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# Behind the News

As news becomes increasingly digitalised and the pace of information heightens, *Dagens Nyheter* remains a key component of Swedish discourse, social opinion, and cultural debate.

Images by Johan Jeppsson

In 2013, Gunilla Herlitz saw publishing powerhouse Bonnier AB launch its Bonnier News branch and was asked to head the newly formed business, which comprises four newspapers and Bonnier's printing group. With this added responsibility, Gunilla has handed over the role of *Dagens Nyheter's* editor-in-chief to Peter Wolodarski while retaining her position as the newspaper's CEO.

Gunilla spoke with *The CEO Magazine Europe* to discuss her journey and the future of Sweden's most circulated newspaper in light of the digital era.

***The CEO Magazine Europe:* What is your professional background leading up to and including your current position?**

**Gunilla:** I started out at the Stockholm School of Economics. It was not my dream to be working in the financial industry, but I thought I'd try it. Before my last year at university, I worked at SEB during the summer. It was very boring and I thought, 'I don't think

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I can do this', so during my last year at university, I started to go to a private school of journalism, Poppius Journalistskola, during the evening. When I finished university, I tried to get a job at a newspaper by combining my education in economics and journalism, and I started at Svenska Dagbladet. I was 23 at the time.

I've been working in media from the beginning even though I didn't have a long, traditional education in journalism. At that time, at least in Sweden, the stock exchange became a huge thing in the 80s, and so did the demand for financial journalists. Before, no one cared if you knew anything about economics and business when writing about it, but at that time, it was good to be a financial journalist. After that I began to work at *Dagens Industri*. I worked as a reporter for many years and around 1999 I began to work as a news editor. From there, I became editor-in-chief and CEO of *Dagens Industri* in 2003 and then editor-in-chief and CEO of *Dagens Nyheter* in 2009.

**What challenges have you experienced coming up through the publishing world?**

It was so different when I started work as a journalist in 1984; I had a typewriter, which didn't have a button to change anything I had written wrong, so I'd have to change it manually, and then I'd walk over to the news editor with the actual paper in my hand. This was before the digital era, so everything has changed since 84. Sitting where I am now, there are all kinds of different challenges, but it's difficult to pinpoint throughout the past 25 years. Everything is a challenge; it moves and shifts constantly.

**Can you shed a little more light on *Dagens Nyheter's* defamation case?**

It's about an article that was published in 2006, so three years before I was appointed editor-in-chief of *Dagens Nyheter*. In 2011, someone asked me to take away the article from the archives because it was digitally published as well. I asked why, and he said this article >





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really hurt him and his profession. I looked at the article and there was nothing wrong with it, and when the article was published in 2006, it didn't create any protest. There was nothing wrong with the article, but it stated in the article that he had gone bankrupt in three different businesses. You can't rewrite history just because someone asked you to do it. I talked to the editor who was responsible for the article's publication in 2006. There were no problems with it, and he [the complainant] could not show me how he had been hurt professionally with this article in 2011.

It's a landmark case and will probably change the laws to state that if you think something is wrong or you feel mistreated, you have to state that within six months, not five years, after the article is published. In England, if you want to sue, you can't wait more than six months, so there's no problem. However, articles are now digitalised and kept internally. We want to make all of our articles available digitally on a big archive, but we have to analyse the consequences first.

**What would you say separates *Dagens Nyheter* from other newspapers?**

I believe *Dagens Nyheter* is the most important newspaper in Sweden, and by that I mean we set the agenda for a lot of debates and talks in Sweden, which is very important. The stories that we write and the news that we write has a great impact, and I think that is the difference between us and other newspapers. Sometimes it's a little bit unfair because there could be a small magazine doing a topic that is very interesting, but no one cares. But if *Dagens Nyheter* takes a stand against something, it's a big thing. We have a lot of responsibility because we are considered extremely trustworthy. I think it's even more important now when a lot of information is for free and you can consume journalism through all different

I got sued in the lower court, Stockholms tingsrätt. They asked the Supreme Court in Sweden if I could be responsible for an article that was published before I was appointed editor-in-chief. Now, the Supreme Court has ruled yes, I am responsible. This case will go to Stockholms tingsrätt again, and I don't think he'll win there because the article is correct, but the important thing is that the Supreme Court in Sweden ruled that the editor-in-chief is responsible for all articles published. That's an impossible situation, but it also means that the editor-in-chief right now for *Dagens Nyheter* is also responsible for this article because the article is still on the internet. It's not a case against me; it's about the responsibilities that all editors in Sweden have.

platforms and all different ways. Still, the impact is not less for *Dagens Nyheter*, which I think is quite interesting.

**How does *Dagens Nyheter* collaborate with its suppliers to ensure the newspaper gets to its readership daily and the content is of the highest quality?**

If you look at the content, we pride ourselves on having our own staff mostly. We have the most foreign correspondents of all newspapers and TV journalists in Sweden, and they are employed by us. Many newspapers don't have foreign correspondents. So editorially, we don't collaborate with that many partners. Of course, we have freelance writers, and authors, and people debating in our newspapers, but we are our own editorial staff. Production wise, we own our own printing facility within the Bonnier group. Concerning distribution, we collaborate with Svenska Dagbladet about the distribution in Stockholm. We have a jointly owned distribution company called Premo in Stockholm. Quality is not just about the content, but also in the printing facility and the paper. I think *Dagens Nyheter* is very high quality in terms of how it looks.

**What does the future hold for *Dagens Nyheter*?**

Looking for prospects, I think. It is an exciting time because we still have our printed newspaper, which is still quite profitable. Of course, the circulation has gone down, but not that fast. We're transitioning at the moment, and in the future—I don't know when—we will have a complete digitally distributed newspaper. It will take some time, and I don't know what it will look like. Concerning our content, more people than ever are consuming our content, and it's also very interesting to see what articles on our site are the most read: quality articles, debates, and things on culture. I think there is definitely a demand for good journalists, so I'm very positive about the future. •



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