

## **IABC Kansas City: Chapter Events – Work Plan 2019**

### **Context**

Kansas City IABC (KC IABC) is located in the heart of North America, straddling the Missouri and Kansas state lines. The organization began more than 60 years ago as the Kansas City Industrial Editors and has been named IABC Chapter of the Year seven times.

As a medium-sized chapter, KC IABC has diverse membership representing the professions of corporation communications, marketing, public relations, design, videography and photography. Members work in communications for large and small businesses, agencies and non-profits. We also have a number of self-employed entrepreneurs in our ranks, as well as college students who are looking forward to a career in the field. Our membership is 125 communicators, and we reach approximately 800 throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Through the decades, KC IABC has become synonymous with outstanding professional development and networking opportunities for business communicators in the greater Kansas City area. The hallmark of KC IABC's professional development is a highly successful Business Communicators Summit (BCS). This all-day conference, patterned off regional IABC conferences, provides diverse professional development to nearly 300 communication professionals in the Kansas City metro area every year. We draw people from as far as Topeka, Kan. (75 miles away from Kansas City), and Bentonville, Ark. (200 miles away from Kansas City).

The chapter's ongoing professional development events are also highly successful, with nine events a year. These are attended by a mix of members and non-members, of which the latter are often a substantial proportion. Additionally, our three special interest groups – Masters for seasoned professionals, IndyComm for independent entrepreneurs and Young Pros with a focus on emerging communicators – provide targeted opportunities for learning and networking for members and guests.

The biggest challenge for the 2017-2018 board year was dealing with a declining membership. Despite this challenge, we continued to provide strong professional development, while maintaining a highly engaged board and a strong corps of volunteers.

The strategic cornerstone of the board year was to ignite our professional development offerings with the intent of re-engaging our membership and enticing guests. We also focused on rewarding board members by allowing them to attend monthly professional development events at no cost.

Our Business Communicators Summit event is one of our primary ways to engage members and entice guests. Primary strategies included a national keynote speaker and relevant breakout sessions that would appeal to our diverse communicators, supported by timely, creative promotional communications.

## **PROGRAM: BUSINESS COMMUNICATORS SUMMIT (BCS)**

### **Goals & Objectives**

The annual Business Communicators Summit (BCS) focuses on engaging members and non-members in a day of learning and networking by providing programming that delivers relevant content and quality presenters. In doing this, KC IABC aims to increase overall awareness of the organization, highlight the benefits of membership, and increase participation in all avenues of KC IABC professional development.

The objectives for BCS 2018 were to

- Increase profit by five percent.
- Increase attendance by 10 people.

**Measurement:** Profit and attendance compared to 2017 numbers.

### **Budget**

Based on prior years, BCS 2018 carried a budget of \$16,475. Additionally, KC IABC's Education Relations group had a \$500 budget for student scholarships, allowing high-performing students who couldn't otherwise attend due to finances an opportunity to participate. The sizable amount dedicated to BCS directly reflects the importance KC IABC places on the event, and the value members and non-members in the community find in attending. With expenses totaling \$12,360, BCS 2018 yielded \$4,115 in profit.

### **Implementation**

#### **Event Overview**

As a perennially strong IABC chapter, a cornerstone of the KC IABC Board is to encourage each board member to embrace IABC's pillars (advancing the profession, creating connection and developing strategic communicators). We are able to focus on all three of these pillars through our Business Communicators Summit. The professional development opportunities the event provides allows for skills development and there are a number of networking breaks where the 100+ attendees can build connections. Because we promote the Summit to members and non-members through our email communications, social media and website, we are increasing awareness of IABC, all of which help advance the profession.

The board subscribes to the "lazy leader" theory to give opportunities for growth and development to every board role. Our Business Communicators Summit is a great opportunity to embrace the lazy leader concept. Because it is such a large event, our Summit Director recruits a volunteer committee to help plan and implement the Summit. Acting as a project manager, she then directs the work of the various volunteers.

#### **Event Strategy**

Launched over a decade ago to provide affordable full-day communications learning to area communicators, the Business Communicators Summit continues to be an excellent way to educate attendees. It serves as a huge member benefit as well as an excellent opportunity for the chapter to increase exposure to the broad communications audience in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Since membership has been declining, the strategy for the 2018 Summit was to engage members and reach communicators who had not attended a KC IABC event in the past, hopefully enticing them to begin attending our monthly professional development events.

