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| CHAPTER | IABC Ottawa |
| REGION | Canada East |
| CHAPTER BOARD TERM | July 1 to June 30 |
| TIMELINE | July 1, 2017 to November 15, 2018 |
| DIVISION CATEGORY | Division 2: Medium Chapter (76 to 200 members) |
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1. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

IABC Ottawa connects nearly 200 members and the greater Ottawa marketing, communication and creative community to learn about best practices, develop skills, create connections, and access resources in a welcoming community. Established in 1976, the Ottawa chapter of IABC has a rich history of striving for effective chapter management to benefit our members, community, and leaders. Our focus is on retaining members, growing chapter leaders, connecting to IABC beyond Ottawa and having a sustainable chapter. We work to help chapter members grow in their careers by providing them with the skills and connections to succeed in their jobs. IABC Ottawa creates interest in membership through a diverse slate of focused quality events, workshops, special interest groups and professional development opportunities. We also create innovative communications content, such as our popular podcast “The Voice”, available around the world. The Voice helps listeners keep on top of the industry’s hottest topics at both the local and international level.

Chapter History/Challenges: Despite stable finances and membership becoming more stable this year we had a number of challenges in the season that impacted doing everything to the degree that we would have liked. Three of these challenges include getting our website hacked, seeing diverse interest and value in our events but smaller audiences creating a need to adapt logistics and a number of leaders as well as volunteers experienced significant work and personal challenges. The nature of volunteer work is that other priorities can arise for leaders, in the past year we noticed more signs of burnout from our chapter leaders who were juggling multiple roles in their jobs and health concerns among board members than in previous years. This meant leaders were turning to the support of the community more and that as Board members we needed to consider how we could support our community, which was not a main goal of the original strategy. Acknowledging the small wins and focusing on what we could do well to advance the chapter strategy was important. To sustain and develop the chapter, we continue to ensure that we focus on the things we do well, achieve our goals, and deliver the most value to our members.

2. OVERVIEW

In our strategic planning from the last and current season a there have been many conversations focused on considering how we can and how we are providing value for our members and how to keep them engaged in a way that they would find valuable. Over the 2017/18 season and 2018/19 season we used the IABC global value proposition (*IABC is the only global association connecting me with the people and insights I need to drive business results*) to help guide these conversations in the Ottawa chapter. These conversations, along with a focus on member retention, led to the Board enhancing ongoing activities, making conscious decisions of where energy was put, and in developing new activities. While the membership team initiates and runs many of these activities, the



responsibility of thinking about members and member retention is on all portfolios of the board.

3. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The overarching goal for membership marketing was to provide members with value that would ultimately lead them to continue to renew their membership. This would ideally be done through deepening connections among members and providing opportunities for continuous development and learning. Overall the Chapter goal is to retain an overall membership of approximately 185 members. Objectives for this goal were to:

- a. Enhance visibility of member benefits (e.g. exclusive digital communications resources) and opportunities.
- b. Retain 70% of members
- c. Capitalize on key IABC moments to promote membership and offer new benefits
- d. Build a stronger sense of membership community and prestige by providing members with tangible local benefits.
- e. Feature IABC members and showcase their contributions and accomplishments in the community

4. BUDGET

In the 2017/18 season and in September 2018 the Board developed a strategic budget that represented the chapter's goals. The budget specifically looked at supporting member initiatives and retaining members. In 2017/18 member dues brought in \$5327 and the membership expenses were \$1652. The main expenses were the member giveaways, Special Interest Groups, and member collateral. This doesn't include the investment made into member leaders. In 2018/19 we budgeted \$7,500.00 in member revenue and \$2,450.00 in expenses to continue to invest in our members. Membership revenue also helps support our events to have a good member pricing.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

Marketing Methods

To expand IABC Ottawa's presence and connect with members we have used a number of message generating activities, online platforms, and leveraged in-person opportunities.

In November 2017 we noticed a need for ensuring that we had a short "about IABC Ottawa" blurb that each Board member could use to promote IABC Ottawa when talking to other creative professionals in Ottawa. We developed this through a mad lib activity where, in small groups, we filled in the blanks to develop a statement about the core values offered by our chapter. When merged together, we came up with the statement: *IABC Ottawa is a community of professional communicators who want to thrive in their careers. We are a local organization with a global network to connect you to opportunities, resources, people, and insights you need to drive business results.* This activity helped the Board focus on who IABC is and how to articulate the value of the chapter to others.

