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SILVIA PAZOS RODRÍGUEZ

"Creating impactful events is creating legacies"

In a constantly evolving industry, where events have ceased to be mere moments of celebration and have become platforms for social transformation, creativity, strategy, and authenticity become key elements. It is in this context that Vanilla Project stands out. In this interview with Magazine Pontos de Vista, Silvia Pazos Rodríguez, Founder & CEO, shares the journey, values, and future of the company which, in just two years, has already gained international recognition – such as the Rising Star Agency (Gold) award at the Eventex Awards – and continues to establish itself as a driving force for change in the events industry.

Could you briefly introduce Vanilla Project and your role as CEO of the company?

Vanilla Project is a creative agency specialized in designing conferences and events with social impact, with extensive experience in both institutional and corporate areas. Our mission is to transform events into moments of reflection, action, and legacy, taking on the responsibility of bringing key stakeholders together around a shared commitment. In essence, we also play a consultancy and advisory role, acting as strategic partners in the areas of events and communication, turning intentions into concepts aligned with mission and values.

My role involves supporting our clients from start to finish on each project, embracing with great responsibility the mission and trust placed in me.

The events industry has been evolving rapidly. What do you see as the main current and future trends?

The sector is clearly shifting; events are no longer just celebrations, but platforms for shaping thought and transformation. Current trends reflect this, with a strong demand for immersive experiences, hybrid formats, storytelling, and increasing demand for purposeful content.

In the future, I believe the key differentiator will be authenticity and impact. Audiences are more demanding, attentive, and selective; they seek experiences that move them and mobilize them toward something greater.

Innovation is essential in this industry. How does Vanilla Project incorporate innovation into its projects and services?

At Vanilla, innovation always begins with thoroughly understanding the client and the strategic goals behind the events they want to create, well before the concept is developed. This process allows us to craft truly tailored solutions, with relevant content, distinctive formats, and highly personalized experiences.

We work closely with trusted specialized partners, acting as a bridge between all teams, as an extension of the client, whose main focus remains on their core business. Vanilla offers an integrated "all-in-one" approach, including strategic leadership, while always ensuring quality, creativity, and continuous innovation in each project.

Sustainability has gained relevance across all sectors. How does Vanilla Project incorporate sustainable practices into its events?

From efficient logistics planning to the conscious selection of materials, every solution we propose aims to minimize environmental impact. We integrate sustainability into choices such as hiring electric transportation, waste management, and the reuse of sustainable materials, among others.

Digitalization and artificial intelligence are transforming business. How do you see these technologies being applied in event production and management?

We believe technology should serve human experience, not replace it. Technology plays a central role in our society, and we strive to use it to our advantage, while acknowledging that it cannot replace the human sensitivity and creativity we bring to every project. Automation of management processes and participant communication through digital applications, for instance, is extremely useful, especially in large-scale events. We use these tools as strategic enhancers, allowing us to focus on what we do best.

Talent management is another crucial pillar. What is Vanilla Project's strategy for attracting, developing, and retaining talent in such a dynamic industry?

We believe in agile teams aligned with the company's purpose. We value idea exchange, strategic thinking, and creativity. Vanilla's culture is one of horizontal collaboration, we support, challenge, and create space for growth.

I'm proud to have worked with some of the best professionals in the industry throughout my career, and I continue to nurture those relationships. At Vanilla, team-building also extends to our external partners, with whom we maintain long-term relationships. This mutual trust has been one of our greatest strengths.

What is the role of leadership in building excellent projects in the events sector? And how would you describe your leadership style?

Leadership is the through-line that ensures consistency, clarity, and quality at every stage of a project. In my case, I believe in a leadership style that is present, strategic, and empathetic, balancing vision with execution. Essentially, it means placing the people within the teams at the center of decision-making, respecting all perspectives and ideas in a human and ethical leadership approach.

In high-level institutional events, those involving heads of state, international bodies, or politically impactful conferences, it is vital to lead with rigor and sensitivity. My experience over the years with projects like the



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Estoril Conferences, EurAfrican Forum, and the UN PRME Global Forum (a UN initiative in New York) has been key in this regard.

Could you share one or two projects that best illustrate Vanilla Project's DNA and commitment to quality and innovation?

One of the projects that best reflects Vanilla's DNA is Book 2.0 #TheFutureOfReading, an event that connects literature, education, and culture to structural themes such as sustainability, mental health, and technology. Vanilla is the strategic partner of APEL in this initiative, which has already had two editions and is preparing for its third. The event aims to explore the role of books as agents of social transformation. Hosting conversations with over 65 authors, academics, and policymakers per edition, Book 2.0 is establishing itself as a relevant space for real dialogue, engaging diverse audiences with tangible outcomes.

In its latest edition in 2024, the event gathered over 600 participants in one day, with sessions in multiple formats, including debates, performances, and institutional presentations. Attendees included the President of the Republic, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Youth, and the Secretaries of State for Education and Culture. It served as the launchpad for APEL's unprecedented study on Book Buying and Reading Habits in Portugal, offering valuable contributions for future public policy. Strategic curation, execution consistency, and coordination with key partners and institutions reflect our approach and position Vanilla as a consultancy specialized in purpose-driven and socially impactful events, designed from the ground up, from concept to implementation.

How does being featured in Pontos de Vista add value to Vanilla Project?

Being featured in Pontos de Vista is an opportunity to strengthen our position as a reference in strategic consultancy in the field of major conferences and purpose-driven events. We believe in the importance of sharing knowledge, opening dialogue in the sector, and positioning ourselves as relevant interlocutors for organizations, brands, and institutions alike.

It's an excellent platform to strengthen existing relationships and create new opportunities, particularly in the areas of training, curation, and consulting, which we are actively developing. It also allows us to reach potential partners, such as creatives and event producers, and new clients who share our vision.

Finally, what is Vanilla Project's vision for the future of the events sector, both in Portugal and internationally?

We believe in-person events will continue to grow in relevance as catalysts for thought and social transformation, a trend we've observed firsthand in the growing number of events being held. Portugal is undoubtedly a sought-after destination for conferences and events for many reasons, and there is tremendous potential to create meaningful experiences with international projection. It's part of our mission and ambition to keep putting Portugal on the map as a strategic hub for thought and action, and a protagonist in the international landscape of impactful events. ■


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