FROM CREATIVITY TO IMPACT THE TRANSFORMATIVE VISION OF VANILLA PROJECT

Transforming creativity into social impact is the mission that drives Silvia Rodriguez, Founder & CEO of Vanilla Project. With a career marked by experience in institutional events and the conviction that brands and people can go beyond profit, Silvia created an agency that aims to tell stories, create legacies and inspire lasting change. In this conversation, she shares the vision that has put Lisbon on the global map of creativity and strategy, and explains how Vanilla Project challenges companies and audiences to take an active role in building a more conscious future.

Creating social impact through creativity is an ambitious and demanding goal. How was the path to clearly defining this mission and the values that underpin Vanilla Project's identity designed?

Vanilla Project's mission stems from values that are intrinsic to the way we live and work, and from the desire to contribute to the world with what we know we do best: telling stories, creating stages, bringing people together and inspiring them, communicating and establishing strategic partnerships that amplify the message we want to convey. We seek to challenge companies to develop greater missions that go beyond profit, with the aim of promoting a world that is fairer, more balanced, and more conscious. When values are aligned and we are true to our convictions, we can create unique experiences that leave lasting marks and generate real impact.

Your previous experience in institutional events gave you a privileged insight into the dialogue between different spheres of society. How does this background influence the way Vanilla Project designs projects that aim to generate collective transformation today?

My professional experience in the world of events gave me the opportunity to meet inspiring people who fight every day for change and social impact in their areas, many of them without much recognition, but with a sense of mission that makes them feel fulfilled. This deep contact with collective missions aligned with the strong values I so strongly defended inspired the creation of Vanilla Project.

Each event, from a corporate anniversary, senior management meetings, to a major conference with international reach, aims to inspire and challenge participants to reflect on the active role of companies and individuals in society. The real impact begins when everyone involved realizes the value of acting with purpose - it is this search for alignment that motivates our approach.

Silvia Rodriguez, Founder & CEO

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In addition to creating and producing events and conferences, how does Vanilla Project help brands build lasting narratives?

Beyond events, we create brands, concepts, digital content, and strategies that reinforce companies' purpose. We currently

lead projects that bring together various entities around a common mission, managing all phases, from concept to execution.

Even when the starting point is an event, there is always work that goes beyond production. Each project begins with the creation of a concept, a narrative, a brand, aligned with the business and communication strategy, in addition to the creation of strategic partnerships and commercial aspects such as market positioning and sponsor management. We work from storytelling to values and mission, designing an action plan through to final delivery.

The concept of 'legacy' is one of the pillars of Vanilla Project. In an era where the ephemeral dominates communication, how do you build relevance and lasting memory in an event?

Building legacies means creating experiences that endure over time, through ideas and inspiration that the audience takes with them, with a desire to evolve and change. Events are sensory experiences and, when based on clear values and a mission that goes beyond the commercial, we all feel the difference.

Our mission is to help companies create legacies that express their role in society, promoting social responsibility and reinforcing the connection to their purpose. Inspired by the principles of 'conscious capitalism,' we help companies outline their missions so that each project generates lasting impact and contributes to a memorable brand.

What are the major themes that Vanilla seeks to bring to the forefront of its projects and debates, and what impact does it seek to generate with this work?

The impact we seek goes beyond the immediate. At Vanilla, we believe that events are more than just moments of encounter: they are stages for reflection and action. We choose to work on themes that we consider urgent and fundamental to society, such as human rights, education, leadership and culture, among others. These areas inspire us to create projects that foster dialogue, debate on current ideas and trends, raise awareness and pave the way for a more conscious and sustainable future for the next generations - something that is crucial today.

They have stood out for their ability to make Lisbon an international hub of creativity and strategy. What conditions are still lacking in the national ecosystem for Portugal to be recognized globally not only as a destination, but as a creative and intellectual reference point?

Lisbon is increasingly establishing itself as a hub of creativity, innovation and strategy, and at Vanilla we are proud to be part of this story. We take projects with Portuguese DNA to the world and bring global events to Portugal, reinforcing Lisbon's image as a contemporary, visionary and culturally relevant capital. The 'People's Choice Destination' award we received at the Eventex Awards 2025 recognizes this work and places Lisbon and Vanilla as global leaders in purposeful events and conferences.

To consolidate this growth, we need to strengthen local collaboration networks, invest in international training, create consistent incentives for innovative projects and increase the visibility of the cultural, social and educational impact of Portuguese initiatives.

The distinction as 'Rising Star Agency' at the Eventex Awards 2025 validates the agency's path, but also raises expectations for what comes next. How do you manage this creative and positioning pressure in a highly competitive global market?

This recognition reinforces our ambition and confirms the impact we want to generate, without ever turning into pressure. For us, the essential thing remains the difference we make to people, businesses and society. In a competitive events market, our approach is distinguished by our purpose of creating change that lasts beyond each event, with projects that we see come to fruition after the events. We see our competitors as partners on our journey and in our purpose, often even as a source of inspiration, strengthening a global ecosystem of creativity and shared responsibility for our societies. This vision allows us to continuously evolve and consolidate a solid position in a demanding and dynamic international landscape.

In your view, what role will events play in the future of purposeful brand communication?

Events will become increasingly essential for building conscious and informed societies. In a world of misinformation and polarisation, dialogue, human contact, sharing experiences and focusing on reflection become crucial.

Through events and conferences, we seek to challenge people to think differently, to open their minds and discover their role in society. We want brands and participants to find meaning and purpose by making conscious and responsible decisions. We believe that events will become a stage for transformation, where creativity and transparency come together to leave a relevant and lasting message.

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