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Creativity and effectiveness in the Valencian Community: the figure of the planner in the creative process

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Abstract

[ES] **Introducción:** El presente trabajo analiza la situación del planificador estratégico en la Comunidad Valenciana. Este perfil nació como una figura imprescindible para aplicar la investigación sobre los públicos a la realización de campañas publicitarias, consiguiendo una comunicación más eficaz. Centrándonos en la relación entre el departamento de planificación estratégica con el de creatividad, buscamos conocer si es necesaria la introducción del *planner* en el proceso creativo, así como las funciones que deberá desarrollar para conseguir campañas creativas a la par de eficaces. **Metodología:** Por ello, realizamos una revisión bibliográfica para analizar las funciones básicas de este perfil, así como su relación con la creatividad. En segundo lugar, desarrollamos un trabajo de campo, donde, a través de un cuestionario a profesionales de la región y varias entrevistas a planificadores estratégicos de referencia, buscamos entender la situación del *planner* en la Comunidad Valenciana y el camino a seguir para la evolución de dicho perfil. **Resultados y conclusiones:** En este análisis observamos cómo el *planner* en la región valenciana se encuentra todavía en una etapa primigenia, por lo que aún queda camino por recorrer para hacer del *planning* una disciplina real. A su vez, hemos podido constatar la necesidad de incluir al *planner* en el proceso creativo, ya que tanto planificadores como creativos se muestran interesados en esta colaboración. Finalmente, proponemos una descripción de cuáles deben ser las tareas del planificador estratégico en este proceso para ayudar al departamento creativo.

[EN] **Introduction:** This article analyses the strategic planner’s situation in the Valencian Community. The planner was born as an essential figure to apply audience’s research on advertising campaigns, to improve communication. Focusing on the relationship between the account planning and the creativity department, it is our intention to study what the planner’s contribution and role in the creative campaigns should be in order to achieve more creative and effective campaigns. **Methodology:** Following a bibliographic review we will analyze the basic functions of the planner in relation to the creative process. Secondly, we will present the analysis of the answers to a questionnaire addressed to

advertising professionals in the Valencia Autonomous Community, and the interviews made to leading strategic planners in order to discover the role of the planner in the Community and how it could be developed. **Results and conclusions:** The research shows that the role of the planner in the Valencian region is at a very primitive stage, and that time is needed to make of planning a real discipline. We have also concluded that there is a need to introduce the planner in the creative process, and that account planners and creative professionals are both interested in this cooperation. To sum up, we propose a description of the planner's main functions in the creative process.

Keywords

[ES] planificador estratégico; perfiles profesionales; proceso creativo; eficacia; creatividad.

[EN] account planner, professional profiles, creative process, effectiveness, creativity.

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1. Introduction

We live in a society that develops continuously and, therefore, jobs and professional profiles are constantly evolving. In consequence, we face professions that have disappeared at the rate that others are emerging. The town crier, the telephone operator, the elevator operator, the milkmaid ... are examples of professions that barely a century ago occupied an important place in society, while today they have disappeared, remaining as anecdotes of our past generations.

This situation continues today. As societies develop and evolve, the emergence of other professions that meet our needs becomes necessary, at the same time that the technological revolution replaces professionals that are 'essential' to date. Therefore, as we read in the article by Alba Casilda (2016) "The new professions that revolutionize the labor market" of the digital newspaper *Expansión*, in ten years 47% of the jobs that we know today will disappear.

Therefore, it is necessary to create new profiles and to modify traditional jobs while adapting to new societies and the current digital context. Jobs such as big data specialist, product manager, environmental health nurse, game tester... which at the beginning of the millennium were unthinkable, begin to be the professions that companies need to be competitive.

The advertising and public relations sector is not an exception and has undergone successive changes in the professional profiles field, since it is an industry in close relationship with a society that must be in continuous renewal and adaptation to it (Etaya & Preciado, 2008).

Around 1968, a new professional emerged within the framework of advertising, the strategic planner, a profile based on deep consumer knowledge to carry out campaigns that connected with the public. However, its incorporation into the agency world in Spain has been slow and doubtful, finding ambiguous functions and forms of organization lacking in accuracy.

Among the tasks stipulated for the planner figure, the largest gap is found in the functions related to the creative department. Although most authors agree on the responsibility of the planner in the orientation of the creative department, we find little bibliography and specifics on how to guide the creative team, reducing it to previous and subsequent tasks to the creative process (Fernández & Sánchez, 2012). In consequence, this research seeks to clarify the functions of the strategic planner in its relationship with creativity.

The importance of understanding the close relationship between planning and creativity lies in the need to create campaigns that connect with the public and reach the objectives set by advertisers. Therefore, only with a good synergy between the planning and creativity department can you create original campaigns that are effective at the same time (Sardegna & Donayre, 2016).

Our research focuses on knowing the situation of the strategic planner in the Valencian Community, with special emphasis on its relationship with the creative department and, more specifically, on the importance of the introduction of the planner in the creative process.

Exploring the existing bibliography to date, we are faced with the lack of studies that investigate the relationship between the strategic planning and creative departments. We find only texts on the importance of the planner as a guide for creativity but through previous research, not teamwork.

Studies on this profile are mostly of bibliographical revision, contributing ideas from important authors on planning (like Stephen King or Stanley Pollit), that analyze which should be the functions of this new profile in the agencies. If we go deeper into the work of the planner in collaboration with the creative person, the research deals with the steps before and after the creative process, focusing on the preparation of the creative briefing and the realization of pre-test and post-test.

Therefore, we can confirm the absence of research regarding the way in which the strategic planner should collaborate with the creative team.

As a consequence of this situation, we understand that the present investigation is of interest to the guild, not only for the professionals who dedicate themselves to planning but for all communication professionals. This is because it is important to know in depth the work that each professional must do to make the most of the human resources of a company and thus obtain better results.

The hypothesis proposed for this paper argues that the strategic planner must evolve and enter the creative process in order to achieve advertising campaigns with better results in terms of creativity and efficiency. At the same time, we propose to show the current need to include the planner in the creative process, and as a specific objective, the definition of the functions of the strategic planner within the creative process.

1.1. Account planner's conception

By 1950 the advertising market was in a moment of maturity, both by consumers and the advertising agencies themselves. The public ceased to be passive subjects and began to be an active part of the communication process. In addition, social research applied to the consumer had progressed in such a way that the advertising agencies had a large amount of information about the consumer that was not used for the preparation of campaigns. Therefore, the profession reached such a level of development that the need arose for this knowledge of the consumer to have an impact on the results and, moreover, to become a way of evaluating effectiveness (Álvarez, 2012).

