gives you constant signals back from your readers in real-time as to what they’re reading, where they’re reading it, where they came from before they read it, where they go to after you read it, and then of course you can engage them in deeper analysis as well if they’re prepared to do that. So you have a range of data sources, or data points, that simply aren’t available to newspapers, and certainly aren’t available on television. I guess the opportunity here for us and for any other media company like us, is to interpret that data in intelligent ways that gives us signals, not only for our digital products, but for our television products or newspapers. We’re not in the newspaper industry but all of these fantastic websites that we have and products we have, allow us to collect data on user behaviour, not specifically on users necessarily because if you’re looking at pure user behaviour it’s all anonymised, people needn’t be worried in that case that you’re somehow extracting unwillingly data from them.

The starting point of this for me is that you can create more effective and cost effective products, products that meet people’s needs based on detailed analysis of their behaviour. If you think, for example, until maybe four years ago *The Telegraph* in the UK was the only newspaper that had any decent subscription base, it had I think 180,000 subscribers, so it had data about its users. But it’s now got 45 million unique users a month or something of that order from which it can define behaviour/trends. They may not want to hear what those answers are, and it may misinterpret them, but it’s got that opportunity. For example, in our case we say that we reach 300 million people a month in television outside the United States, or worldwide rather, but on the web we know that we reach 35 million people a month, certifiably.

HK Because they have to sign in?

IR9 No, they don’t have to sign in at all, that’s just how many unique users we detect. That’s 35 million individual unique users. There is some ropiness around that measure because if you clear all your cookies in one month you will show as two users, so give or take a certain percentage of double-counting in that you certifiably know that you have that many individual users coming, however you choose to measure them. Then you can know where they’ve come from, so you know a little bit about their tastes, you know where they go immediately afterwards so that you can tune your site for them to stay with you one or two or three pages longer.

There’s a journalistic opportunity here to use that data to make your site more compelling, to work out business or other partnerships with other sites that are unbeknown to them perhaps feeding you with content, and of course the most successful in that case now is Facebook and Twitter for us. Then there becomes a commercial opportunity, obviously a more engaged user is more valuable on our site to our advertisers. Then if you can then ask them to go into more detail with you, to have a relationship with you by logging-in and giving them extra value, that user immediately becomes more financial valuable to you.

HK So does the sort of numeric analytics that you can do from counting who’s on the site, where they were before, and where they’re going next, and then you’re enabled to do more detailed analytics if they log-in and share some information with you?

IR9 Yes. That’s generic across the board, not just with us. I think the opportunity in the past three years since I’ve been here for us, has been to take that core data of just behavioural information, X number of our users come from X site, they stay for X time. My journalists have all that information now and so they have metrics, they are given targets. This is another very important thing from a media company point-of-view, the targets that you give to the journalists have to be appropriate to their job, you can’t just say I want the site to make 15% more revenue this year. That can be in those targets, but you have to give the journalists a pathway to be able to have an influence on that. The best way for journalists to have an influence on that is to have more of their stories read by more people for longer.

HK So what kind of targets would a journalist be given?

IR9 My journalists have general targets which we may be aiming for a specific increase in our total audience. We will also be aiming for a specific increase in our total number of pages surfed, and then they currently are measured on page views per user and page views per visit.

HK So they’re asked to increase those numbers to get more-

IR9 Yeah. But what they have to work out is what are the strategies that work to do that? What you do with that, which I love doing with them, is they work out what stories. It’s not just about click ((?)) and writing stupid headlines like ‘you won’t believe next what happened when this woman gave the man his first kiss dot-dot-dot’, there is ((aulisticals?)). It’s about genuinely analysing the behaviour of your user and finding out what they want, and then tuning it. Yes, you can create spikes and you can create very clickable headlines, all of which is potentially good, but if you look at it intelligently you can give people more of what they want.

