Polis – Trust the Trust?

The BBC Trust wants to know what you think about BBC.co.uk but it doesn't know how to ask. So it is going around asking people *how* it should question people about what they think of the corporation's online services. This is not as dumb as it sounds.

I was part of a group of bloggers being consulted abouttheir consultation by the BBC Trust (which is the new body charged with overseeing the BBC). It is part of the official review process which includes a website, meetings, opinion polls and focus groups. They are keen to get beyond the usual suspects and so they invited some excellent bloggers such as Sunny Hundal, Simon Dickson and Mick Fealty to give their views. Of course, we all had quite different views of BBC.co.uk and how the Trust should interact with the blogsphere.

And this is where I don't think the Trust 'gets' New Media, yet. It simply isn't possible to use the same frameworks for consultation online. People want real ownership of the process. As Sue Thomas from Leicester's De Montfort University pointed out, people are used to being creators online, so they don't want to be treated as passive consumers when being consulted either.

As with all attempts at openess and consultation, the Trust can't win. If it is too open then the process becomes unfocussed and they don't get the neat answers that they can stick in their glossy reports. But I am afraid that openess and a realisation that consultation is a process not a product is the only way to work in the new networked world. I look forward to the Trust's continued engagement and an even more imaginative response.

- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science