



A history of planning

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When we say 'Account Planning', do we think of the principles, the practice, the discipline, the role, the department, the processes or the job title? There has never been a single model. For the purpose of this potted history, I am going with Paul Feldwick's concept of 'The Intellectual and Political Movement of Account Planning'. I start not with the founding of the first eponymous department, but with a new system of market analysis deigned to develop more effective advertising targeting and strategy.



This article is from the 50th anniversary issue of Admap, which looks ahead to [the future of brand communications](#).

All Admap articles are available exclusively on Warc.

1960s

June 1964 Stephen King's T-Plan (Target Plan), a set of advertising development guidelines, was introduced at J. Walter Thompson. It concentrated on combining market research and consumer insights to develop more creative and effective advertising. A progression from the agency's 1920's T-Square, it's most enthusiastic proponents were in the creative department who found its rounded and human descriptions of the target audience followed by a description of the *responses* to be elicited from each of their senses/reasoning/emotions genuinely helpful.

September 1964 [Admap magazine](#) is launched. The advertising trade press then consisted of two weekly titles: Advertiser's Weekly and World Press Gazette. They were deferential, parish-pump in nature and unconcerned with the techniques of the trade. Admap was founded by a legendary defrocked vicar, Roger Cook, who wanted a publication to address that need.

December 1964 Jeremy Bullmore added [The Planning Cycle](#) to the T-Plan. It was rightly defined as "an absolutely universal aid to planning anything whatsoever" (Stephen King)

The Planning Cycle: "An absolutely universal aid to planning anything whatsoever"

Jeremy Bullmore, 1964

1965 JWT sends Stephen King to Harvard University which got him interested in communications models and triggered the

whole train of Account Planning thought. He intuitively felt US beliefs about how advertising worked were absolutely wrong. He knew his thinking had to be fairly solid in order to counteract DAGMAR (Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results), an influential 1961 US book that fails to link advertising directly to sales results and instead created a system of intermediate measures which have dominated ad evaluation ever since. Most of JWT's clients at the time were American-based and wedded to DAGMAR types of ad testing techniques; Unilever, a major JWT client since the 1920's, was the exception being European and more intellectually curious, but even they still had to be convinced.

June 1967 Stephen King's award winning MRS paper is published in *Admap* – '[Can research evaluate the creative content of advertising?](#)'.

1967 Stanley Pollitt, the new Head of Research and Media at Interpublic agency Pritchard Wood & Partners, introduces new working methods and a new discipline designed to deliver greater effectiveness: he moved the researchers out of their back rooms and converted them into active partners involved with the central issues of the agency. He later declares the results "disappointing". He and his 'planning manager', Bob Jones, decided that 'the only way to find this new type of researcher was to breed them ourselves from numerate but broadminded graduates'.

[What do we know about how advertising works?](#) is published by JWT London/BMRB – a seminal ESOMAR paper by Timothy Joyce, which demolished many accepted ideas and replaced them with a simpler, totally convincing structure.

January 1968 Stephen King and Stanley Pollitt have lunch and discover that they had each been thinking separately about the importance of understanding consumer responses to advertising, and how to get away from mechanistic systems based on unfounded assumptions. Both questioned the need for a marketing department within agencies, as clients were taking over this function themselves. Stephen King describes Stanley Pollitt as 'an exceptionally intriguing man, and very good fun'.

April 1968 Stephen King pleaded with JWT management to create a new department to replace the marketing department. His vision was to institutionalise objectivity within the structures of advertising by bringing research closer to the creative process.

Stephen King hired Judie Lannon from Leo Burnett Chicago to start in-house qualitative creative research. She built a viewing room in the office and spent morning noon and night moderating groups.

May 1968 PWP/Interpublic breakaway agency Boase Massimi Pollitt launches with 11 people, including three account people and three researchers, all on an equal footing. Later to be called Account Planners, their researchers are charged with strategic thinking, advertising research and media planning. Following an early failed campaign, it was decided they would research all the agency's strategies and creative ideas with consumers in group discussions. 'We are confident,' Mr Boase told *AdWeekly*, 'that we are going to do very well'. (They are now called DDB).

July 1968 At a JWT away-day of the potential group heads for the new department, various names were discussed – Target Planner and, the one which stuck, Brand Planner.

November 1968 Stephen King's Account Planning department opens at JWT. "Some of the reps (JWT speak for account people) felt a bit threatened by the new department, but reps always feel threatened, it's part of their job description," he said. It comprised 24 account planners, which changed the roles of about 60 people in the agency. "Clients very much appreciated what we were doing but said 'don't worry me with your internal organisation, just stop talking about it and make sure Ev Jenkins (top planner) comes to my next meeting'".

December 1969 "Learning from Research in the 1960's" by Stanley Pollitt is published in Admap. It expresses his frustration with the over dependence on recall measures in evaluating advertising and the gulf between traditional models of advertising and how great creative work actually gets results.

