

IABC/Toronto: Chapter Events

IABC/Toronto is IABC's largest chapter with nearly 700 members. We serve communications professionals across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in various industries and at varying levels of experience. Our members represent the diversity and multiculturalism of the GTA, and engage with the association for networking and professional development, as well as to recognize, mentor and amplify one another. One of our greatest strengths as a chapter is the involvement of our engaged members who consistently work to create a chapter that is representative and supportive of career growth.

Our **2019-2020 purpose** was: To create connection between professionals in the brand, marketing and communication functions and the broader business community to elevate our profession. We convene thought leaders with a unique and relevant point of view to facilitate learning and development opportunities for our community, our volunteers and our board. Our **goals in 2019-2020** were to: 1) Keep our Purpose at the heart of all we do; 2) Be transparent and open with our stakeholders; 3) Maintain our financial health with a view to long-term sustainability.

Events at IABC/Toronto - More than half of the portfolios in our chapter, led by a "Vice President" (VP), touch events in some way. Whether it's to host and plan an event, promote and engage attendees, or increase awareness of membership and its benefits, each portfolio VP and their team works hard to create value for members and a satisfying experience for non-members. The professional development (PD) portfolio has the sole responsibility of planning and hosting valuable PD events, while the Networking portfolio focuses on planning and hosting engaging events that offer the opportunity for members and non-members to connect with one another. The Special Interest Groups portfolio works to engage and recruit members by identifying communities of interest within the chapter, facilitating learning and networking within those communities. This portfolio places a large focus on the highly engaged Professional Independent Communicators (PIC) group with specialized events, social media channels and a dedicated newsletter. This portfolio also manages the Senior Communicator's Circle, where senior communications professionals meet to network and learn from one another.

The Programs portfolio also engages senior communicators to help judge entries to our local awards program- called the OVATION Awards - creating opportunities for professional development, as they learn from one another and from the high-calibre entries they are judging. Those entries that win awards are then recognized at our highly anticipated annual OVATION Awards Gala – an event planned and executed by the OVATION Awards portfolio. The Programs portfolio is also responsible for promoting and executing the (S)CMP exam to help career development. Volunteer Services helps volunteers connect with VPs seeking volunteers, connect with peers, and to just have fun. Part of that involves ensuring volunteer needs are met, but another part is through volunteer events; our volunteer recruitment event, and our volunteer recognition event. Each event is promoted before, during and after the fact by hard-working volunteers from the Communications and Digital Media portfolio. Working in tandem with the Membership portfolio, this team also uses the digital engagement opportunities created by these events to promote IABC International, the chapter, and the benefits of becoming a member. The Membership portfolio further promotes the association and member benefits in-person, or - as necessitated by the pandemic – digitally, at our various events, as well as through presentations at universities and colleges in the GTA.

Goals & Objectives

Goals	Objectives
Increase awareness of the benefits of becoming an IABC member.	Present at GTA-based colleges and universities to highlight the value of IABC membership.
	Engage new members through at least four "New member coffee" events hosted by a past-president.

Support PIC members to deepen their knowledge and broaden their reach.	Host a minimum of four events tailored exclusively to meeting the professional development, networking and business-building needs of independent communicators.
Provide opportunities for meaningful engagement amongst senior communications professionals.	Host a minimum of four Senior Communicator Circles by invitation only to ensure the target audience is engaged.
Maintain IABC/Toronto's reputation for recognizing excellence in Communications.	Host the OVATION Awards gala in May, recognizing communications campaign winners from across the GTA.
Provide opportunities to connect and advance professional development.	Host four to six professional development events throughout the Board year (outside of PIC).
Provide opportunities to members and non-members to connect with fellow communicators	Host four to six networking events throughout the Board year (outside of the senior communicator's circle).
Connect members with potential employment opportunities.	Host annual talent expo for students and communicators in transition to connect with potential employers.
	Host an online training webinar for OVATION judges.
	Host at least one CMP/SCMP exam, with at least 18 participants.
	Host in-person event for Blue Ribbon Panel judges to judge the Gold Quill awards.
Provide opportunities to recruit and recognize chapter volunteers and future chapter leaders.	Host one volunteer recruitment event, one mentorship event, and at least one volunteer recognition event.
Engage in dialogue with the communications community; further sustainability/transparency	Host Annual General Meeting for IABC/Toronto members; attain quorum.
	Host a minimum of two open forums with underrepresented members of the communications community