Due to this panorama of the fifties, the obligation of the appearance of new professionals in the agencies that knew the consumer in depth is observed. Therefore, in 1968 the figure of the strategic planner emerged, commonly called planner, in two advertising agencies in London simultaneously. They both wanted their professionals to be consumer ambassadors within the agency (Sánchez, 2011).

The main function of this new profile was to integrate research into the entire advertising process, adapting consumer knowledge so that advertising would connect better with the public.

1.2. The fathers of account planning: King and Pollit

Since this profile was born at the same time in two advertising agencies, we find two different schools of thought: the first one led by Stephen King, executive of J. Walter Thompson (JWT); and secondly, the one led by Stanley Pollit, account executive at Pritchard Wood and Partners (PWP). Both are considered the fathers of planning, but their way of conceiving the profession was totally independent.

King's vision focused on improving the work of the marketing department. For this, the executives of JWT tried a deep restructuring of the agency, merging the marketing department (what we currently consider the account managing department), the media planning department and the research department, in to a large department that was named Department of Account Planning. With this movement, King sought to unite and manage the detailed knowledge of each of the professionals of that 'macro-department' to achieve more effective campaigns and media plans. However, these measures did not achieve the expected result, causing great problems for the agency since the people that made up the three departments had completely different work patterns and rhythms (Álvarez, 2012).

On the other hand, Pollit, who, as we pointed out, was an account executive, transferred the responsibility for the investigation to his department. The drawback of this measure was that the account executive was very close to the client, which added to the lack of specialization of these professionals, and caused difficulties to propose investigations that were accurate and effective to study the problems. However, Stanley Pollit knew how to solve this issue and wanted to add another person in the elaboration of the briefing; a specialist in research that would collaborate with the account manager to write the document and thus provide all the information about the consumer.

This way, when Pollit created his own advertising agency, Boase, Massimi, Pollit (BMP), he placed the planner together with the account executive to work together. Thus, he avoided overloading the account executives with work and responsibility and found a figure to guide their work and finally put all the knowledge about the consumer into practice (Pollit, 1979).

Therefore, from the two creators of planning, we see how Pollit's ideas were better managed, achieving the introduction of the planner in his agency.

Lastly, King and Pollit also had different visions of the role of the strategic planner in the agency. For the former, the planner had to implement the strategy from the traditional marketing approach, while the latter wanted to deepen the joint work of the planner with the creative team to choose more effective communication approaches.

Therefore, due to the objectives of our work, we select Pollit's ideas and we will try to investigate and explain the intrinsic need to introduce the profile of the planner in the creative process.

1.3. Functions of an account planner

Due to the context in which the figure of the planner was born and its situation between the account and the creative department, we find a great variety of functions and tasks that lead to confusion about what a planner is and is not.

There is no doubt that this profile arose because of the urgent need to integrate research into the entire advertising process. The aim was to get to know consumers as much as possible in order to create campaigns that would connect with them.

It was wrong to believe that embodying the function of integrating research into the communication process in the figure of a professional was going to be an easy job. We are talking about a very broad and complex process, which requires a multitude of skills and tasks, which meant the diversification of the tasks of the planner (Jordan et al., 2016).

Therefore, we will go through the evolution of the planner's functions and thus understand the complexity that this idea entailed.

To begin, following Pollit's ideas, Antón Álvarez (2012: 56-58) has collected the tasks that the strategic planner had to fulfill at first: The planner had to be an expert in research, but not to store this information, rather with the purpose of understanding and using the data in favor of communication. Therefore, the planner is inclined towards qualitative versus quantitative research and understands that research should open avenues for action and never strangle ideas, nor pigeonhole the consumer.

Secondly, the strategic planner had to participate in the complete elaboration of the campaign. Therefore, the planner had to be involved throughout the entire process, from the selection of the strategic approach to the evaluation of creative ideas and the results. Therefore, we re-emphasize Pollit's ideas that showed the need for the planner to work as a team with the account and creative professionals.

Finally, at the organizational level, the planner had to be placed between the account executive and the creative executive, having the same responsibility as them when carrying out creative and effective campaigns.

However, we currently see how the figure of the strategic planner is beginning to evolve and is making its way to other areas of marketing or multidisciplinary communication, responding to customer needs. Therefore, because the consumer is currently the center of communication; because the planner is in charge of combining all the communication elements to launch a unique and integrated message; because the development of the media and of the consumer itself makes it necessary to know all contact points to be able to reach him; and because the strategic planner has evolved to not being limited only to conventional advertising; the planner is necessary to achieve effective communication campaigns for advertisers (Jordan et. al., 2016).

And in this last vision of the planner's role in organizations, Stephen King's school of thought is the one that matters, since it went beyond advertising barriers, defending a teamwork with the media and marketing professionals. The planner has evolved within companies, since it is the right profile to carry out communication strategy and, therefore, must know marketing mechanics, the company operation, the strategic plan or marketing sections and be able to evaluate each component of the marketing mix (Pujals, 2014).

Thus, the planner must now adapt to the environment and work on the analysis of the market and the consumer, on the development of the brand and of advertising, and on knowing all the possibilities offered by the different marketing communication disciplines from the strategy point of view (Baskin & Pickton, 2003: 421).

1.3.1. Account planner's lines of work

From these three basic tasks, the traditional functions developed by the planner are included in 4 categories: research, voice of knowledge, strategy and cooperation with the creative department (Sánchez, 2010).

Research: Following the catalyst that originated the profession, the first function that any strategic planner must develop is to investigate. However, the planner does not have to carry out the investigation himself, but is in charge of requesting the pertinent data and research to know the brand, the market, the trends... and, above all, to understand the consumer perfectly. Therefore, he must understand the data and studies to extract the relevant information and generate knowledge to apply to the campaigns.

Voice of knowledge: As we have seen, the problem of the agencies in the fifties' decade was that they had a lot of information, but it wasn't valued in the resolution of the campaigns. To remedy this, the strategic planner has to be the voice of the consumer in the agency. The planner's contribution enhances the investigation, bringing the pertinent information closer to the development of campaigns.

Strategy: The planners themselves tried to expand their functions beyond research and due to their relationship with the account management department, another task to be developed by this profile would be to conceive the communication strategy. Thanks to the knowledge acquired by research, the ability to interpret the data and to strategic thinking, the planner is the right person to communicate a strategy that takes action in the right direction.

Cooperation with the creative department: As pointed out by Pollit (1979), the planner had to be placed between the account executive and the creative department to help both parties. Therefore, among the functions of the planner should appear the collaboration with the creative department. The

main function is the creative briefing, that is, collecting the information extracted from research and transmitting it to the creative team in a way that inspires and channels creativity. Another task linked to the creative department's work is the evaluation of their creativity by the planner through pre-test and post-test methods.