We have strategically used our online channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, monthly newsletter, and website) to promote our content to the communications community and utilize our chapter leader's personal channels to increase the reach of our message. The membership team worked closely with marketing-communications team to build a content calendar. Their suggestions were to: (i.) regularly feature local member opportunities, (ii.) promote national awards, and (iii.) share international professional development opportunities with members (content distribution average at least twice a month and more frequently during membership month). Also, our monthly newsletter that goes out to over 12,000 subscribers has a section dedicated to member



recruitment. We call it “Why IABC” and highlight the value in being an international member by promoting the world conference, courses in the academy, Gold Quill awards, the Hub Community, and free-for-members webinars.

In early 2018 the chapter website was hacked for a second time leading the Board to quickly develop and implement a new website. While this was not the original plan, we used the skills within our Board to launch a new website on an accelerated timeline. The new website layout allowed us to use more visuals on each page, feature photos of members, and of events instead of using generic stock images. We specifically looked at how we could better display the IABC value proposition by the pictures we selected, key messages, navigation, and the content on membership page itself (i.e. order of benefits). In the end this challenge allowed us to have an improved (and mobile-friendly) website.

We strive to share personal stories that resonate with the communication community in Ottawa through our online platforms. We have done this through the creation and promotion of member profiles (see work sample) that tell the members’ story of who they are, what they do, and how their membership is valuable to them. These stories are featured on our website and shared to other members through our channels. The leader who conducts the interviews and writes the stories aims to showcase the diversity in our members to show the unique makeup of our community. These stories also provided us insight into our members for planning events that would interest them. In addition to these stories, during membership month Board members informally shared what made them want to become a member on their personal social media platforms and what they have learned from their experiences thus far. Board members also took to LinkedIn to give more in-depth stories of the membership value and specifically skills they have built by being a chapter leader. (*See work sample for examples of members engaging with us online.*)

The in-person opportunities include having one or more of the Co-VPs or Volunteer Directors from the membership portfolio present at the events or having the President highlight the perks of being an IABC member during opening remarks at each event.

Recruitment and Retention

We placed a strong focus on the activities in the 2017/18 season and the beginning of the 2018/19 season to focus on member retention and how to increase member engagement. Our strategies to engage and retain members included:

- **Ottawa specific member recognition items:** We have three member appreciation initiatives to give members added benefit. At the 2017 Season Open we brought back a successful activity and offered members free professional headshots (also offered to non-members for a small fee.) Our November 2017 Professional Development event was hosted at the Canadian Internet Registration Authority’s (CIRA) offices and they provided each IABC member with a water bottle that received rave reviews. Members even tweeted about the perks of membership! For the first time in the Fall of 2018 we designed and mailed all members webcam cover featuring the IABC logo in our chapter’s colour along with a thank you note. The webcam covers turned out to be a great success and were branded on creative professionals’ laptops throughout the city — increasing IABC’s outreach and visibility.



- **Using Membership Management (MMA) to learn about new members:** As part of our Board orientation we ensured that Board members understood what the membership database MMA was and how to use it to learn about new and returning members. Every few months at Board meetings the Membership Team will highlight who the new members in our chapter are so that when we see them out at events or elsewhere they can welcome them, as we notice new members attending the first event occurring after they join.
- **Professional Development (PD):** A key way we connect to the community is through our PD events that aim to power communicators by giving them insights into the industry and knowledge they can take back to their jobs. For added member value all PD events have a member price that is between five and fifteen dollars less than the non-member price. The 8 to 10 events in the calendar year have a balance of members and non-members. This past year we focused on events for strategic communicators and topics that would help them power their careers. These topics are developed based on informal and formal member feedback, and industry trends. At the 2018 Season Opener we had an attendee survey (that we later promoted online as well) that gave the Board insights into the topics the community was hoping we would cover at our Special Interest Group events and some of the challenges they are facing in their professional life. Most members in the Ottawa community are in mid-level roles in their organizations so we made sure to consider that and selected a focus on that strategic level that meets where they are in their career and pushes learning.