1970s

1970 Stanley Pollitt hires his first graduate planning trainees, starting a new breed of agency talent, Jane Newman, Ross Barr and PF among them. Subsequent BMP planning alumni include ad agency founders John Madell, Leslie Butterfield, Adam Lury, Damian O'Malley, Gary Duckworth and Will Collin et al.

1971 [What is a brand?](#) by Stephen King, is professionally published by JWT London. In it, he identifies many of the critical issues with which we continue to struggle today, such as how organisational structure gets in the way of brand building, and why marketing isn't as central to business as it should be.

May 1971 "Has anything gone wrong with advertising research?" by Stanley Pollitt is published by Admap. He cites the work of Ehrenberg, Joyce and King to justify an alternative set of theories. "We must form the best informed judgement that we can from the most detailed analysis of quantified hard data, but should feel confident using soft data as well."

1973 Two start-up agencies, SJIP and TBWA London, follow BMP's lead and build in planning. TBWA is led by Nigel Bogle, John Hegarty and John Bartle (an early client champion of Stanley Pollitt and BMP).

March 1974 Stephen King issues his [JWT Planning Guide – An approach to planning advertising](#) – a 34 page toolkit summarising the theories on which JWT's planning methods were based and setting out a framework for best practise planning techniques.

October 1975 [A practical progress from a theory of advertisements](#) by Stephen King is published in Admap.

1975 Backlash: Planning is questioned by agency managers ('how do we afford it?'), creatives ('why should our work be messed up?') and clients ('how can agency planners objectively test their own ads?'). This is overcome largely by BMP's creative director, [John Webster](#), whose famous TV work – Smash Martians, Cresta Bear, Courage Tavern et al – is credited to his working with planners.

April 1979 "How I started Planning in agencies" by Stanley Pollitt is published in Campaign (their title, not his).

1979 Six agencies in the UK top 20 boasted an Account Planning department. By 1980 it was eight and, by 1985, 18.

The [Account Planning Group](#) is founded to be a forum for the growing population of UK account planners (100 in year 1). Initially, BMP chose to boycott the APG, believing they had a competitive advantage not be shared with others. Its first Chair was Charles Channon.

Stanley Pollitt dies of a sudden heart attack, aged only 48.

"We must form the best informed judgment that we can from the most detailed analysis of quantified hard data, but should feel confident using soft data as well"

Stanley Pollitt, 1971

1980s

Spring 1980 The IPA launches its [Advertising Effectiveness Awards](#) under Simon Broadbent's chairmanship. Designed to prove the accountability and business value of advertising, it introduces an 'effectiveness culture' to adland. JWT, Davidson Pearce and BMP dominate the early awards; all are 'planning agencies'. The Advertising Works book series (now in its 21st edition) brings the winning cases to a wide business audience.

1982 Impressed by the quality and creativity of British advertising, identifying that account planning was the differentiator, Jay Chiat hires ex-BMP planner Jane Newman from Needhams in Chicago where she was working as an indifferent account handler. The explosively successful Chiat/Day is where planning makes its US breakthrough. Chiat calls planning his 'secret weapon'.

"The third wave" of UK agency start-ups appear on the scene; Bartle Bogle Hegarty is born, [John Bartle establishing its highly successful planning model](#). 1987 sees Butterfield Day Devito Hockey and Howell Henry Chaldecott Lury, also with founding planner's names on the door.

1983 APG membership stands at 400. According to the head hunters, demand is exceeding supply and planning salaries rise.

November 1983 John Bartle's paper "Today's concerns: Tomorrow's Dangers – Planning Myopia" is delivered at an APG event. He warns of planners becoming intellectually arrogant, overpaid, self-styled gurus, and accuses some planners of wearing the Emperor's New Clothes. Client and agency market researchers join in, decrying the hype of inexperienced planners.

1984 [Setting advertising budgets for lasting effects](#) by King is published in *Admap*.

1985 The rapid growth in computing power enables the science of econometrics, or statistical market modelling, to be introduced to the agency planning armoury, [first by Broadbent at Leo Burnett](#) and Tom Corlett at JWT. Planners can now manage mountains of data.

1988 McCann Erikson London's Creative Director declares all planners are 'dead from the neck up' and the entire department is disbanded. They subsequently changed their minds.

On the occasion of his retirement, JWT published the King Papers, a small selection of Stephen King's published writings spanning 1967-1985.

1989 The first [How to Plan Advertising](#) handbook, edited by Don Cowley, on planning tools and techniques is published by the APG.

1990s

1990 As planners become increasingly concerned with 'insights' and strategy, the less attractive business of number-crunching and creative research gets outsourced. Media planning is also removed from creative agencies, along with qualitative research and audience understanding. Agency planning starts to lose credibility.

The US APG is founded, populated largely by UK ex-pats, stimulating the burgeoning US planning scene. It launches popular

conferences, which, by the end of the decade, attracted 1,000 attendees. By 1992, a third of US agencies claim to have planning.