Finally, we also find that Antón Álvarez (2012) advises the location of the planner as moderator of the brainstorming process. However, this dynamic has fallen into disuse and therefore we don't find the planner in the creative process.

As we saw before, when the planner is placed in other environments different to advertising, strategic planners specialized in other areas appear, opening their lines of work. According to Griffiths (2008) we find six types of planners according to their specialization:

- Of the brand: related to the company reputation.
- Of the relationship with consumers: obtaining the attention of the public and the participation with them.
- Interactive: thanks to technological advances, they are responsible for interactive communication.
- Of communication channels: analysis of media (traditional and emerging, such as social networks) to connect with the public.
- Of the data: effective use of CRM, ROI, big data and any database.
- Of content: because users are now also content creators, and consume content from third parties, companies must understand how to take advantage of this phenomenon.

1.3.2. The creative process

It is necessary to pause to explain what we understand by the creative process. The creative process under the Wallas model (chosen as the most widespread within the profession), consists of 4 phases in which conscious and unconscious processes coincide (Wallas, 2014). The 4 stages that make up this process are:

Preparation: The phase in which the information is collected and the specific and general knowledge about the problem we are facing is generated.

Incubation: It is about working with the collected material, about "digesting it mentally".

Illumination: Moment known as inspiration. It is the moment in which, having processed and absorbed all knowledge, you arrive at the idea.

Verification: The last phase, where the creative person must incorporate his idea with reality and, therefore, make the relevant modifications until the final idea is achieved.

Now that we have a clear perception of what the creative process entails, we can see how the functions corresponding to the planner are found in the preparation phase (when he transfers the research to the creative department) and in the verification phase (due to the elaboration of the tests and the evaluation of their effectiveness).

Therefore, the initial thought of Pollit in which the planner had to help creativity has been assimilated with an external vision, becoming a superficial collaborator that focuses on the previous and

subsequent phases, but at no time is introduced within the creative process to collaborate at the moment of generating the ideas.

1.4. The account planner and creativity

As we have seen, the functions of the planner within the creative process are very scarce, but according to the study "The Planner, Key to Effective Advertising. Strategist and Guidance for Creativity" by María Luisa García (2009), PhD hired by the Complutense University of Madrid, professionals believe that the planner does develop his work in creativity. This work translates into the preparation of the briefing, the counter briefing, and the elaboration of the pre-tests and post-tests; so there is still a gap in the creative process.

From the birth of the profession until now, its functions have been increasing and settling in. However, we observe how the functions that are within the field of research and strategy have evolved, but the tasks of the planner in creativity have been left in the background and in an external perspective.

However, if we deepen in the future of the planner, the Account Planning Group (APG) (2017) of Spain affirms that the work of the planners must evolve, not focusing so much in the previous phases to creativity, but beginning to be much more relevant in the creative process and in the delivery of the ideas. They assure that just as the creative team has understood the strategic discourse and has internalized it, those planners who have creative sensitivity are the ones who will make planning evolve. As the APG affirms, progress is made towards agencies with more mergence between profiles and fewer differences between positions.

This idea is not new, since John Hunt, global creative director of TBWA, already affirmed that the planner and the creative executive should form the "Big Ideas" team, and this same team would be in charge of executing them (Cooper, 2006: 154).

1.4.1. Showcases as teamwork examples

As an example to highlight the Big Ideas team, it is worth noting the appearance of the showcase as an advertising format for brands. The showcases are audiovisual products with a maximum duration of eight minutes, which show the operation of an advertising campaign to understand it as a whole (Moreno, 2012: 2).

Showcases were normally used for the presentation of pieces or campaigns in advertising festivals. However, due to the communication capacity of these pieces and the viral nature of the Internet, showcases became advertising pieces in themselves. Case samples are often used to display guerrilla or below the line actions, and thus reach more people than if we only performed the action on the street. The purpose of these videos is to search for the surprise, the entertainment value and the identification of the consumer with the recorded event. The investigation and the extraction of insight are fundamental.

The importance of this 'new' format in advertising work lies in the need for collaboration between creative and strategic planning, since the showcase serves to sell creativity and demonstrate the effectiveness of the campaign. This way, research is put to the benefit of creativity and vice versa. The creative person must conceive the audiovisual product in an original way (since it will act as an advertising piece to surprise the target), and the planner will have to study the storytelling and the video thread to explain the concept, actions and results, as well as capture the attention of the target

audience. Therefore, the showcases clearly demonstrate the need for cooperation between the creative and the strategic planning department, since both must work on the ideas together to bring them to fruition.

1.5. The account planner in advertising agencies

Finally, to understand the way this works within a company and the relationships between its employees, we will analyze its organizational form.

Due to the recent incorporation of the planner into the advertising industry, his position is still doubtful and even authors such as Mariano Castellblanque (2006) wonder if this figure is necessary in the agencies' organization chart.

Firstly, we must know the evolution of the planner in the advertising agency. As we have already pointed out, the figure was born linked to the account management department and, therefore, it was located within it. In spite of its union to this department, Mariola García Uceda (2011) in "The Keys of Advertising", for example, does not place the planner within the account management team. The structure of the account team is conceived for the author in a pyramidal form, composed of the director, supervisor and account executive. However, she separates the functions, differentiating the work of the account executive from the strategic planner. The first one will be in charge of the contact with the client, while the strategic planner will be the strategist of the account, being in charge of the research, the briefing and the strategy.

Continuing with Mariola's ideas, when conceiving the team for each account, she affirms that it is formed by the contact or management group (account team), the creation group (creative team) and finally the media group (media team). These three groups should revolve around the account planner (currently called "strategic planner"), since it is the profile in charge of being in contact with all the groups to ensure that the set of communication actions are coherent.

In this way, we see how the planner is still not located within any department, but is understood as a transversal figure which must be in contact with all the professionals dedicated to the same client to maintain cohesion throughout the process. We highlight the transversality of the planning professional because, based on the objectives of this research, we will study the work of the planner with the creative team so that they collaborate and work as a team to achieve creative as well as effective campaigns.

1.6. Teamwork and the creative department

Currently, in agencies and any type of company, we find work teams, since the competence of teamwork has become a competitive advantage for organizations. This is due to the fact that, for the completion of projects, the collaboration of different professionals is necessary; it is demonstrated that through the communication and transmission of each individual's knowledge to the benefit of the team, higher quality results are achieved, attaining the individual and group objectives (Torrelles, *et al.*, 2011).

However, we must understand exactly what teamwork is about because although different people work for the same purpose, if each one does it in isolation without taking into account the other components of the group, we cannot talk of teamwork, but of working "individually in company", as pointed out by Pablo Cardona and Helen Wilkinson (2006).