At each event we aim to have at least one speaker who is an IABC Ottawa member to show the wealth of knowledge in our community. We also focus on promoting the value of being at our events even through the small details, such as: having our Board members wear their IABC pin (ordered specially from headquarters), putting member ribbons on the name tags, hosting a member booth, and having special gifts for members.

In Spring 2018 we re-introduced our Senior Communicator events with Past President Kelly Rusk leading the initiative. The first event was an intimate breakfast event with Chief Digital Officer at the Health Standards Organization. We promoted the event by reaching out directly to current and lapsed members who had over ten years of experience in the field. This personal outreach strategy helped us connect with members and increase the value of our Senior Communication event.

- **Member Month:** Leveraging the IABC member months and our own membership month is a core part of our regular membership recruitment and retention activities. For each month we look at the resources from IABC International and develop our own chapter plan using those resources. During each membership month we reach out directly to recently lapsed (in the previous three months) and those who soon need to renew (in the upcoming three months) to encourage them to renew during the month to take advantage of the incentives. Most of our member outreach is spent on reminding members what happens during the member months and welcoming new ones. In May of 2018 we ran our own local membership month and used a pre-loaded VISA card as an incentive to join (the value of the card was equal to the cost of membership.)

Through carrying out membership months we have learned that it is important to include the Board as a key stakeholder. As such, time is now built into the plan to brief Board members (using our Slack channel) on the key messages of the month and how Board members may



want to are promote it. Specifically in October 2018 all Board members were encourage to share how their membership has helped them and over 60% of the board created a message on their own accord.

- **Corporate Membership:** Most communicators in Ottawa work on small teams (under 10 people) mostly at non-profits and in government. In the past this has meant that corporate membership has had little appetite in the community We did do outreach to organizations in Fall 2017 that had three or more members but there was no interest in expanding to a corporate membership. However, we were interested in how the new corporate membership program and processes for it would be of value to our community. In the past we had noticed challenges in the manual paper form and understanding how corporate memberships could span across different cities / chapters. We also found that when members lapsed and we reached out to ask them why and we discovered they had left the organization, it showed a gap in process.

As such, when the new corporate membership program came out in Spring 2018 we reviewed the full program as a board to see where the interest and opportunities might be in Ottawa. Without direct outreach on our part we did get a a new corporate member who was very interested in the academy learning and the opportunity to attend the IABC World Conference. Having the opportunity to talk to them about the value they saw helped us consider how we might talk to other potential corporate partners in the future. Additionally, we raised with International that the chapters should receive notifications if new corporate members join as it did not show in the MMA as recent joins or as a corporate group.

Both corporate membership and certification is seen as future opportunities for the chapter to leverage and the 2018/19 season is focusing on how to leverage both activities together to have impact for our members. n the 2017-18 season we attempted to host an exam in April, but soon found out that was not an ideal team for those who had expressed an interest in taking the exam. To help advance and promote certification in addition to advertising the exam we had a member of the GCCC talk at our Networking in the New Year roundtable speed networking event who talked to the value of the certification and how it helped advance their profession.

Special Services

We have a number of member focused initiatives to connect, advance, and develop our members to help them thrive in their career.

- **Jobline** provides an opportunity for employers to reach a targeted audience of communication and marketing professionals in Ottawa and helps professionals looking for a job find their next opportunity. Positions posted on Jobline can include: opportunities in communications, marketing, public relations, government and media relations, writing, editing and translation services, consulting, and more. Member pricing has always been part of the pricing structure and for the 2018-19 season we introduced a price for non-profit members, considering our membership demographic, and that most members work for a non-profit.
- **Special Interest Groups (SIGs)** - After pilot testing SIGs in the previous season the Board held a think tank sessions to look at how SIGs would evolve over the next couple of seasons. We also asked other chapters for advice on what went well and challenges



they had with SIGs. To us SIGs are small events with a focused topic where members can share experiences, ask questions, and work on solutions together. Each SIG has a host who has expertise in the topic area and is confident in facilitating a conversation in that area. We decided to commit to hosting three SIGs a season. The location of the SIG depended on the topic and who was able to facilitate the event. While it was intended to be a members-only event, we had one non-member ask to come to a specific SIG to learn more about the organization. Today, she is one of the chapters biggest ambassadors. (See results for SIGs hosted.)