Implementation

Event strategy: IABC/Toronto hosts events to add value and promote membership in a variety of ways:

To create connection: Networking is one of the top reasons members (and non-members) consistently identify as the reason they engage with IABC. Creating a community of peers with which to socialize, learn from, and develop, is essential to career growth and personal growth. The chapter consistently seeks to reserve networking time at every event, and have also made an effort to provide networking opportunities for various affinity groups, some of them for members-only.

To provide professional development opportunities: Professional development opportunities is another main reason members (and non-members) consistently identify as the reason they engage with IABC. Communications is a rapidly evolving field, and we provide relevant, high-quality, and useful events for communications professionals of varying levels of experience. Many of our widely promoted PD events are offered for professionals with entry to mid-level knowledge of a topic, we host workshops for professionals with mid to senior-level knowledge, and promote judging awards as a PD opportunity for professionals with senior-level knowledge. This year, IABC/Toronto hosted the inaugural Blue Ribbon Panel in-person judging event, which has since been requested again (virtually). Both networking and PD events are generally open to members and non-members, and we take these opportunities to promote member benefits and upcoming chapter events and initiatives. Overall, about 50% of 2019-2020 registrations were from non-members.

To celebrate excellence in communication: We are able to expand awareness of our brand and the great work within our industry by continuing to host our highly anticipated OVATION Awards Gala recognizing communications excellence, and through recognizing a leader outside of the field of communications for demonstrating excellence in communications.

To recruit and acknowledge volunteers and future leaders: Our annual volunteer recruitment event allows members who are interested in sharing their time and experience - and to further develop their skills - a chance to meet with each

IABC/Toronto VP and to hear about volunteer opportunities. Our volunteer recognition events provide a chance for volunteers to network with one another, and be celebrated for their hard work.

To welcome new members and to promote IABC and its member benefits: By connecting with GTA colleges and universities with communications-related programs, we were able to directly communicate with the next generation of professionals to highlight IABC benefits. Our annual Talent Expo allows us to further develop those relationships by helping to connect new communicators and communicators in transition with potential employers. New member coffee events allow us to personally welcome new and returning members, and to reiterate member benefits.

To engage in dialogue with members of the communications community: Each year the chapter hosts an Annual General Meeting to inform members of the previous year's programs and initiatives, its current financial state, and to vote in the next Board. Additionally, this year highlighted the necessity of connecting with communications professionals at large to discuss how best to support our community. The anti-racism protests in June 2020 motivated a series of open forums aimed at gathering feedback for how best to support communications professionals around diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility.

Event management: We strive to ensure that our events are respectful, inclusive, accessible and that our speakers are representative of our membership. We also work to ensure that our volunteers have the support they need to plan and host events that run smoothly. As a result, we have created a package to help volunteers plan successful events, and ensure that each team of event volunteers is led by a volunteer experienced in event planning. **Event marketing:** We regularly promote chapter events and initiatives across our social media channels, with direct emails and through our newsletter. We also cross-promote events and initiatives to participants. In 2019, we conducted a survey to our members to gain insight into what they valued from their membership to allow us to better tailor our messaging.

Challenges: The pandemic forced a number of event cancellations and the necessity of innovative thinking to continue to deliver member value. It also caused unforeseen disruptions in revenue generation and of in-person events. We were forced to move our high-profile OVATION Awards gala to a digital platform with very little time for proper planning. We did so successfully through digital channels; however, it was a very different experience than in years past. **Opportunities:** The pandemic and subsequent lockdown in Toronto, still underway beginning in March 2020 has presented the opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of belonging to a communications community. Recognizing that communications professionals were faced with unprecedented economic and career challenges, IABC/Toronto canceled in-person events and moved them to online platforms. We offered most events at no cost to members, and at a low cost to non-members, hosted events to support communicating effectively through the pandemic, amplifying one's brand, and provided support around DEI.