For example, three years ago we did a public study, which has been publicised quite heavily, called [Study 1], which was the power of views and recommendation. It happened just before I got to [Media org 2]. There was an analysis done of what types of stories people were seeking from us as far as we could tell from the data, and that surprised a lot of people because what it was was what’s next? It wasn’t give me the breaking news, it was tell me what’s coming next? I know the breaking news, but tell me what’s coming next? How can I position myself for what’s happening in the future? So as a result of that data and that analysis of data, we shifted our editorial strategy for the international website very much towards analysis, that where possible every story should say ‘and this maybe is what’s going to happen next’. We also moved a certain amount of editorial effort into high quality commentary and analysis beyond the spot news.

HK Where did that conclusion come from? Did that come from web analytics and analytics based on people who’d logged-in?

IR9 Nobody was ((?)), we just-

HK Just from web.

IR9 Yeah. It was purely from having the right codes/tags on the stories so you could tell what type of story they were. So the story knew that it was an analysis, or knew that it was a forward looking story.

HK So it was the types of stories that people read.

IR9 Yeah. And then we looked at how many were recommended. If you look at a like or an email recommendation or passing a story on, you can interpret that I think quite well as somebody believing that they’re going to invest a tiny bit of their time in sharing that story. I value the story enough to share it with my friends. That’s quite a good signal, I think, it’s requiring a micro piece of effort but you're not just ignoring it. What we discovered, that the highest percentage of shared stories and the ones that people were prepared to invest that commitment in, were stories about what’s coming next.

So the site has moved quite significantly over the past three years into a slightly more analytical framework. What we realised was, for [Media org 2] the presence of breaking news is just normal, it’s what people expect from [Media org 2]. What we can add that they will value more or value in addition to that, is this analysis. It takes time, but I think that’s also having a big impact on the television network in the sense that if you think about people’s interaction with the [Media org 2] brand, it’s in more than one place, it’s on their phone perhaps in an app, it’s on the television network if they ever watch the television network, and it’s very likely to be on the web, and if you can have moments with them throughout the day or throughout their news cycle, you can build a column of value for the business all the way through.

HK Is that report publically available?

IR9 Yeah. I think I can share a copy of that with you.

HK That would be great. What about social media data mining, does that figure?

IR9 Yeah. Social media’s incredibly important for us. I have always regarded it as an equivalent of SEO, search engine optimisation. If you think about the growth of Facebook over the last five years relative to the growth of Google over the previous five years, seven years ago I would say everybody was focused on how to get people from Google into their sites. So we did search engine optimisation, we made our stories discoverable by search engines, and we also did, or people did, search engine marketing where they actually paid for links. *The Telegraph* was particularly strong in that from a news point-of-view. So you made sure that your stuff was discoverable.

That’s exactly the same if you like as opening up the funnel to social media is, how do I expose my content and make it available to the greatest possible number of people in social media? And what’s great about social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, is that if you do it right both of those audiences are quite self-selecting in their preference for news. So if you choose the right methods to reach an audience ... Facebook’s increased for us well over 100% in the last 12 months, we’ve gone from 2 million followers of the international site to 7 million as of yesterday, and it’s become almost as significant, very closely as significant a search as a contributor to inward bound traffic.

That requires constant management of that, not so much writing stories that are specific to Facebook, but having an awareness of what gets shared. This is going to sound blindingly obvious, but putting a photograph or an illustration attached to it and putting a little bit of video potentially with it, can be incredibly helpful in making it more shareable. So those things are driving people back to our website. A lot of it depends on Facebook’s own algorithm, which in the last 12-18 months has been tweaked by Facebook to be more receptive if you like to news, it’s become more news orientated.

HK So there you’re looking again at likes and shares and re-tweets as indicators of valued stories or the types of stories that people are looking for.

IR9 Yes. You’re looking at this from a journalistic point-of-view as well, right? You’re coming at this from a media point-of-view, right?

HK Media generally, not journalism specifically.

IR9 Do not laugh at what I’m going to tell you, but from my point-of-view the journalistic judgement of my staff comes first.

HK That’s not funny!

IR9 It must always be their preeminent thought, why am I putting this story here? I want it to do well, I want it to be read, I want it to be shared. But that’s not its purpose in life, the purpose in their life is to make the site and the stories reflect the values of [Media org 2], but also reflect what’s truly happening in the world at that moment. Yes, they will put certain stories in certain places because they’re going to be fantastically popular. We’re trying to maximise the reach and value of those stories and using these tools to tune journalistic judgement and to complement journalistic judgement. They’re not an end to themselves, unlike some publishers.