For teamwork to occur communication is needed, the existence of feedback between all parties, each individual contributing to the team, adapting to it and developing effective time management.

Focusing on teamwork within the creative department- since it's where the creative process takes place- we highlight the human factor, because the human environment of the agency will affect the results (Etayo & del Río, 2008; Pérez, 2005).

In addition, authors like Teresa Amabile (1998) support the creation of disparate groups of people, with theoretical and practical knowledge of different fields and different styles of thinking. Although the author refers to the creative team (usually formed by an editor and an art director), this statement can be extrapolated to the formation of teams in general.

This way, the fusion of different people to carry out tasks is enriching, with the result that that currently multidisciplinary groups are sought. This is because they provide visions and ideas that would not be achieved otherwise and, at the end, better results are obtained at the level of quality, novelty and variety (González, et al., 2008).

2. Method

2.1. Methodology strategies: collection of information and procedures

To address the objectives set forth in our research we consider that to know the situation of the strategic planner in the Valencian Community we must find out the practice that is being carried out by this profile. Therefore, we conducted a questionnaire for strategic planners and the creative individuals who work for agencies in this region to find out what is the current situation of the planner, and at the same time we learned the opinions of these professionals on the introduction of the planner in the creative process and its functions in this field.

The questionnaire is a quantitative technique that consists of investigating a sample of subjects that are representative of a population. The advantages of this method of data collection are that it allows us to obtain information from almost any group, as well as it facilitates the standardization of data since we can treat it informatically and analyze it according to statistics (Hernández *et al.*, 2003).

Being the most used method for data collection, this first phase is carried out through a questionnaire over the Internet. Thanks to this tool, we can reach a large number of people with low cost. At the same time, being an online questionnaire, it allows interaction with the interviewee, which translates into fewer incomplete questions (De Rada, 2012).

Lastly, we would like to note that we opted for an anonymous questionnaire, since it is more likely to get real answers and, therefore, the results will be as rigorous as possible.

As a procedure, we first elaborated the questionnaire and carried out a pre-test with Álex Rubio, strategic planner and founder of Twelfthundred Agency, to corroborate the correct understanding and approach of the questions from the perspective of the agency worker and planner. The questionnaire consists of a total of 14 questions: 6 open, 3 closed and 5 with Likert scales. The benefit of this type of questionnaire lies in the fact that closed questions require less effort from the respondent and, therefore, the time to complete it is less, in addition to allowing coding and analyzing the data easily. On the other hand, through the open questions we will get more in-depth information on the issue and on the attitude of the professionals. Through the Likert scales we will know the position of the experts on the current situation of the planner and the future approach.

Regarding the content of the questionnaire, it consists of an initial block of 4 questions (2 open and 2 closed) to know the respondent's profile and to classify him or her according to gender, age, job position and type of company in which he or she works. Next, we have a closed multiple-choice question about the tasks carried out by the strategic planner in the company, in order to contrast the real work of this profile in the advertising agencies with the studied theory.

The following question is open with the purpose of them describing the figure of the planner in a single sentence, so we can extract what is most important from this profile for the respondents. The next block consists of 5 closed questions with a 5-scale answer on the Likert scale, where we seek to know the attitude of the experts on the current situation of the planner and its future approach. In this block of questions we try to investigate the collective imaginary of both planners and members of the creative team, to see if they perceive the profession as in the beginning (the function of the planner consists of research prior to creativity and measuring the results); if we find linkage between the work of the planner with creativity and the achievement of results (the planner is a figure that helps to achieve more creative and effective campaigns); if we can find links between the award-winning campaigns comparing the Spanish festival of creativity (Sol) and the Spanish festival of strategic planning (Eficacia) (the Sol awards are to the creative team what the Eficacia are to the planners); the predisposition for teamwork when generating ideas (the great ideas team is composed of the creative individual and planner); and, finally, to know the opinion of both profiles on the possibility that the planner worked within the creative process.

Finally, to close the questionnaire there were 3 open questions to find out what should be the functions of the planner in the creative process and, in addition, in the last two questions they had the possibility of leaving a comment and requesting the results of the survey. Finally, the elaboration and dissemination of the questionnaire was done through Google Forms.

After studying the situation of the strategic planner in the Valencian Community through a questionnaire, the next step in our methodology is to conduct an interview to professionals of reference in the Valencian Community sector to help us understand the situation and to clarify the data obtained after the first study. To do this, a semi-structured interview was prepared with 7 open questions that will be adapted according to the course of the interview.

The interview is a very useful method for qualitative research since it allows the extraction of data through conversation. It is a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee in order to obtain information about the proposed topic. In addition, since it's a process where both parties are present, it makes it possible to clarify any question during the interview and, by allowing the total expression of the interviewee, wider and deeper answers are obtained (Díaz-Bravo *et al.*, 2013).

The advantages that lead us to use this method of data collection is the broad spectrum of application, since it facilitates the collection of attitudes, opinions, emotions... that is, unobservable events. It also makes it possible to orient the interview around a specific topic that guides towards the objectives.

2.2. Population sample

We chose a sample of experts for the resolution of the questionnaire and the interview, since we need the opinion of the professionals themselves about the daily life of the planner. The Official Association of Advertising and Public Relations of the Valencian Community was chosen, which has 146 collegiate companies and whose purpose is the organization and representation of the profession in the

community; and the Association of Advertising Communication Companies of the Valencian Community (ComunitAD), with 27 members and whose objectives are the representation of the sector, the enhancement of the profession, the projection of the associated companies and the promotion of the advertising activity in the Valencian Community.

We chose both organizations for their importance in the advertising sector within this region and through them we will distribute the questionnaire to the professionals. The subjects to whom we will direct the survey, as we have already pointed out, will be advertisers that work in advertising agencies, with special interest in strategic planners and members of the creative team; this way we will be able to know the perception of the profession through the planners themselves, as well as the opinion of the creative design team, and finally we will be able to compare both visions and know the actuality of the planner with a perception of the whole.

During the information collection period (March and April 2017) we obtained a total of 49 responses to the questionnaire (of which 28 belonged to the strategic planning field and 21 to creativity). We must note the difficulty of finding strategic planners in the Valencian Community, since most of the advertising and communication companies are SMEs, where they look for all terrain professionals instead of specialized ones.

During the same period, a total of 23 interviews were carried out with strategic planners from the region, which allow us to have a broad view of the opinion of these professionals on the issues of interest for our study.

3. Analysis of the results

3.1. Questionnaire results

By obtaining a similar sample in both profiles (28 responses from strategic planners and 21 responses from creatives), we decided to enrich the analysis of the results by comparing the information collected from these perspectives. Firstly, we will analyze the data obtained by the planners.