Budget

Tactic/initiative	Budgeted	Actual
Professional Independent Communicators	\$1,500.00 (cost) \$2,000.00 (revenue) \$500.00 (total revenue)	\$675.56 (cost) \$1,425.80 (revenue) \$750.24 (total revenue)
Senior Communicator's Circle	\$600.00 (not revenue generating)	\$0 (in-person events cancelled)
PD events	\$6,200.00 (cost) \$15,500.00 (revenue) \$8,900.00 (total revenue)	\$1,568.51 (cost) \$1,014.82 (revenue) \$553.69 (total loss due cancellations)
Networking events	\$4,500.00 (cost) \$4,000.00 (revenue) \$500.00 (total revenue)	\$1,452.34 (cost) \$3,158.85 (revenue) \$1,706.51 (total revenue)
OVATION Awards	\$57,100.00 (cost)	\$14,279.41 (cost)



	\$76,000.00 (revenue) \$18,900.00 (total revenue)	\$44,443 (revenue) \$30,163.59 (total revenue)
Programs: judging & (S)CMP exams	\$160 (not revenue generating)	\$0 (in-person events cancelled)
Volunteer Services	\$2,800.00 (not revenue generating)	\$1,200.00
AGM	\$1,200.00 (not revenue generating)	\$0 (virtual)
Zoom	\$0	\$374.63

Evaluation/Results

Objectives	Topic(s)	Results
Present at colleges and universities in the GTA to highlight the value of IABC membership.	Member benefits	Objective met: IABC/Toronto presented at 3 educational institutions pre-COVID and two virtually after COVID.
Engage new members through at least four “New member coffee” events hosted by a past-president.	Member benefits Networking	Objective exceeded: 5 events were hosted with a total of 42 attendees.
Host a minimum of four events tailored to the needs of independents.	Networking; PD; Branding, Business building	Objective exceeded: PIC hosted 5 networking events and 2 PD events with a total of 168 attendees.
Host a minimum of four Senior Communicator Circles.	Networking Hot topics	Objective not met: Two events were held, with a total of 19 attendees; two events had to be canceled as a result of the global pandemic.
Host the OVATION Awards gala in May; recognize winners from across the GTA.	Recognition and celebration	Objective met: A virtual event was held for all award winners and their clients, with over 100 participants.
Host four to six professional development events throughout the Board year (outside of PIC).	Video marketing, Reverse mentoring, Crisis communication, Creative messaging, Optimizing your LinkedIn profile, DEI	Objective met: We hosted six PD events with a total of 384 participants.
Host four to six networking events throughout the Board year (outside of the senior communicator’s circle).	Themed networking	Objective exceeded: Five downtown or virtual events, total of 164 participants; three regional networking events (in-person, outside downtown), ten participants.
Host annual talent expo for students and communicators in transition to connect with potential employers.	Career search/development	Objective met: We hosted one event, with a total of 38 registrants.
Host an online training webinar for OVATION judges.	Training - award judging	Objective met: We hosted one virtual event for OVATION judge training.
Host at least one CMP/SCMP exam, with at least 18 participants.	Career development	Objective not met: We hosted one exam, with a total of seven participants.
Host in-person event for Blue Ribbon Panel to judge the Gold Quill awards.	Award judging	Objective met: 11 volunteers were recruited to judge the and met in-person, February 2020.
Host one volunteer recruitment event, one mentorship event, and at least one volunteer recognition event.	Recruitment Recognition	Objective met: We hosted one recruitment event, one mentorship event and one recognition event, with a total of 115 participants.
Host Annual General Meeting for IABC/Toronto members.	Sustainability Transparency	Objective met: We hosted one AGM, attained quorum; total of 51 registrants.
Host two open forums with underrepresented professionals.	Dialogue: inclusion, equity, diversity, accessibility	Objective exceeded: We hosted four open forums, with more than 50 participants.

Work samples - Work sample #1: Open forum invitation; Work sample #2: Student presentation; Work sample #3: Blue Ribbon Panel thank you