### **Event Management**

Before the Summit could take place, months of planning went into making it the success it was. Volunteers were recruited, from both our membership and the communications community, to serve on the planning committee. Programming was addressed first to ensure quality content and presenters. **Work Sample 1** shows the survey attendees from the prior year received, which guided decisions on topics to cover in 2018. The committee recommended a slate of topics and presenters. Additionally, board members were consulted to confirm all proposed content was relevant to our diverse audience and were current areas of interest in the business communications field. Our Keynote topic was “Content Marketing Demystified” by national speaker and content marketing expert Quinn Tempest. Breakout topics were presented by local experts on:

- Conversations Around Diversity in the Workplace
- Don't Let Your Crisis Communications Plan Gather Dust
- How to Improve Your Persuasive Powers
- How Words Get You Found Online
- Engaging Influencers on Behalf of Your Brand
- Grow Your Brand Ambassadors
- Video Content Strategy for Smart People

For the third year in a row, the committee also elected to host an executive panel. One of the highest rated sessions from past Summit evaluations, the Executive Panel featured communications executives from an agency (Barkley), a not-for-profit (Gilda's Club Kansas City) and a large corporation (Black & Veatch). The panel featured a question and answer session discussing challenges, trends and innovations in the communications field.

In addition to recruiting speakers, the committee negotiated discounted pricing for the venue, determined the menu for the day and secured a caterer, managed all audio/visual needs, securing and editing all descriptions and developing all promotional materials, including a postcard save the date and program. The committee, along with Board members, were also responsible for ensuring the Summit ran smoothly the day of the event, managing registration, greeting attendees, and introducing speakers.

### **Event Marketing**

When time came to promote BCS, a multitude of avenues were used. This included email marketing, social campaigns, website promotions, newsletter blasts, direct mail, and word-of-mouth. The planning committee was up against a few obstacles; the first of which was the timing of the summit landed in the midst of spring break as well as March Madness. Additionally, a general decrease in company-sponsored attendance and the many competing communications organizations in KC made it difficult to secure attendees.

To combat these challenges, frequent, targeted promotions of the content, quality and affordability of BCS were implemented, even sharing a preview of the presenters. Of course, the sweet deals sprinkled in also helped drive registration. These deals included an early bird rate, board referral discounts, a flash sale, group discounts and discounts for speaker guests. **Work Sample 2** displays a communications plan for the many promotions leading up to the Summit.

The Business Communicators Summit 2018 took place on March 8, 2018 at the University of Kansas Edwards Campus in Overland Park, Kansas. The nearly 120 attendees consisted of members, non-members, students, speakers and sponsors. The event earned a profit of \$4,115 (an increase of more than \$2,400 from 2017).

A melting pot of communicators from corporations, agencies, small businesses and colleges in the community, attendees gathered to learn from one another and make meaningful connections. Quinn Tempest, the keynote speaker, traveled from Phoenix, Arizona to share her expertise on content marketing. **Work Sample 3** shows details of the seven breakout sessions offered to attendees. Finally, the day ended with one lucky attendee was awarded one year of FREE KC IABC monthly professional development, and many in the audience received a book from one of the panelists.

## Measurement

From a qualitative standpoint, the attendee survey was used to determine satisfaction of the event as well as areas for improvement to consider for 2019. Quantitatively, total attendance, number of volunteers, total sponsorship and profit were evaluated to determine effectiveness.

## Results

The survey feedback alone was a great indicator of a successful event; many were pleased with the selection of topics covered and felt they left the summit having learned something applicable to their job or situation.

As mentioned above, the event earned a profit of over \$4,000 and sponsorship from 11 organizations. Attendance is an area where improvement is always welcomed and will be a major focus for 2019; BCS 2018 attracted one more person than in 2017 for a total of 115 attendees.

Although attendance did not meet the original objective, student attendance reached a record high for BCS. Nine scholarships were awarded. In addition, several colleges brought groups of paid student attendees, for a total of 19 student attendees. Six colleges and universities were represented: Avila University, Johnson County Community College, Truman State University, University of Central Missouri, University of Kansas, and University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Objective	Result
Increase profit by 5%.	Exceeded. The 2018 event achieved a \$4,115 profit, 66% over 2017's \$2,400 profit.
Increase attendance by 10 people.	Did not achieve. Our total attendance in 2018 was 115 compared to 114 in 2017.

**Attached in support of entry:**

- Attendee survey template (Work Sample 1)
- Communications plan (Work Sample 2)
- Event program (Work Sample 3)