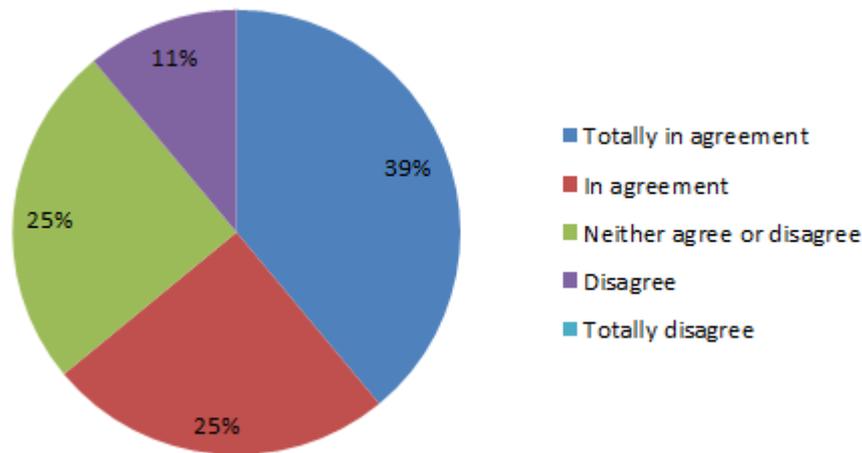
With respect to the functions carried out today by the planners in advertising agencies, most agree on the preparation of the briefing, being in contact with the client and giving orientation to creativity. In second place, we find the reception of the briefing, the preparation of the counter briefing, the investigation, the analysis and interpretation of the information and the realization of the strategy. The functions of preparation of presentations, the generation of ideas, the control of competition, the study of the public and the search for insights are still important. However, the functions that the planner exercises least are the evaluation of creativity and the preparation for competitions, moderating brain storming sessions, evaluating results and, finally, digital analysis.

Regarding a definition of what the planner's profile currently means in the agencies, the importance of this professional in the preparation of the strategy is highlighted. The workers themselves describe this profile as the counselor, the entity that guides and contributes value, which is why they define it as a key figure.

Next, we study the degree of compliance of these professionals with respect to different statements.

Faced with the ruling that the function of the planner is previous research and the measurement of results, the respondents agreed, and totally agreed, in a 25 and 39% respectively, but we found that 25% were neither in agreement nor in disagreement.

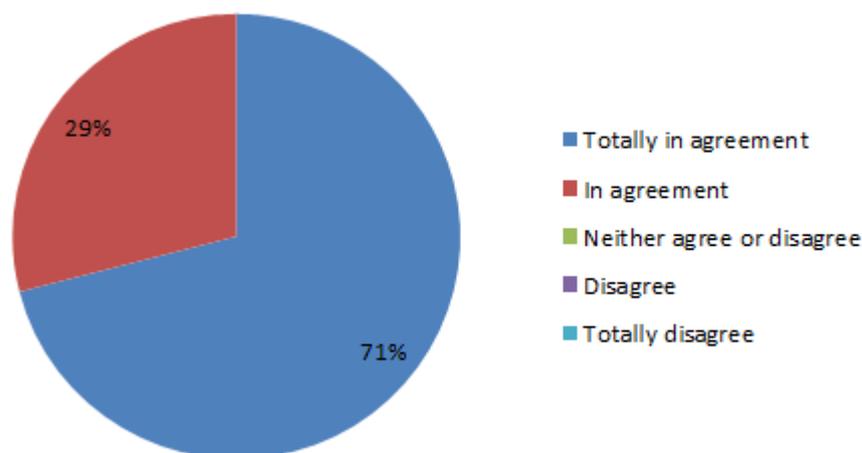
Graph 1: The planner's function consists of the prior research to creativity and the measurement of the results



Source: customized

With respect to the planner helping to achieve more creative and effective campaigns, they were all in agreement, with 71% of the people questioned in total agreement.

Graph 2: The planner is a figure that helps to achieve more creative and effective campaigns

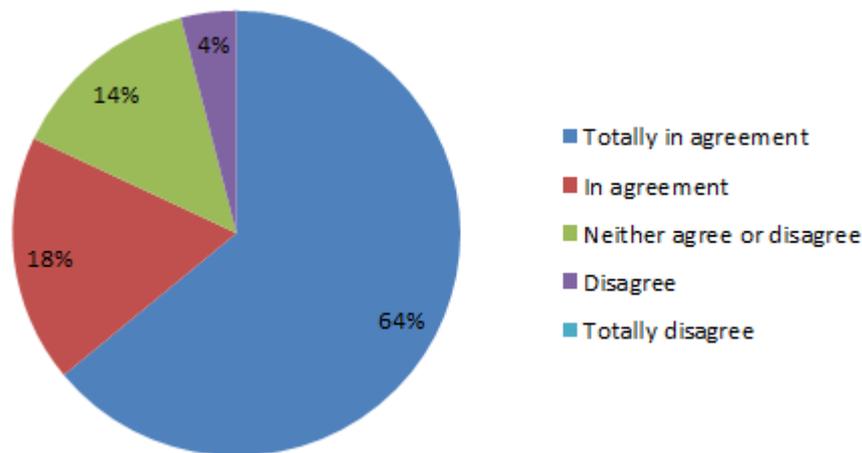


Source: customized

In the comparison of the Sol to the Eficacia awards, the majority agreed (64%), although in this question we find a disparity of opinions.

In the affirmation that the great ideas team is formed by the planner and the creative team, the majority agreed and totally agreed (82% in total).

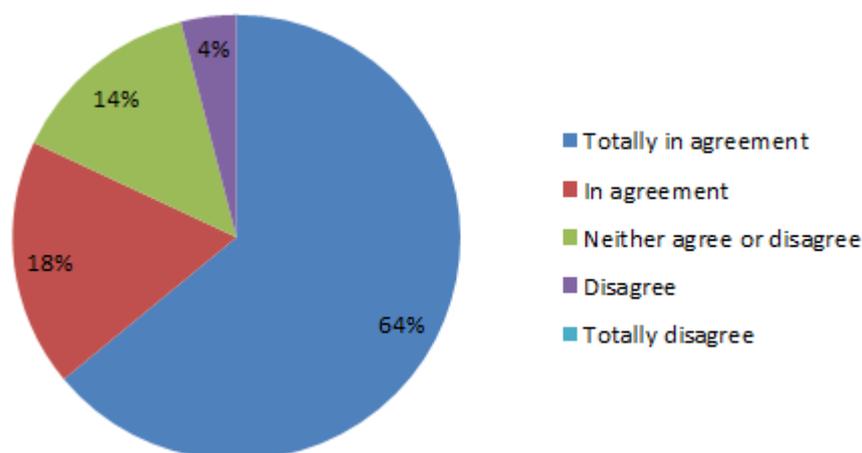
Graph 3: The great ideas team consists of the creative team and the planner



Source: customized

Finally, in response to the question of whether the planner should be introduced to the creative process, 82% of the respondents also agreed or totally agreed.