HK What I understand you to be saying is that what you find out through analytics is interesting and important, but not the only determinant of what you do as journalists.

IR9 That's right. We use it as an aid to enhance the skills of a journalist. We will frequently put a story at the top of the site because it’s important, not because it’s going to score well.

HK And is that like an organisational kind of ethos and principle?

IR9 In the part of the organisation that I run, yes. It’s a little bit different in the United States because they are in a volume game. I have the slight luxury with the international site that it is a niche site, it’s worldwide one edition outside the US, it isn’t in multiple languages other than I do also run [Media org 2] Arabic. It is a sort of high-end product. It isn’t competing against the likes of *The Mail* online. If I was still running [Media org 3] in the UK it would be a different proposition. So I understand why people chase clicks, because their business models are based much more on volume than ours.

HK Are you glad to have the freedom to not chase clicks?

IR9 Yes. We still have to grow, so the site’s grown, our unique users are up 22% year-on-year. Which I’m thrilled about because it’s only through hard work and good journalism that that’s happening, it’s not through running crap.

HK What tools, approaches and methods do you use? Have you developed your own in-house tools, or do you contract the intermediary organisations like Radian6 and-?

IR9 Radian6 is used more by marketing teams and advertisers than us in editorial. In editorial we use the Adobe Omniture platform, that is extremely good for telling you the real-time analytics on the site. We also use a product called Visual Revenue and various products from a company called Outbrain. Outbrain also has some very clever products which give us re-circulation through the site, because a huge amount of this is based on the metadata and the knowledge of each piece of content, knowing what it is. At the moment some external companies like Outbrain are in a sense more knowledgeable about our content than we are. Most journalistic/media companies have done a pretty poor job so far of deeply knowing their own content, and there are very good external companies that do that.

Journalists look at a range of signals, they get signals from Twitter about re-shares, they get signals from Facebook. Visual Revenue is quite fantastic because it will allow us also to do what’s called AB testing on headlines, so you can offer a percentage of the audience one headline and offer another percentage of the audience a different headline. A very good example, when King Juan Carlos resigned we had something like ‘Spanish King abdicates’, and I can tell you that a headline which said ‘I quit, says Spanish King’, was 40% more successful than the earlier one. Same story, really important story or interesting story, better headline. Which journalist would not wish to have 40% more people read their story? So that’s where the judgement comes in, it gives them the opportunity to write better headlines, not for us to put ten hybrid animals up there or 70 things you need to know about Brad and Angelina.

HK So are journalists receiving digestible short syntheses from these various tools? You’ve talked about Omniture, Outbrain and another-

IR9 Yeah, they do. They can look at them in real-time, which often isn’t helpful, they can look at them in retrospect, which often is. It depends. If you’re responsible for the business section or the sports’ section, you want to look at that moment in what’s doing well, so you have a sort of short-term window in which you’re constantly tweaking the sources. For example, we did a fantastic interview with Lance Armstrong the other day, so a story like that, along with where we’re going to publish it, how we’re going to publish it, at what time of the day we’re going to publish it, and how we’ll work with television to get maximum impact for it, they’ll also be a social plan, what time do we put it on social media? Do we go into, for example, Lance Armstrong fan clubs and share it with them so that they then share it? The journalist’s job is now more sophisticated about where do I want the story to have its own life beyond my pressing the button on it and saying it’s published? I love that. It’s demanding. Most of the journalists love it too. So if we have a big story like that, they will have a specific social plan per story.

HK Each journalist for each story?

IR9 If they’re big enough, yeah. In my opinion, each journalist needs to think about how they’re going to amplify the story to best effect.

HK How many journalists are you talking about?

IR9 I have about 55 who work for me and they should all do this.