1993 The APG launches its own Creative Planning Awards for the briefs that inspired great work. Brent Gosling of O&M [wins the first one with Nik-Naks](#) (and later 'exports' planning to India).

1996 TBWA's Jean-Marie Dru publishes Disruption, a whole-agency process to impact clients' business led by the agency's planners across the world.

1998 Jon Steel's influential book, [Truth, Lies & Advertising: the Art of Account Planning](#), celebrates the growth of planning in the US through its success at Goodby Silverstein, where he is planning director.

1999 [Eating the Big Fish](#) by Adam Morgan is published. It was the first book to say you don't have to follow the leader to succeed and the first to explain how to leverage the flexibility and freedom of being a "challenger brand".

2000s

2000 *Admap* publishes the book ['Pollitt on Planning'](#), seminal articles by Pollitt, edited by Paul Feldwick.

The rise of the 'Gonzo Planner' is observed by Peter York (of Sloane Ranger Handbook fame) i.e. planners who eschewed hard work, data analysis and market investigations and just hung about looking for cultural stuff they liked and could write into a creative brief.

Naked Communications is launched by ex-BMPers Jon Wilkins and Will Collin, fusing media and creative planning into a new strategic approach to communications planning. Their innovative campaigns and international growth provide a 'new model of planning' to clients.

Paul Feldwick declares: "Account Planning is the greatest innovation in agency working practice since Bill Bernbach put art directors and copywriters together in the 1950's"

Robert Heath's ['Hidden power of advertising'](#) is published by *Admap*.

2003 As planners grapple with the digital revolution, Russell Davies of [Wieden+ Kennedy/Honda fame](#) publishes his [first blog](#), and the 'plannersphere' is born.

2004 The [AdLab blog](#) launches and, by the decade's end, claims 20,000 users. The new generation of planners become avid bloggers and tweeters.

2005 [The Sony Bravia 'Balls' commercial](#) is one of the first ads to demonstrate how social media can transform the impact potential for broadcast advertising. It shows how today's account planners need to have strong media sensibilities and must work collaboratively with new species of planners to create modern campaigns.

Dylan Williams is hired by Mother as Head of Strategy. As young people become increasingly resistant to advertising, Mother's approach – starting with culture and working back to commerce – unlocked planning in the digital age where 'interruption' is no longer an option.

2006 [Stephen King passes away](#), just before his 75th birthday.

2007 IPA Diploma President's Prize Essay won by Faris Yakob for '[I believe the children are our future](#)'. It marks a landmark in Communications Planning, by capturing the way that younger people were beginning to consume entertainment in popular culture and showing how to plan across multiple platforms in the new digital landscape.

[A Master Class in Brand Planning – The Timeless Works of Stephen King](#) is published comprising 20 of Stephen King's ground breaking papers with commentaries by respected marketing practitioners.

[The Sage Handbook of Advertising](#) is published, including a definitive chapter by Paul Feldwick on Account Planning, its History and Significance for Ad Agencies.

[Marketing in the Era of Accountability](#), by Les Binet and Peter Field, is published by the IPA/Warc – an important and practical meta- analysis of over 800 IPA effectiveness case studies. It proves emotionally based campaigns are more likely to produce very large business effects, outperforming rational campaigns on every single business measure.

2007/8 Craig Mawdsley's [Sainsbury – It's always worth trying something new](#) paper wins the APG Grand Prix. In 2012, it wins Grand Prix of all Grand Prix.

2010 [How Brands Grow: What Marketers Don't Know](#) by Byron Sharp – one of the five definitive books planners must read – is published.

December 2012 [Advertising Effectiveness: the Long and the Short of it](#) by Les Binet and Peter Field is published by the IPA; it's an update of their seminal 2007 analysis.

April 2014 Jane Newman, pioneering Queen of Planning in USA, is the first account planner ever to be inducted into the American Advertising Hall of Fame – and also one of the very few women.

July 2014 Membership of the UK APG reaches 1000.



[Creativity ain't what it used to be](#)
James Hurman, *Previously Unavailable*

[The end of dumb digital marketing](#)
Ben Wood, *iProspect*

[The future of insight gathering](#)
Eric Salama, *Kantar*

[The future of search](#)
Matthew Maltby, *Google*

[Marketing in the age of fragmentation](#)
Scott Symonds, *AKQA*

[Social's future is not community](#)
Darika Ahrens, *Grapevine Consulting*

[Build trust in a post-privacy era](#)
Neil Dawson, *SapientNitro*

[The post-disruptive advertising era](#)
Gareth Kay, *Zeus Jones*

[Programmatic: the risks and rewards](#)
Rob Norman, *GroupM*

[The agile brand](#)
Lois Jacobs and Thomas Ordahl, *Landor*

About the Author

Merry Baskin founded planning consultancy Baskin Shark after stints at JWT London and Chiat/Day New York. A former chair

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