

WORK PLAN

Programs

Houston is the fourth-largest metro area in the U.S. and one of the most diverse cities in the country. Houston ranks fourth among U.S. metro areas in Fortune 500 headquarters and is home to the world's largest medical center (Texas Medical Center), oil and gas majors, energy services companies, and tech – as well as the diverse communications professionals who work in these industries.

Because our audience is diverse, so is our IABC Houston Chapter professional development programming. Our members include internal and external communications professionals; social media, marketing, public affairs and media affairs specialists; designers, videographers and printers; and independent consultants, entrepreneurs and C-suite executives.

There's a saying that "Houston is an hour away from ... Houston," because the nine-county Greater Houston Area spans an area larger than five states. We heard from some of our members that it can be difficult to drive an hour each way to get to our luncheon location Downtown, so we've changed our programming locations to literally meet our people where they are.

In 2019, we began alternating our monthly luncheon locations between Downtown and a Galleria (west side) restaurant. We also started a new monthly evening professional development and networking opportunity, Networking Nine, that we host at locations ranging from Midtown to Pearland (18 mi. south of town) to The Woodlands (40 mi. north). However, our Entrepreneur Strategic Interest Group (ESIG) opted to continue holding its additional monthly luncheon programs at a restaurant near Downtown.

Additionally, we launched a podcast, "The Business Communicators," which takes communications professionals on a journey that explores the key issues and trends that impact our industry. Focusing on professional development, each episode features a compelling conversation with C-suite executives, strategists, nationally-acclaimed journalists, and digital influencers. The show is hosted by current IABC Houston President, Austin Staton. New episodes are released on the first and third Wednesdays of each month.

Goals and Objectives

- **Diversity of Location:** Meet our current and potential members where they are
- **Diversity of Thought:** Offer professional development programming that appeals to our broad member and potential-member base, and invite guest speakers who represent the best of the business in their respective fields
- **Diversity of Experience:** Offer professional development opportunities that everyone can learn something from, whether they're young professionals or seasoned executives

Providing Value

IABC Houston distinguishes itself from other groups by standing out as an organization focused on professional development. Communicators come to our events to learn about best practices and industry trends, share case studies, and gain different perspectives.

IABC Houston events have a reputation for being the place to meet and hear from world-class communicators. Chapter members and guests regularly provide positive feedback regarding the quality of our monthly programs. In 2019, our chapter focused on lining up experts who are solid communicators on topical issues with broad appeal. For example, luncheons like "Shaping Organizational Communications with Disruptive Technologies" (focused on Virtual and Augmented Reality), "Insight, Integration and the Human Network: A Guide to the Future of Internal Communications" and "Be a Thought Organizer: A Radical Approach to

Promoting Your Organization” made solid impressions on attendees about the depth and breadth of topics and experts in our sphere, as well as our chapter’s diverse approach to program scheduling.

While offering quality monthly luncheons is a priority, our Board agreed that we do not want to become known as primarily the “monthly luncheon” organization. This required us to be innovative and offer programming and speakers that can meet our audiences wherever they are in their careers. While we don’t currently target career levels, we do ensure that our topics and speakers are relevant to most.

Budget

We secured agreements with our monthly luncheon locations at a price of \$35.00 per person. Based on our event ticket fee pricing, we are able to make a small profit at each luncheon, which we are able to put to more programs and events for the chapter, including a student sponsorship and special events such as the recent members-only tour of NASA.

Chapter Luncheon Rates

\$45.00 Member Ticket

\$40.00 Earlybird rate

\$55.00 Nonmember

We also secured agreements with our monthly ESIG luncheon location at a price per person that allows us to remain cost-neutral.

ESIG Luncheon Rates

\$37.00 Member Ticket

\$32.00 Earlybird rate

\$43.00 Non-Member Ticket

Networking Nine dinners are Dutch Treat, so therefore do not impact our chapter’s budget. We did implement a \$5 registration fee to reduce the incidence of no-shows; however, that \$5 can be applied as a credit toward a future event if members attend the dinner.

Implementation

Since January 2019, we have offered a schedule of 28 events and 19 podcast episodes that reflected the needs voiced by our members, while also seeking out new venues. In addition to our monthly chapter luncheons and Entrepreneur Special Interest Group luncheons, we introduced Networking Nine – a series of members-only networking dinners, each focused on a specific topic.