- **Awards** - At the end of each season we recognize chapter volunteers, leaders, and members for their contribution with chapter awards. We have two chapter awards: Distinguished Member and Volunteer of the Year. Additionally, we ensure that all members who win National and International awards are recognized.
- Additionally, having IABC World Conference in Montreal provided an opportunity for our members to be engaged and experience new value from their membership. Members in our community were involved in conference planning, as speakers, exhibitors, Gold Quill award winners and as attendees. Also, it was a great opportunity for members to connect in a different setting, some who were new to joining the conference. We considered the conference in our strategic planning knowing it would be of something of interest to members, which lead us to promote the benefit of attending the conference to our members and ensuring that we did not plan overlapping professional development events.

6. MEASUREMENT & RESULTS

| Objective | Results |
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| Enhance visibility of member benefits (e.g. exclusive digital communications resources) and opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shared member benefits on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to growing audiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Twitter: 4691 followers ○ Facebook/: 1126 followers ○ LinkedIn: 1531 members ○ Newsletter: 1342 subscribers ● Featured a member benefit in each IABC newsletter (8 in the year sent out) with each time mentioned getting at least 5 clicks on the opportunity. Include across online channels as well. ● Over 20 IABC Ottawa members attended World Conference with at least 50% being for the first time due to the promotion and proximity. |
| Retain 70% of members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One new corporate membership in the new corporate program and one renewed in the new corporate program. ● Membership stabilized after two years of member loss. ● Members by month for 2017-2018: Overall 98 renewed and 74 new over the year. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ July 2017: 6 renew, 1 new = 7 ○ August 2017: 1 renew, 4 new = 5 ○ September 2017: 9 renew, 4 new =13 ○ October 2017: 19 renew, 13 renew = 32 ○ November 2017: 3 renew, 8 new = 11 ○ December 2017: 3 renew, 3 new = 6 ○ January 2018: 4 renew, 5 new = 9 ○ February 2018: 17 renew, 19 new =36 ○ March 2018: 16 renew, 3 new = 19 ○ April 2018: 9 renew, 4 new = 13 ○ May 2018: 6 renew, 8 new = 14 ○ June 2018: 5 renew, 2 new = 7 ● Members by month for July 1 2018 to Nov 15. So far to date 49 renewed and 15 new on par with last season. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ July 2018: 6 renew, 3 new = 9 ○ August 2018: 3 renew, 7 new = 10 ○ September 2018: 7 renew, 1 new = 8 ○ October 2018: 31 renew, 4 new = 35 ○ November 2018: 2 renew, 1 new = 3 |
| <p>Capitalize on key IABC moments to promote membership and offer new benefits</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote the value of World Conference ● Each membership month showed an increase in numbers (see above) by leveraging international plan with local feel ● Gave one member a pre-paid VISA in our member month draw. ● Streamlined processes for Jobline moving to online payment meaning more jobs were posted ● Special Interest Groups launched in Ottawa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ November 2018: IABC Special Interest Group: Tips and Techniques for Stellar Speech Writing (10 attendees) ○ October 2018: IABC Special Interest Group: Being Unilingual in a Bilingual City (7 attendees) ○ June 2018: Including Wellness in the Communications Practice Special Interest Group (7 attendees) ○ May 2108: Measuring What Matters: Communications Evaluation Special Interest Group (10 attendees) ○ May 2018: Maneuvering Your Career as a Young Communicator: Special Interest Group (10 attendees) Part 2 ○ February 2018: Maneuvering Your Career as a Young Communicator: Special Interest Group (10 attendees) |
| <p>Build a stronger sense of membership community and prestige by providing members with tangible local benefits.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ordered and mailed out webcam covers to all current members and new members as they joined. Positive feedback about the incentive. ● Water bottle only for members at a PD event. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members talking value of leadership opportunities online |
| Feature IABC members and showcase their contributions and accomplishments in the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Featured more than six IABC members throughout the season across IABC Ottawa channels (note: due to website crash some features were lost)• Recognized Silver Leaf & Gold Quill award winners on our social channels and at our season closer event. |