

## Albert Sàez, former president of the Government Board of the Catalan Corporation of Audiovisual Media (CCMA)

**‘The essential components in training a journalist are reading and writing’**

Albert Sàez Casas was president of the Catalan Corporation of Audiovisual Media between January 2008 and April 2009. Born in Barcelona in 1965, he has a Doctorate in Communications and is a professor at Ramon Llull University. He was the assistant chairman of the newspaper *Avui* and member of the editorial committee of the newspaper *El Periódico*. He talks about the present situation of journalism in this interview.

### **How would you define the communications sector?**

The communications sector is the set of all companies and mediators that produce contents to be consumed through mass distribution media. This is made up of a series of companies and their employees who generate contents for mass distribution media.

### **What types of industries does it include?**

In my opinion, there are five large players in this field: contents producers, distributors, the technological apparatus, advertising and advertisers and institutions.

### **What are the occupations with the greatest demand in the communication media?**

Well, in recent years, there has been high demand in the institutional sector. But everything is at a standstill right now.

### **Why?**

At this time, there are three crises: the economic crisis, the business model crisis –as the media no longer know what they are selling or where to obtain resources- and, then, a professional crisis, about traditional roles.

### **Does the crisis involve deep changes to the sector?**

I believe that there is a structural problem, although we still don't know how to resolve it. I believe that we need to return to our roots. What is our function? To serve citizens. If you work for them, you summon an audience and you will sell advertising. When you stop providing this service, because the audience supplies themselves through other routes or because they don't distinguish between your service and the adverts themselves.... then...

### **What is the role of the professional journalist in this situation?**

Today there is great disparagement towards contents and, therefore, disparagement about the people who are producing these contents. Journalists must recover their intellectual nature and that is a problem of mentality.

**What should the educational profile be for this profession?**

The essential components in training journalists are reading and writing. And, clearly, also their thinking process and thoughts. On the other hand, they must also have a good cultural foundation, enough to understand the world, which helps to understand exactly what is going on.

**And what skills are most sought?**

They must have enough ability to know how to explain what is happening. Because computer programs change over time, but this requirement does not. The best advice that could be given to aspiring journalists is to work a lot. In the end, journalism consists of finding and explaining stories. The day that you explain a good story, you are happy, and the day that you go to a press conference, not so happy. But the same thing happens to engineers.

**Are new journalists like that?**

Young university graduates have good knowledge of technology and, with that, you could assess them as 'skilled in multitasking'. Conversely, they have a weak foundation in culture and writing. This affects not only aspiring journalists, but all the new generations. Furthermore, they have minimum desire or willpower to really work and make an effort. Something that for liberal jobs is an added complication.

**Technological changes are an opportunity...**

Yes, but there is a risk of too much technicality and upholding the essence of a profession without seeing its development. I mean, before there was a designer, a journalist, a typist, a studio *guy*... now everything is done by a single person. You can either interpret this as doing things that are not your responsibility or see it as having more control over your product. In other words, there are less hands between what you write and what readers see.

**What exit is there for the situation that you defined?**

The present panorama leads us to a fundamental time for the profession. A time to redefine and to rethink everything. Stories need to be told again and the service must be provided that is at the heart of journalism.

**Noteworthy quote:**

**'The best advice you could give an aspiring journalist is to work a lot.'**

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