Graph 4: The strategic planner should be introduced into the creative process



Source: customized

At the end of the questionnaire the planners contributed their ideas about the functions that the planner should have in the creative process. Among the answers we concluded that the strategic planner must be the person who inspires and guides the creative team, supervising that creativity fits the strategy.

Therefore, the planner must constantly participate in the communication process and work hand in hand with the ideas.

Next, we will explain the data extracted from the individuals who make up the creative team.

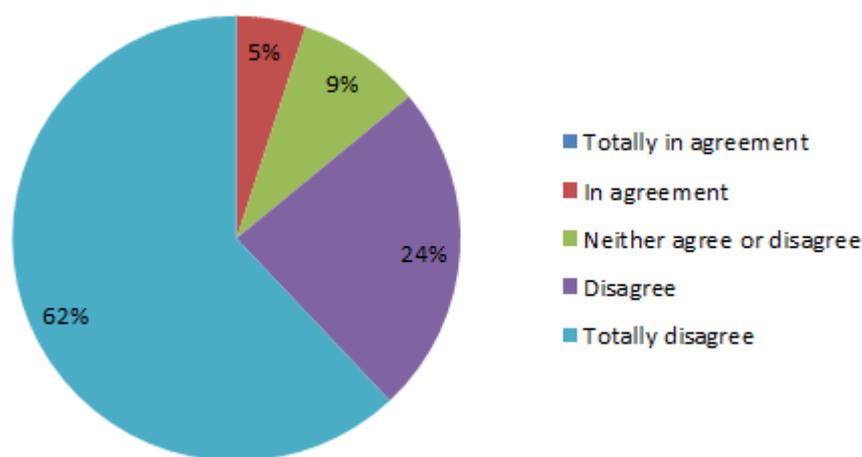
In the first place, the functions that are mostly carried out in the agencies by the planner are the elaboration of briefings, being in contact with the client and the strategy, followed by the investigation, the analysis and interpretation of the information, the orientation to creativity, the study of the public and the preparation of the presentations. In half of the agencies it is also the planner who performs the counter briefing, generates ideas, studies the competition and looks for insights. Finally, the least performed functions are the reception of the briefing, the evaluation of the results, the preparation for competitions, followed by the assessment of creativity and, finally, the moderation of brainstormings and digital analysis.

Regarding the definition, we have extracted from the opinion of the creative team members, we see that the vision they have of the planner is that of a creativity counselor, capable of creating concepts and being a creative trigger. They see him as a multifaceted professional who organizes projects and works in the middle of the field, between the account executive and the creative department.

Next, we will outline their degree of approval with the statements made.

We do not find consensus in the affirmation that the planner mainly carries out the research prior to creativity and the measurement of results, finding that 62% of the respondents totally disagree.

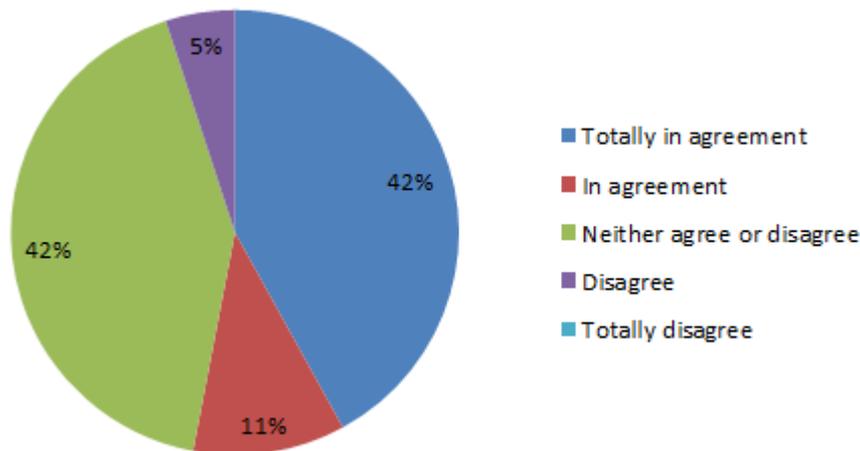
Graph 5: The planner's function consists of research prior to creativity and the measurement of the results



Source: customized

In the affirmation that the planner achieves more creative and effective campaigns, a little more than half of the respondents agree or totally agree (11% and 42% respectively), and 42% were neither in agreement nor in disagreement.

Graph 6: The planner is a figure that helps to achieve more creative and effective campaigns

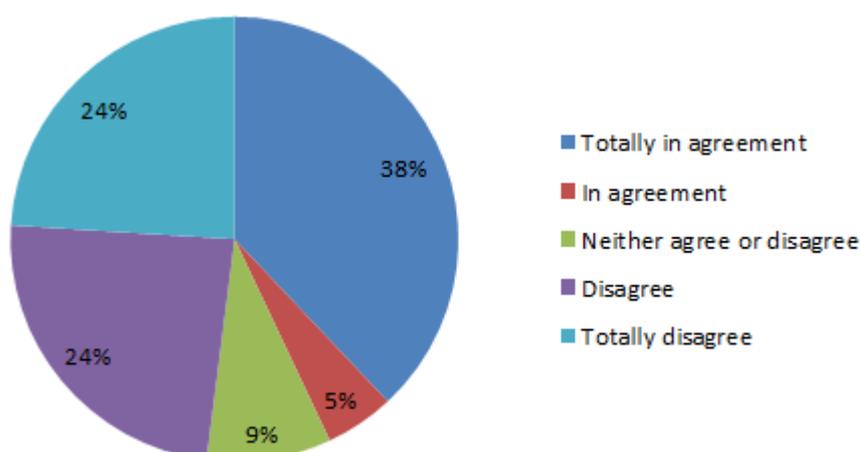


Source: customized

Faced with the idea that Sol awards reward the creative team and Eficacia awards reward planners, half of the respondents were not in agreement nor in disagreement, and the rest agree by 25%, while the other 24% disagree and strongly disagree.

On whether the great ideas team is formed by the creative team and the planner, the creative individuals themselves are in disagreement and totally disagree (24% at each point of the scale) although, on the other hand, 38% are totally in agreement.