HK With every big story they should think about where they want-

IR9 Yeah. We had a story on television the last two days about football match fixing where we had an exclusive interview with a guy who is the most famous international football fixer, […], he’s a crook, and that’s taken months of work to get. We shouldn’t just put it out there and hope it lives or dies, we choose the day it goes out, the moment it goes out, think about which hashtags you put on Twitter to make it most effective. How do you amplify the signal for the journalistic effort that you’ve put into it?

HK Is the journalist him or herself deciding which hashtags?

IR9 Yes. This is not by any means perfect yet and it depends on people’s level of interest. The sports editor has a person sitting quite near them who is one of our social specialists. He will say to her, or he will look himself as say, “What’s the best hashtag for this kind of story? What’s trending most in this subject matter area?”, and it’s probably going to be football or gambling or something like that, and so he or she should think about how they slot themselves into those pre-existing areas of interest.

HK And how does he or she find that out? Are you providing that kind of information?

IR9 I would expect certainly each section chief to be able to look at Twitter analytics in real-time and see that themselves. So that requires training for them and development for them. I tend to have a domain subject matter expert if you like, and then one of their jobs is to share that knowledge.

HK Within a team.

IR9 Yeah. And you get varying levels. But one of the things that’s been most exciting to me, is watching people who are very experienced journalists getting extremely excited about this additional knowledge and feedback that they’re giving. We have much of this data projected now on the walls on the newsroom and it’s fascinating to see the TV people become more and more and more interested in it, because it’s giving them live data about stories that they’re doing that they’re important and giving them live feedback, which they couldn’t possibly get from a TV audience.

HK So has someone in the newsroom got the responsibility for synthesising this and projecting it?

IR9 No. It’s on the wall, so things like our top 20 stories are on the wall.

HK And that’s coming through a dashboard or something?

IR9 That particular one is coming through a Chartbeat dashboard. Chartbeat is a New York company that most people use to look at real-time data. That sort of rotates what’s on the site, so you could see what’s on the site, you can then see what’s performing best, and then we have a little bit of colour which is the top Google search terms in the last 20 minutes or something like that. To me that’s just a way of stimulating the visibility of data, of making people think about it.

HK The other tools that you’re using that you mentioned, if I’m a journalist in your team, do I go to an Omniture dashboard to find out certain things, and another dashboard-?

IR9 Yeah. Chartbeat is probably our most effective current real-time tool for what’s working right now. I would expect someone who’s running a section to look at their Omniture performance over a week, a month or a year. And then you’ve got comScore for competitive data, but because we’re multi-national we have very little competitive data rather than in specific markets. So really it’s a combination of various Outbrain tools, Visual Revenue, Chartbeat and Omniture. In most cases we haven’t brought those together into some sort of proprietary dashboard. It’s something we probably ought to do but at the moment there are so many different sources and companies coming into this area. Does that help? I feel as though I’m being quite passionate about that.

HK Yeah, that’s great. My next question really is, you’ve said that some journalists are getting really excited about another way of knowing what’s happening with their stories. Any resistance, any reluctance? Because you’ve said it’s challenging.

IR9 It’s challenging to get people to do anything. Journalists can be not passive-aggressive exactly, but they’re story gatherers not publishers necessarily. This is why to me it is vital for my journalists and why it is a luxury for me, that I tell them that their judgement comes first and that these tools are there to maximise the impact of what they do. If we were in a different business we would not have that luxury.

HK So that makes it kind of easy to introduce them because you’re not saying, “Right, all change, do this”.

IR9 That’s right. Or we’re going to measure you and we’re going to give you a gold star if you’re pushing the most commercially successful material. There was a thing the other day that *Time Magazine* is going to try and measure its journalists on who publishes the most commercially successful material, and I think that’s bollocks. It’s actually something that’s worth knowing, but to use it as a measure of value is not necessarily right.

HK You’re saying right, here’s the information, here’s the information, here’s the information, pay attention to it, reflect on it, but there’s no insistence on that or procedures that people are absolutely required-

IR9 What I want is for them to codify it themselves. I want them to have a little card beside them, and they do. This is going to sound ridiculous but everybody has a curation strategy and amplification strategy. What is my plan for amplifying what I’ve just done? How could I make that story sing? What headline is on it? Have I made sure it’s been tweeted? Has it got the right hashtag on what I have tweeted about it? Have I got it tweeted by the right people? Because we have people like [Presenter 5] or some of the presenters who have tens of thousands of Twitter follows, if they tweet a story it’s going to get read. How do we get them to endorse what we’ve just published?

