"Authenticity and essence are, for me, the most important aspects, both personally and professionally"

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Silvia Rodriguez
Founder and CEO Vanilla Project

"Because vanilla doesn't have to be boring" is the concept that defines Vanilla Project, a creative agency that combines authenticity and innovation to transform ideas into unique solutions. Silvia Rodríguez, the founder and CEO, reveals the motivations behind the creation of this project, which goes beyond the conventional by developing branding strategies and events, such as Book 2.0, an initiative promoting the future of the book industry in Portugal.

To get to know you better, could you tell us a little about your professional background and what past experiences influenced the creation of <u>Vanilla Project</u>?

I have a degree in Business Management and started my career in strategic consulting, working on projects focused on process reorganization. This gave me a solid foundation to develop disruptive thinking and creatively find solutions to improve efficiency for the benefit of businesses. Later on, during a transitional phase, I decided to take a different path by assuming the leadership of projects international and events in Portugal. This experience led me to reflect on the concerns of the Portuguese society and how we could learn from what the world has to offer. Vanilla Project clearly stems from this desire to support Portugal and societies in addressing significant topics through strategies and events that serve as platforms for change and impact.

What motivated the creation of this creative agency, and what inspired you to choose this name that connects to the site's slogan, "Because vanilla doesn't have to be boring"?

The word "vanilla" resonated with me from the very beginning, and the slogan reflects the agency's mission: to take brands, projects, and events that are in a stage where they fell the need to be reinvented—having reached a certain level of normality—and give them a "twist." I enjoy rethinking and redesigning, not only starting from scratch but also recreating what already exists, breathing new life and impact into it. What fascinates me is the challenge of transforming something perceived as simple or lacking flavor into something vibrant and meaningful. This is the creative approach that defines Vanilla Project: Inspiring Change.

You describe Vanilla Project as an "incubator of ideas." How does this vision translate into the daily activities of your projects, and what sets this agency apart from others?

Today, I see Vanilla more as a social impact platform. We tackle issues that resonate with society and contribute to building a future vision, collaborating with partners who already share this desire for change and are open to transforming our societies for the better. When I say we are an "incubator of ideas," I mean that we work closely with our partners, deeply understanding their strategies and missions to present creative, original solutions that reflect the brand's core values. Our creativity isn't limited to communication or strategy but extends to our ability to extract the essence of the client and create something truly innovative and unique. We don't just organize events; we work from the project's inception to ensure it has a real impact on society and stands out in today's market.
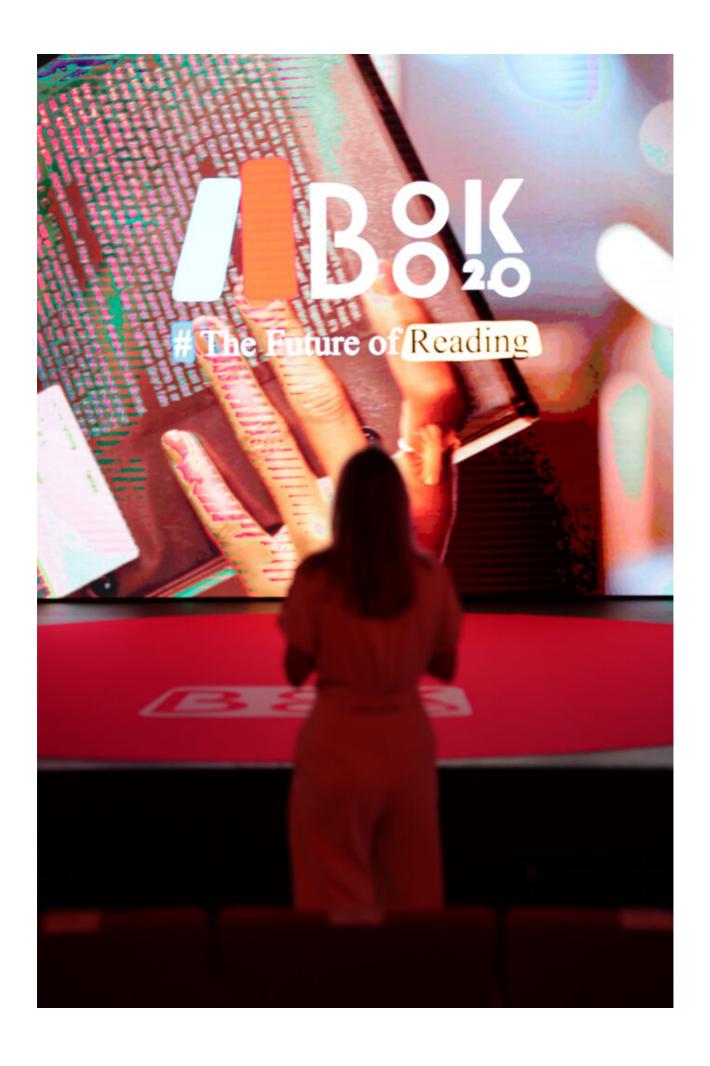
The agency believes that every brand has a "unique essence waiting to be revealed." How does this project work to uncover and communicate that essence authentically, helping your clients stand out in the market?

Authenticity and essence are, for me, the most important aspects, both personally and professionally. Many companies in Portugal have their purpose and determination but sometimes lack the differentiating element to stand out in a highly competitive market. Vanilla operates precisely at this point: helping companies define their true core values and align their mission with their practices, creating strategies and action plans that express their essence. I see many organizations with well-defined values that aren't reflected in their products, services, or communication, and this is where Vanilla Project makes a difference.

We also know you are the executive director of Book 2.0, an event aimed at promoting the sustainable development of the book sector in Portugal, which has already had two editions, the most recent one held this year. What were the main objectives when creating Book 2.0, and how does this event reflect Vanilla Project's essence and values?

I took on this challenge two years ago, coinciding with the launch of Vanilla. I have always been passionate about books, although, like many people today, I struggle to find time to read. Creating this event from the ground up was an opportunity to reflect on the challenges of the industry, particularly the coexistence of books and technology and the adoption of new educational models. Book 2.0 aligns with Vanilla's mission by addressing topics of social impact and literacy. Recently, we signed a broader cooperation agreement to promote reading and education in Portugal—areas I consider central to the future of upcoming generations. This project perfectly aligns with Vanilla's mission.

In terms of expansion, what are the next steps for Vanilla Project? Are there plans to enter new markets or develop new areas of focus?

Yes, many projects are being developed. Regarding Book 2.0, it is a partnership that has come to stay and will continue to grow as an national and international relevant event, positioning Portugal within the European and global context. In parallel, Vanilla is strengthening partnerships in areas of social impact, sustainability, and education, with projects that will inspire other sectors. While Vanilla was born in Portugal, it has a global positioning and is not confined to any single market. For sure, we will always be involved in projects where we can add value and support their transformation, amplifying their strength and impact, whether locally or internationally.

Finally, we'd like to know your opinion on the future role of creative agencies in an increasingly digital and technological world. How can agencies adapt to new technologies like artificial intelligence without losing focus on creativity and connection with the audience?

There's no doubt that artificial intelligence is here to stay, and the real challenge is to balance innovation with authenticity. This balance must remain our central focus: preserving the essence of people, brands, and projects without compromising what makes us unique. Vanilla's mission includes leaving a positive legacy—a commitment to future generations—by designing strategic partnerships rooted in solid values and a shared mission for transformation and change. We believe that transforming the world starts with responsibility and awareness, without ever losing sight of what truly matters.