



## **Chapter Management Awards 2019 Membership Marketing**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Our small chapter of International Association of Business Communicators is located in Newfoundland and Labrador – a Canadian island in the North Atlantic and inspiration for the award winning Broadway musical *Come from Away*.

After centuries of making a living and raising families in a harsh ocean environment - a place referred to by many as “The Rock” - we have a work ethic known throughout the world and a culture that embodies the human spirit with warmth, creativity and humility.

It is in this environment - on the rugged rocks of the North Atlantic - that our small chapter thrives – bobbing and weaving with the economy that fluctuates with commodity prices and out-migration of our people who have gained a footing in business, industry and the arts throughout Canada and the world.

Here at home, our dedicated board of directors at IABC NL are helping to advance the profession, create connections, and develop strategic communicators in our province.

We are proud of our approximately 65 members who are the professional communicators at the heart of every organization and shine brightly throughout IABC nationally and internationally.

We continue to learn so much from our IABC colleagues and we are delighted to have the opportunity to present our work through the Chapter Management Awards Program.

This submission describes our approach to membership marketing.

### **Membership Marketing at IABC NL**

Our members are at the heart of everything we do. To ensure we are meeting their needs, our strategic planning and decision making processes are aligned with the feedback we receive from members both informally and through member surveys.

Each year, the IABC NL chapter undertakes strategic planning to help guide its plan, including revisiting our value proposition for our members, providing a relevant professional development program, certification options, and networking opportunities. Our strategic planning has been informed by research undertaken to find out what our members need. IABC NL has aligned with International’s #IABC1720 strategic framework, adopting the vision, mission, and three core components as our own to guide our chapter. We are interested in gathering feedback on the



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new strategy through our new membership survey which will be undertaken in spring 2019. We have also developed a survey for lapsed members to glean their reasons for not renewing and to develop tactics for retention.

Our most recent membership survey helped us plan membership marketing for the 2017-18 year. Close to 50 per cent of membership responded:

- 61 per cent of respondents felt networking was the top benefit of membership
- 25 per cent of respondents felt professional development was the top benefit of membership
- 50 per cent of respondents had attended networking sessions throughout the year and 75 per cent had attended professional development events
- The number one reason for not attending events was competing priorities

When asked how information is currently received from IABC NL:

- 96 per cent of respondents said email
- 57 per cent said Facebook
- 35 per cent said Twitter
- 35 per cent said the website

When asked about the preferred way to receive information from IABC NL:

- 79 per cent said email
- 14 per cent said Facebook
- 3 per cent said Twitter
- 4 per cent said the website

We plan marketing initiatives according to these parameters and have sent strategically-timed emails through Mail Chimp to members regarding professional development and membership events, and follow up with postings on social media and our website. Our website includes a wealth of information for members, and was revitalized in 2016.

In terms of social media, we have traditionally been active on Facebook and Twitter, however we expanded our reach this past year by introducing new Instagram and LinkedIn accounts.

Marketing content and materials for IABC NL are aligned with IABC's Brand Guidelines thanks to an audit completed by the communications director in 2017-18. Having in-brand marketing materials ensures that members and prospective members create a strong associations with IABC



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both on a local and international level. Board members are provided with brand guidelines and materials through IABC NL's shared drive.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the membership marketing portfolio is to maintain and grow membership of the IABC NL chapter. The membership director works with other board members on services and programming to enable retention and recruitment success.

The objectives of membership marketing are to:

- To engage, recognize and retain the approximately 65 existing members of the IABC NL chapter; and
- To further attract and recruit new members to the IABC NL.

### IMPLEMENTATION

IABC NL focused on retention and recruitment during 2017-18 through the following tactics:

#### *Membership Management Area:*

We review activity within the membership management area on [iabc.com](http://iabc.com) at the end of each month to determine lapsed members and to update email lists. With this information, the membership director sends personalized emails to lapsed and soon-to-be-lapsed members monthly to ensure continued engagement. When needed, trouble shooting is completed with members who are having difficulty in renewing or joining.

When a member decides to leave the chapter, the membership director will also inquire about their reasons for not renewing.

#### *Networking:*

The membership director connects with both members and non-members at professional development sessions, awards and other events, in an effort to engage and recruit members.

We believe that professional development and networking events provide a wonderful opportunity to promote the #IABC1720 pillars of advancing our profession and creating



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connections, which provide demonstrate value in our membership. Recruitment and retention often comes back to the relationships we build in the community and with existing members, and events are the perfect venue to tell our story about how we are advancing the profession and creating valuable connections for our members.

Our professional development and networking events and awards program also provide a special service for members, providing them with exclusive member only rates.

Events also provide us with the opportunity to share educational materials promoting the chapter and the benefits of membership.

### Member Recognition:

We firmly believe that one of the best ways to retain your members, is to recognize them. Recognition also helps leverage our community to recruit new members who want to join our family.

