

Producing information, producing and monitoring communication

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This essay is based on the interview with Fernández, conducted in November. She is a communication manager of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry that involves a considerable responsibility in the area of communication, because the Chamber of Commerce in Madrid represents a broad community and a network of more than 6.000 persons. *El Diario Montañas* was the first newspaper where Covadonga Fernández worked. It was a local journal, in Santander, in the North of Spain. When she finished her university studies in Communication (Complutense University, Madrid), she began working as a professional freelance journalist for several national magazines. One year later, she signed on as exclusive journalist for *Panorama* Magazine. The publication of shocking reportages in 1989 brings her to work for a centennial newspaper: *ABC*. Until then, we could speak of a successful but traditional career of a professional in the field of communication.

A significant step occurred when Covadonga Fernández became Communication Manger of the Camara de Comercio e Industria de Madrid (Madrid Chamber of Commerce and Industry). She arrived in a public corporation that was heavily bureaucratized, and she needed to modernize the corporation to provide it with greater visibility in Spanish society. Her first challenge was to build an organization that realizes how important communication is, and to transform its communication culture.

The first task was to build a communication department with professional journalists who had experience working in economic newspapers or magazines. She recruited two senior journalists, as well as two young ones. The young ones had the necessary skills and

experience in digital media. In the interview, she outlined the importance of team work to face the changes. In her own terms, she wanted an articulate journalist of the 'ancient regime' and the new languages.

Today, 'old' style journalism deals with press notes and the relations with the media system. This leads to the regular presence of the Cámara de Comercio e Industria de Madrid in the media; and not just only on rare occasions as before. Consequently, the Cámara de Comercio has become a relevant factor in Spanish society due to its everyday presence in it. Everything that Cámara de Comercio does is communicated to a broad and unknown audience through old and new media, including its own website.

Another task she dealt with was to reach an important number of people affiliated to the Cámara de Comercio. The target group was an audience of entrepreneurs and professionals; a community of more than one hundred thousand people. Until then, most of them had only one communication channel with the organisation: the reception of the magazine. Covadonga Fernández and her team collaborated on a communication plan to transform the audience of distant affiliated entrepreneurs, to a digital community with a relevant communication flow and the power of interactivity. The main steps of this plan were: a) to build a new 2.0 web design, b) to inform through the magazine about the organisation of the new communication channel and its benefits, and c) to make the website more interactive and to invest resources, as persons and time, in social networks. For the moment, the job is a balance between the traditional and periodical rhythm of the paper newspapers and magazines, and the continued presence in social networks, as Twitter and Facebook.

The last step of the plan has radically changed the professional activity to a routine of being ready 24 hours because the communication flow cannot stop.

Always based on teamwork, they have the responsibility for feeding the presence of the Cámara in the flow of news, and of answering the questions and the critics, from the affiliated and non-affiliated community. In Covadonga Fernández's words, "We have to be always exposed to commentaries and critics, which is very different from the traditional job in a newspaper that I learned in University".

What are the steps for the future? First of all, the model of transparency needs to be consolidated and the flow of communication extended to the new technological advances. Then, the next step is to extend it to the phones of the Cámara de Madrid community. This is a structural change in professional practice. It is both a change of professional language and a change of attitude. At the same time, she succeeded to obtain a very active audience in the social networks. She needs to supervise and manage the work of 6.000 people every day. Finally we can say that Covadonga Fernández's professional biography has shifted from producing information, to producing and monitoring communication.

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