

## Strategic Planning & Creativity

There seems to be an inherent contradiction in the notion that strategic planning and creativity can be coordinated. After all, strategic planning is a calculated process, while creativity can appear at any given moment, without warning, and certainly without time to plan. While this may be true for the mad geniuses of the world, in marketing, creativity needs to be calculated, and more importantly, it needs to be integrated and consistent with strategy.

Before we can explore how the creative process is structured so that it can fall into line with the strategic requirements of the company we need to review which aspects of coordination are required. Essentially there are two primary elements that demand coordination. They are:

1. Market Research – the creative staff needs to fully understand the findings of the research, particularly with regard to which markets are being targeted and what the findings were with regard to which messages will be most well received.
2. Exposure Channels – a strategic decision (as opposed to a creative one), the channels to be used will greatly influence the creative process, not only in terms of medium the work prepared for, but also the style and feel of the work.

So how does a company effectively structure the creative process so that it is receptive and responsive to the strategic needs of the company? The Tudog process embraces 7 key steps. They are:

### 1. Concept Development

Based on information provided from the research and the determination of medium, the concepts for the creative piece are developed.

### 2. Strategy Alignment

The concept developed is reviewed alongside the strategy and evaluated for consistency and anticipated efficacy.

### 3. Concept Modification

The creative concept undergoes a round of enhancements so that the message is more focused and in tune with the strategy.

### 4. Alignment & Modification

Once again the revised concept is evaluated alongside the stated strategy and intended channels and send back to the creative team for adjustments based on the feedback received.

### 5. Completion of Concept for Trials

In most cases the creative should be tested within controlled groups so that the expected efficacy and the actual performance do not wind up too far apart from one another.

#### 6. Alignment & Modification

Based on the results of the trials the concept is further adjusted and the final versions are completed and distributed for approval.

#### 7. Production

The creative pieces are produced and distribution, through the strategically planned mediums, is initiated.

The occurrence of a creative team being swept up in its enthusiasm for and pride in a spectacular concept, even when that concept does not coincide or completely support the strategy, is an all too often event. The concerns of the creative team focus on expression and the creative process. They are less aware of strategic demands. Perhaps that's the way it needs to be so that they can be creative without the confines if strategy stifling their imaginations. So long as the process is in place to nudge them back into step with the strategy, it's probably the better way to go.