HK How do you?

IR9 Well, we would say to them, “Here’s an amazing story about Gaza, would you like to tweet it?”, and it’s up to them if they do it or not, we don’t abuse their accounts or their personalities. And then of course on the commercial side where there are stories that are supported by advertising or are very important to us for a commercial point-of-view, we do want those read and we do want them read very well, so we will have a social strategy around those. For example, we have sections on architecture and fashion that are very expensive to advertise in and thus often sponsored, but that doesn’t mean that there isn’t an audience out there on Twitter or on Facebook who want those kinds of stories, it’s up to us to go and get them. So through the clever use of this data we can not only ensure that our news stories are really well read and really well circulated, but things like our fashion stories are incredibly well circulated and go to the right people.

HK And that’s up to the journalist who’s written the fashion story.

IR9 Yes. Or their section editor. For example the person who runs our star section, he is responsible for driving social traffic. One of his metrics is to drive traffic back into it, to have a successful social plan.

HK So editors are taking on quite a lot of this responsibility.

IR9 Yeah. Somebody said to me just the other day, “You’re expecting editors to commission, edit, publish, build pages, amplify, curate”, and there was something else as well, and I said, “Absolutely, all journalists have to do that now”.

HK What do you mean by curation in this context?

IR9 That is an area where we’re not as strong as I would like to be. I think we have a mission or an ability to not only bring you the best of what [Media org 2]’s got, but to bring you the best of what other publishers have as well, and to know your subject well enough. I think there are stories we have that should say, ‘And here is our editor’s choice of the three other best stories we’ve come across in this subject from around the web’. That kind of thing. Which again helps you from a data point-of-view because you have inbound and outbound links to other places. We’re not just doing it for that reason, but that is one of the tasks we’re now expecting of our journalists.

HK I’m really fascinated by the detail, I don’t know if you can tell that! When it comes to social media, are you looking at what’s happening on your Facebook page and what’s happening in relation to particular hashtags and particular app signs on Twitter?

IR9 Yes. We look at what’s trending overall. If someone says Brad and Angelina is the most trending topic in the world, within reason I would want to know what we were doing about that story if we had something to say about it. If it’s this ridiculous ice bucket challenge thing, we should be covering that as a phenomenon. Not too much, thank God. But if it’s a phenomenon we should know about it and do something about it.

HK What barriers are there for you in doing what you want to do with data mining and analytics? What would like to be doing that you’re finding it difficult to do and what’s stopping you?

IR9 The barriers are time, money and people. I would like to do more. I’d like to gain more insight from the data. With limited numbers of people devoted to it we have a constant flow at the moment of things we can do to tune the site, tune people’s work, but it’s not always possible to get onto that as quickly or as forcefully as I would like, and I’m pleased that we’ve done as well as we have. It would be very helpful to have a couple more people focused on this, and a little bit more resource to devote to the publication of this kind of distribution of this information as signals around the business. And feedback as well. For example, we do a tag cloud every month or every quarter for our correspondents to show them whose videos have been most watched, and that’s a fantastic piece of feedback for them.

HK It sounds like everyone is still basically a journalist doing the work of a journalist and is trying to integrate these new-

IR9 That’s right. That’s sort of what I want. I would like a couple of data analysts right now, having them as former journalists would be quite valuable, or understanding each other’s perspective, but I don’t want it to be the job of just the data person in the corner to do this, otherwise they just become, “Oh that’s”-. It’s every journalist’s job in my opinion to make their story the best read they possibly can.

HK So there isn’t a data person.

IR9 There are data people, but what I don’t have at the moment, in my team at least, is a sort of real-time data analyst who I would quite like sitting across the business tuning it and finding insights.

HK What do the data people that you’ve currently got do then?

IR9 They tend to look at more long-term trends and bigger scale trends.

HK I just wanted to ask you about some of the issues and kind of concerns that-

IR9 Just one second. How long are we going to be?