In an effort to recognize our membership and promote the talent and experience within the group, we continued with our membership profile initiative and changed the format to a Q&A format. Our member profiles are featured on the local website and shared via social media channels, tagging the member and their organization in the posts (see **Work Sample 1**). Of the five members profiled with this new format this year, three became board members.

Another initiative to celebrate our volunteers and create connection is a Get to Know Your Board series; implemented this past year, we celebrate the diverse talents of our volunteer board (see **Work Sample 2**).

The chapter also used networking events to recognize and thank members for their support. The last holiday event, members and guests were treated to a gourmet fare and beverages and a live performance from an ensemble from the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra. Personally signed holiday cards were also sent to all members via email and social media, in keeping with green practice. We also used a coffee event to welcome our new members and create an atmosphere of inclusion and connection (see **Work Sample 3**).

We also strive to recognize our membership and fellow communicators, whether it be celebrating their achievements, supporting their careers, or representing our chapter and industry in provincial, national and international movements for positive change (see **Work Sample 4**).



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### *Building Student Membership*

A focus was placed this past year on student recruitment, leveraging access to the field and also the affordable student rates. Discussions took place with College of the North Atlantic (CNA), Newfoundland and Labrador's public post-secondary institution, around faculty and student engagement, with plans to have membership inclusive of student fees in future semesters.

We have met with CNA stakeholders to devise a faculty and student engagement plan and a meeting is set for 2019 with a cross section of faculty and students to gauge the needs and expectations of all parties. The upcoming year will see the roll out of the plan, which will initially target applied arts programs, encouraging involvement and/or membership with the chapter and the board. We will also look at opportunities for a mentoring program, which will aid members in receiving certification points. The exciting long-term implications involve IABC NL being engaged by the institution for program development in the communications field.

### *Building Core Membership*

We started the year off strongly by expanding the board, complete with three support positions for busy portfolios: Digital Communications Coordinator, Special Events Coordinator, and Sponsorship Liaison. We feel that by building a strong, sustainable IABC NL board of directors, we are able to expand upon our member engagement activities, adding more value to the membership. These inclusive, relevant and fresh PD, networking and volunteer opportunities, are tools to build on our membership and generate excitement for the communications industry in our province.

We have also augmented the Director of Membership portfolio to include a role as Volunteer Coordinator. This will allow us to direct interest from our current (and potential) members in getting involved, increasing the value of their IABC membership and engaging them more deeply. All of these changes have stemmed from the "lazy leader" philosophy that our leadership adopted following Leadership Institute 2018.

### *Member Onboarding*

We sent personalized welcome emails to new and renewing members connecting them with available resources, such as our website and also advising them of upcoming events and networking opportunities.



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### Membership Month

March 2018 and October 2017 marked Member Month for IABC, which offered discounts on membership and renewal fees. As part of Member Month activities, the membership director reached out to members who recently lapsed or would soon be lapsing to let them know about the 10 per cent discount, as well as the chance to win prizes from International.

Additionally, emails, several tweets, and Facebook and LinkedIn posts were created for these months targeted at new and existing members and using first, the Find Your Tribe theme, then the Expand Your Impact theme encouraged by IABC International (**See Work Sample 5**). These months were a success for both recruiting and retaining members, with IABC NL securing five new memberships and four renewals in March, and in October, seven new memberships and nine renewals.

### **BUDGET**

IABC NL's membership rebate increased by 47 per cent in 2017-18, with a total of \$2,721 being collected.

There were no expenses for marketing activities.

### **MEASUREMENT & RESULTS**

Thanks to data from the Membership Management Area, we are able to reach out to lapsed members to receive feedback on their decision not to renew. This past year, due to challenges with the economy, members have reported the cost as a number one reason for not renewing. A survey to recently lapsed members has been developed and will be launched in 2019.

Our main results from our efforts to date include:

- An increase in membership numbers from the previous year. We have secured new members to our chapter, allowing us to raise our numbers to 65 strong, including two corporate (small group) memberships in 2018.
- Engagement with members through E-Blast: in the 2017-18 year we had a total of 37 e-blasts, with an open rate ranging from 79.3 to 24 per cent, well above the 19.3 per cent



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industry average. In fact, 24 of the emails sent has an open rate of more than double the national average.

- Social Media Growth:
  - Facebook Likes +14.4%
  - Total Facebook Reach 16,518
  - Total Tweet Impressions 75,844
  - Twitter Followers +9.7%

### **WORK SAMPLE**

Work Sample 1: Membership Q&A profiles featured on the IABC NL website

Work Sample 2: Board 'Hidden Talents' Social Media Features

Work Sample 3: Holiday Event

Work Sample 4: Supporting our Community and Members through Social Media

Work Sample 5: Sample of Membership Marketing during Member Month