One issue we encountered with the Networking Nine dinners was the propensity for no-shows. We offer these intimate, round-table style networking dinners to members only, and registration is capped at nine individuals to keep the conversation focused and personalized. Initially, we did not charge a registration fee because meals are Dutch Treat. After only half of the registrants attended the first three events, we implemented a \$5 registration fee, which can be redeemed towards a future luncheon or event if the member attends the dinner. This change reduced our incidence of no-shows by approximately half.

We advertise all of our professional development and networking events on iabchouston.com, as well as through our social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Upcoming events are also announced at the preceding monthly luncheon program, ESIG program, Business Communicators podcast, and other chapter events.

Measurement

We conduct surveys of all attendees (members and guests) following each professional development event to identify opportunities for improvement and discover what we did well and should consider continuing for the future. Based on survey feedback throughout 2018, we made the following changes in 2019.

Feedback	What we did about it
Offer a greater variety of options to connect with others in our Chapter, whether at luncheons, socials or other activities such as smaller group dinners.	We launched Networking Nine -- members-only networking dinners, each focused on a specific topic and limited to 9 members. We also began hosting a monthly Happy Hour, alternating between two locations.
Hold events at a greater variety of locations to accommodate members not working immediately in the downtown Houston area.	Beginning in 2019, we began alternating our monthly luncheon locations between Downtown and a Galleria (west side) restaurant.
Host programs that are reflective of the broad range of practitioners – from entry level and mid-career to executive level communicators.	We've made a concerted effort in 2019 to invite speakers from a broad range of disciplines and career levels. For example, 9 of our 27 events (33%) and 7 of our 19 podcasts (37%) were led by Vice Presidents, CEOs, partners, or other executive-level communicators.
Offer professional development insights on ways to improve profiles and interactions with C-suite executives, including how to communicate better the value of "having a seat at the table"; highlighting evolving communications trends, advances in tools and technology, and the latest on measurement techniques to up the communicator's game.	In response to this feedback, we offered the following professional development opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 6 events and 9 podcasts episodes related to highlighting evolving communications trends● 5 events and 7 podcast episodes related to advances in tools and technology● 5 events and 3 podcast episodes related to measurement and impact

Results

A consistent point of feedback was that our IABC Chapter events project a welcoming environment for attendees, where people are encouraged to mingle and make new contacts. We don't come across as being "cliquish" like some other long-standing organizations appear to do. Having Board members making the rounds at events to meet newcomers and introducing them to other attendees was mentioned several times. We also got kudos for having volunteers serving as greeters and table captains.

In the future, our chapter will continue to focus on providing professional development opportunities that drive member and potential-member engagement, as well as professional value for our colleagues across the Houston region. We will continue to identify topics that resonate with our audiences and invite industry-leading speakers and communication professionals to share their stories and best practices with us.

Based on the survey and anecdotal feedback we've received, as well as registrations for our events, we've achieved the following results in relation to our goals for 2019.

Goal	Result
<p>Diversity of Location: Meet our audiences where they are</p>	<p>In 2019, we alternated monthly luncheon locations between a restaurant Downtown (Brennan’s of Houston) and a restaurant closer to the Galleria / Energy Corridor (Masraff’s). We also hosted the Networking Nine dinners at locations across the Greater Houston area.</p> <p>Survey feedback: “Loved the new location and the setup of the tables. It was great having everyone face the speaker, and having smaller numbers at the tables allowed for better networking.”</p> <p>“I liked new location - the food was good. nice to have menu with options.”</p>
<p>Diversity of Thought: Invite guest speakers who represent the best of the business in their respective fields</p>	<p>In 2019, we hosted speakers from the following industries: tech, academia, politics, space exploration, government, telecommunications, and energy.</p> <p>These speakers’ expertise ranged from internal communications to public relations to political speechwriting, to crisis communications, to using technology and social media to drive the customer and employee experience.</p> <p>Survey feedback: “Excellent speaker whose experience made him ideal to speak to this topic.”</p> <p>“Absolutely LOVED the speaker and topic!”</p> <p>“Great speaker and topic this time! I appreciated hearing from someone outside our typical industry speakers. Good presentation. Good take-aways.”</p>
<p>Diversity of Expertise: Offer professional development opportunities that everyone can learn something from, whether they’re young professionals or seasoned executives</p>	<p>While we don’t currently target career levels, we do aim to ensure that our topics and speakers are relevant to most attendees.</p> <p>Survey feedback: “Bill was amazing. I learned so much in just a few hours that I can take back to my job. I’ll be thinking about all of this for a long time to come. Thank you”</p> <p>“The speaker was excellent and I feel like I came away from the workshop with valuable, practical advice that will help me handle a crisis.”</p>