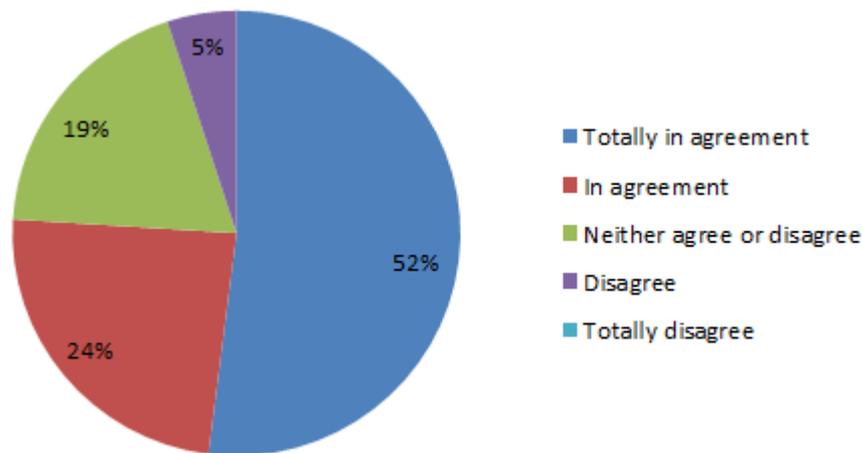
Graph 7: The great ideas team consists of the creative team and the planner



Source: customized

Finally, with regard to the question whether the planner should be introduced into the creative process, most agree or totally agree (24% and 52% respectively).

Figure 8: The strategic planner should be introduced into the creative process



Source: customized

In the last question about what should be the functions of the planner in the creative process, we see that he or she has to be a mediator and guide who provides creative solutions from the strategy point of view, creating a puzzle. The planner should be the one to find insights and the person to be involved in the process to say if the ideas fit the briefing, leaving the development of these ideas to the creative team.

Therefore, comparing the information extracted from both profiles, we observe that currently the strategic planner profile is the one that normally prepares the briefing and who has direct contact with the client, in addition to carrying out the research and analyzing and interpreting the data.

According to the planners, one of their top-level functions is the orientation to creativity, while this point is considered less important by the creative individuals. In the same way, the creative people believe that the elaboration of the strategy is representative of the planners, while they themselves relegate it to the background.

It is worth noting the disparity of opinions with respect to the strategic planner receiving the briefing, since by the planners' point of view it is a very much an accomplished function, while the creative individuals take this task least into account.

Finally, we would like to draw attention to the fact that the functions that were presented as essential in the studied bibliography (the evaluation of results, the assessment of creativity and the moderation of brainstorming) are the least performed at present. In addition, despite the fact that today digital analysis is a task that they must begin to control, we see that it is the least performed.

Regarding the definition of the strategic planner, they focus on defining themselves as strategists that should guide, direct the creative team and provide value. Creative individuals give an added value to

this profile by emphasizing that they must be able to create concepts and guide creativity. In addition, they emphasize that he or she is a multifaceted professional who organizes projects mediating between the account executive and the creative department.

Next, we will explore the coincidences and differences in the opinions of planners and the creative individuals.

These profiles coincide in the idea that the planner should be introduced in the creative process, however we cannot say with certainty that the Eficacia awards reward strategy to the planners, as Sol awards do with the creative team members.

The greatest disparity is observed in planners thinking that together with the creative individuals they form the Big Ideas team, and at the same time they claim that the strategic planner is able to achieve more creative and effective campaigns. In both cases, the creative members are more skeptical, downplaying the planner in its collaboration with ideas.

Finally, we see that the functions that the planner should perform in the creative process according to the planners themselves must be to guide and inspire, channeling the creativity towards the strategy. In this case, the creative individuals inquire more, and describe the planner as a professional who must give creative solutions from the strategic point of view, providing insights and giving an opinion as to whether the ideas fit the requirements of the briefing, without collaborating in the development of the ideas which is the exclusive task of the creative team.

Therefore, after the extraction, analysis and comparison of the data, we can see that the figure of the planner in the Valencian Community, as the professionals themselves manifest, is much closer to the account executive profile with a strategic vision, than to the characteristics that define the strategic planner. The planners themselves see the reception of the briefing more important than the elaboration of the strategy, the very function that defines this job description.

However, the creative individuals perceive the planners as an intermediate position between the account executive and the creative team, understanding that they must mediate to manage and direct creativity to align with the client's strategy.

On the other hand, although both profiles agree on the introduction of the strategic planner in the creative process, it is the creative individuals who refine the most what the role of the planner should be within it. While the planners focus on continuing with their role of 'orientation to creativity' (without explaining what it consists of), the creative members define what the planner's role will be, pointing out that this profile must be capable of creating concepts, contributing insights, as well as checking the creativity to make sure it matches the strategy.

At this point, it should also be noted that within the Valencian Community, the planners themselves declare that the search for insights is one of the tasks carried out to a lesser extent, while according to the consulted bibliography it should be a first level function.

This may lead us to conclude that the planner is a figure that is still underdeveloped in the Valencian Community (in addition to the difficulty of finding this profile within the agencies of the region), and that it continues to be linked to account professionals.

Therefore, although they are interested in their immersion in the creative process, they are still unclear as to what their role should be, since they are not performing the full functions of a strategic planner.

For their part, the creative individuals have more clear what the tasks should be, and although they are not yet being met, they do see what the future of the planner should be for more creative and effective campaigns.

3.2. Interview results

Most interviewees (21 out of 23) are positive with the discipline in the Valencian Community, since planning has always existed (whether or not we find a planner in the agency, the planning must be carried out, be it an account executive, a creative member or any other figure who is responsible for researching and choosing the strategic approach), but currently there are more planners and concerns on the professionals' part. However, they recognize that this issue is still at an early stage and there is still a long way to go, especially in the advertisers' field. They consider that it would be necessary to have a budget for this discipline to make the strategic planner and planning take off in the Valencian Community, hence it is necessary to educate customers in planning, showing that this discipline helps them achieve the objectives and, therefore, they must pay for it. If there is no budget for planning, it is impossible for an agency to hire people totally dedicated to this task. Therefore, they consider that the first step should focus on giving value to the profession and that it is noticeable to advertisers, because if they begin to demand and hire planning, this will be a real discipline in the agencies.

Regarding the idea that planners are currently carrying out the traditional functions of the account executive profile, practically all of them consider that it is so; the planning is being done by the account executives in most of the agencies. This is because there are few pure strategic planners (as noted above, it is still not a discipline that advertisers demand and, since there is no budget, it is difficult to find professionals destined solely to planning). But what we do find are account professionals with a strategic vision. In addition, we must clarify that not all profiles that define the strategy are planners, since there are many professionals called strategic planners for having strategic vision or for knowing the theory of what a planner should do, but if they do not comply with the basic functions of this profile they cannot be labelled with this classification.