HK This is my last bit really, so if I put it into one question.

IR9 And I know my answers to you have been incredibly long.

HK Well, I like long answers! It’s a final question really about concerns that people express about data mining and how you think about them and whether you think that they’re valid concerns. So if just name a couple of them and then you tell me what you think. There’s a broad question about is it an ethical thing to do, to mine data? I’m particularly interested in social media data mining because I think there is an issue. An obvious answer to that would be we only mine what’s public, we don’t mine what’s private. But I don’t think it’s as clear cut as that because I think people feel private even if technically some of the stuff that they’re publishing doesn’t remain private. So I think those are the main issues really around privacy and ethics. Related to that is the issue of how transparent data mining practices are and whether you think you are transparent, or could do more to be transparent, or don’t need to be transparent about it, because of those issues around ethics and privacy.

IR9 For the bit that I’m responsible for, and if we think about the role of data as a publishing tool and to inform better publishing, that’s where I think this commitment that we’ve made so far to journalistic judgement being the precedent, that would hopefully prevent you using people’s data to effectively just create an echo chamber where they only get what they were already interested in. So I am hopeful that in the ways that I’ve described to you, our use of data will allow us to get more interesting news to more people who are interested in it, and to reach people who we didn’t know. For example, with something like the Robin Williams’ story, that brings in a lot of people who are generally interested in entertainment stories who might not otherwise come to a hard news site. So we can then expose them to the best stories available on Gaza, you know what I mean, that kind of thing.

I’m not going to address the commercial, I’m just going to address the editorial bit. That stuff I think is both as transparent as it needs to be. Then when you get into personal data, we currently have very little personal data on people because we don’t have a registration system that’s deployed very deeply. As we do, like all businesses we need to do that more, I think you need to give back something in principle. An individual needs to see that there is value in them sharing their data with you, that they get a service or they get some kind of benefit from it. Whether that’s something silly and small like badgers and gamification type tools. I think consumers are really aware of that now.

But I’m speaking very strongly from the publishing side of the business as opposed to the advertising side of the business. On the advertising side of the business all of this data is incredibly valuable in working out tastes, preferences and attitudes. You and I have talked 75% or 80% about the content led use of data as opposed to the use of it for advertising.

HK Yeah, which is what you’re responsible for. Were you saying about registration, is it better or worse to do data mining on people who are registered, or is it better to do it on people who don’t know that it’s going on? Like if I register with [Media org 2], then it’s possible for you to communicate to me in the terms and conditions, whether I read them or not, what’s going to happen with the data that I share. But if I don’t register and I just write something on your Facebook page or tweet something, it’s actually harder for you to communicate with me that you are doing something with my activity.

IR9 Yes. Although we might come back and say thanks very much for your comment, can we publish it? One of the nice things about all of this is to engage the users in the editorial process. Of course we have huge problems like trolling, like anybody else does, but we often get into some fabulous conversations with our users and allow them to publish into the site and have their say on the site, which I love. But if you register and you are clearly sharing your data with us or any other publisher, we need to give you something really good back. The proposition needs to be at least visibly two-way.

HK I didn’t really catch what you were saying about being transparent as well, because for me transparency is about telling people that the data mining is going on. Where can I find out, if I went to the [Media org 2] site that you’re responsible for-?

IR9 ((Laughs))

HK What’s the URL by the way? It’s not [Media org 2].com. What would it be?

IR9 If you’re looking at in Leeds it will come up as [Media org 2].com, yes. My one, if you look at the URL, it’s addition.[Media org 2].com, which is the international version of [Media org 2]. If you’re outside the US it should always automatically default to that. This is a little bit of a live issue at the moment. Because we’re domiciled in the US we abide by a lot of US rules, but right at this very moment we are looking at how to adopt the cookie acceptance rules from the European Union. The whole process for personal registration is being replaced and revised right as we speak, so it’s not worth me talking about the terms and conditions that we will put in place if you log-on as Helen Kennedy.

HK You were going to tell me where on the site I can find out about what-

IR9 What I was meaning was, why I was hedging my bets on that was because we haven’t deployed the cookie acceptance thing. Right at the very bottom of the site it says privacy guidelines.