They all agree that the main functions that a planner should carry out are: writing briefings, finding insights, collaborating with creativity, preparing presentations and evaluating results. However, the problem remains the same: as the planner has to help with other clients simultaneously, as well as account and creativity colleagues, in the end he cannot perform his own functions. They are mixing roles in the agencies and when combining account functions with strategic planning, there is a mismatch in the work weights, causing some basic functions not to be fulfilled in favor of the tasks of the other profile.

Regarding the work of the planner together with the account and creative departments, we can say that all the interviewees consider the strategic planner as a "hinge" between these two worlds. On the one hand, the account department translates into the advertiser, and the planner must collaborate with him to teach the client which is the way to go, what the strategic focus will be. On the other hand, the creative department will materialize in the public, and the functions of the planner in this field is to facilitate the work of the creative team, mainly in the creation of an inspiring creative briefing, where the path to be followed is already shown (contributing contents and references that stimulate the minds of the creative team).

All the interviewees consider that during the creative process communication between planning and creativity must continue, since the strategic planner will be responsible for sharing with the creative department the insights and references (the way in which other brands or product categories have solved the same problem, plans to tell stories, types of music...), as well as any trends or information

that can help them in the creation. In addition, the role of the planner can be very relevant in the ideation and storytelling development, since creativity and planning must work side by side to conceive the development of the idea, the contact points, the activations, how to capture the attention of the target audience, etc.

Therefore, they all defend that there must be a fluid communication between the strategic planning department and the creativity department, helping each other to produce creative and effective campaigns. The majority also points out that the planner should help in the presentation of the ideas to the client in some cases, since research and data always provide him security. To conclude the process the planner must obviously evaluate the results and measure the effectiveness, observing if the objectives set initially have been met.

Therefore, if teamwork enhances the final result, the introduction of the planner in the creative process will enrich it, because if creativity is coordinated with strategy, the usual outcome is to achieve the objectives. An example of this are the Awards for Effectiveness in Commercial Communication, where the strategies that have worked best in order to fulfill the initial objectives are awarded.

Finally, regarding the vision of the future about the profession, most believe that the first thing is to make planning a real discipline, training more professionals in it. Therefore, when the planner becomes integrated, performing his real functions in the advertising agency, it will be then when he will definitely enter the creative process.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Firstly, we must point out the limitations of our research, because due to the current situation of the planner in the Valencian Community, it has been complicated to extract a large sample of professionals to consult. Despite this, we believe that the level of response achieved is significant and allows us to address and understand the complexity of the issue we address in our study.

According to the data obtained, we can now define the planner as an "account 2.0", since the functions he or she performs correspond to the traditional account profile, adding a strategic focus and research. At the same time, we can say that in reality what happens is that the account professionals are the people in charge of carrying out the planning, or that other professionals call themselves strategic planners for performing strategy or research tasks, but that by not complying with the basic functions of the planner they cannot be considered as such.

In both cases we observe that in this community roles are being mixed, merging tasks of different professionals, which means that the real functions of the planner profile are not fulfilled since there are no workers assigned in their entirety to planning.

In addition, trying to understand the reason why planning has not managed to mature in the Valencian Community, we perceive that it is an economic issue. Advertisers in this region are still not aware of the benefits that this discipline brings them and do not allocate a real budget to it. Therefore, to settle the planner and his work in the agencies, we must begin with the education of the clients in planning, to turn it into a real and paid discipline. Despite being in an initial stage of planning, we must emphasize that there are more and more professionals interested in this discipline, which is good news with respect to the growth of the profession.

Focusing on the work of strategic planners in collaboration with other teams in the agencies, we see that this profile has to be as close to the account department as to the creative department. The planner has to help the client choose the best strategic approach according to their needs, while it offers support and facilitates the work of the creative department.

When we become interested in the introduction of the planner in the creative process, we must disclose the functions of this profile in this process. As a result, the strategic planner has to open the process by writing the creative briefing, a document that informs and inspires the creative team. Once the creative process has begun, the planner must continue communicating with the creative individuals, providing information in the form of insights, references or trends to stimulate and inspire the work of the creative team. In some cases, the planner also has to join the presentation before the client, since by means of the data and conclusions drawn from the research he contributes rigorously to the ideas presented.

In addition, there are times when the planner and the creative team must work together, such as in the storytelling development, where creativity and strategy must go hand in hand for the correct evolution of the idea or story. Finally, the planner is also in charge of closing the process by evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of the communication made.

The Valencian Community professionals, both planners and creative individuals, agree with the introduction of the strategic planner in the creative process, since teamwork always enriches, and if creativity and strategy are coordinated, creative and strategic campaigns will be achieved at the same time. However, the reality is that the introduction of the planner in the creative process will depend on the needs of the creative department and it is the latter who will decide if they need the planner to a greater or lesser extent in the process.

However, as we have pointed out, we must begin by making planning a real discipline, by introducing the figure of the planner in the agencies. Once the strategic planner is a profile within the advertising communication process, it will be able to evolve and enter the creative process.

Referring back to our starting hypothesis (the strategic planner must evolve and enter the creative process in order to achieve better results in terms of efficiency and creativity), we can say that throughout the investigation, and after the presentation of the final results, the hypothesis initially proposed is verified, accepting that the figure of the planner is still in an initial phase within the Valencian Community and, therefore, the first step should be the settlement and evolution of the figure within the framework of the agencies.

The main objective of our research was to demonstrate the current need to include the planner in the creative process. In addition, we set ourselves the specific objective of defining what the functions of this profile are within the creative process. Both objectives have been reached, the first one by showing the ideas of the professionals of the Valencian Community, collecting the opinions of both the planners themselves and the creatives (who specifically work in the creative process). Both profiles agree on the introduction of the planner in the process, and affirm that the collaboration of the strategic planner helps to achieve creative and effective campaigns. Therefore, it is logical that they named the 'orientation to creativity' as one of the functions that the planner must perform.

We have also compiled what the functions of the strategic planner should be in the creative process, from the realization of the creative briefing that opens the process, continuing with the support to the creative team through concepts, insights, references and trends, helping to present the ideas... to the

final evaluation of the campaign, observing if strategy and creativity are coordinated, and measuring the results obtained to verify if the objectives are achieved.

Finally, as a synopsis of the work as a whole, we can say that this research has shown us that the figure of the planner is still in a primitive stage, not yet appearing in most of the agencies of the Valencian Community, where roles are mixed to cover the planning functions. Therefore, we observe that the strategic planner in this region corresponds, as we have said, to an "account 2.0", since he carries out the tasks of this profile, although he provides a strategic and a research vision. And, according to the professionals, the main cause of this slow introduction of the planner in the advertising industry would be the lack of budget on the advertisers' part.

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