HK Okay, I’ll have a look at that after.

IR9 And that tells you exactly how ... Actually it’s very good. It’s very good but it’s very US. I don’t want to go into that too much but there is an issue for us about where we’re domiciled and how we’re affected by European Law, which is an active conversation all the time.

HK Does it worry you, or is it a concern for you that people are okay with the data mining that you’re doing? Because I think your answer when I raised this was, given the reasons that we’re doing it, which is to provide good journalism, then it’s kind of okay. That’s a crude version of your answer.

IR9 Yes. But that's only because the 75% of our conversation has been about that. If I looked at it from an advertising point-of-view, I would also say I think the advertising answer to that would be through the effective use of data, usually with the consent of our audience, we can avoid wastage of advertising inventory for our clients and connect people with advertising messages that are appropriate for them.

HK How do you get that consent?

IR9 That’s what I’m saying, we haven’t got the consent button up there at the moment.

HK Because I think most digital and behavioural advertising is not consent based, is it?

IR9 Well, it has the veneer of being consent based, and then you have that ad choices’ button and all of that kind of thing. But I agree, it’s not. I’m being chased around at the moment on the internet by Eastpak Luggage Company because I looked for something for my daughter the other day, and now I’m being pestered to death. So it depends on how well you do it. Again, internationally we have a slight luxury in that most of our advertising is related to sponsorship and is therefore less targeted to audience groups that we might have.

HK So it’s less of a pressing concern for you for those reasons.

IR9 Yeah. It’s important and we need to do it better and more subtly, but we have a slight luxury in that just for the time being.

HK Are there any things that you wouldn’t do that you know other people are doing but you feel like that they cross a line in terms of-?

IR9 Yeah.

HK What kind of things?

IR9 People have historically abused search engine optimisation and they have put search terms deep into their site that are completely unrelated to what’s being viewed. There are well known cases where the words Madeleine McCann have been buried into stories. There’s a thin line here. Writing stories in response to a trend is smart business practices for people who need to do that, but may go against the journalistic judgement that you’re trying to convey. On the other hand for example, if we discovered that we had totally ignored The Lego Movie as a social phenomenon, but could pick that up from social media trends, and someone might say to our entertainment staff, “Look, you’re doing a story about ((Proost?)) but the real attention is on The Lego Movie”, that would be a sensible response to data. Do you know what I mean? There’s a difference between that and just chasing clicks.

HK Yeah. Is there any data mining itself that you wouldn’t do? Is there any lines that you would draw that you wouldn’t go beyond in terms of mining data?

IR9 I don’t know. I guess what the corporate answer would be, we always operate within the law of the countries that we’re operating in. I don’t know. I’m sure there are things that would make me feel uncomfortable, but whether they’re legally uncomfortable I don’t know. You know what I mean?

HK Yeah. Because I’m interested in-

IR9 I don’t feel qualified to give you a full answer on that one. The moment I say, “Oh God, I’d never do that”, they’ll be some clever way of doing it that comes in that’s usually beneficial, so I wouldn’t say never say never. But I think consent and transparency are really important. Fortunately in a strongly journalistic organisation the people who are producing the stuff do care about it a lot. Most of us in journalistic organisations are protected by the ethics of our own staff and teams.

HK Yeah. I think that interplay between legal, organisational and personal views on what’s okay and what’s not okay, is interesting and tricky, isn't it?

IR9 It is. And it’s what makes these jobs great, because it means you’re still working for an organisation that is made up of people and that they give a damn.

HK Yeah. And I think there’s a strong trend of ethics in journalism and one or two other media industries, but not all of them.

IR9 That’s right.

HK So there’s overlaps there. I won’t take any more of your time. It’s great, really interesting.

IR9 If you think of anything more you’ve got me on Skype. I will send you that consent thing. I really apologise for not doing it before.

HK That’s okay. And if you can send me that report or link me to it, then that would be great as well.

IR9 Yeah.

HK Thank you for your time, I really appreciate it. Thank you. Bye.

IR9 Bye.