

Chapter Management Awards Entry

IABC/BC - Chapter Events



Based on 2019–20 chapter year

Background

2020 was a year that changed the event industry. Here at IABC British Columbia, we have a long history of educational, engaging and fun events for our large chapter. Events are regularly ranked as one of the top reasons our members stay with our chapter. In 2019, we recruited two brand new event co-directors to the board, and they were tasked with rebuilding the portfolio, which no longer had any volunteers. Throw on top of that a global pandemic and we had what you could call... a recipe for being flexible and getting creative!

In this board year, our events portfolio had some wins and some losses. We had to abandon some of our plans and reprioritize others. We also saw in-person *and* virtual events draw in greater attendance than we'd seen in years. We hope you'll appreciate our creative approaches to engaging members.

Portfolio SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strong interest in events by members, as indicated by membership surveyMany processes and venue lists already developed by former directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Many people are fatigued of online to attend an event after a full day of online meetingsOur volunteers were relatively junior once recruited – they required significant attention and support and were not in a position to take on the majority of event planning solo
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communicators were dealing with an entirely new approach due to COVID and were looking for information and solutionsWith everything being online and probably a captive audience staying at home, we had an opportunity to present PD content through the summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Many free webinars available creating competitionMany organizations are cutting back on discretionary spending, impacting ability to charge for PD beyond nominal fees

Goals and Objectives

Associated Chapter Goal	Portfolio Objective	Target	Outcome or Output
Engage. Increase engagement by providing valuable member experiences.	Achieve an average of 15% registration at chapter-wide events	15%	Outcome
Grow. Increase brand awareness and membership base	Hold two brand new engagement opportunities during the board year	2	Output
Engage. Increase engagement by providing valuable member experiences.	Double total portfolio volunteers, creating director pipeline	4	Outcome

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Budget

1. \$450 courier
2. \$150 event decorations
3. \$1,000 equipment rental
4. \$10,000 catering
5. \$2,500 venue rental
6. \$200 materials and supplies
7. \$400 speaker gifts
8. \$70 volunteer recognition
9. \$300 travel

Implementation

In-Person Events

Before COVID-19 struck we planned three highly social successful events that started the year on the right foot. We invested heavily in creating an amazing experience for these events and, as such, we planned to lose money. Instead, due to the highest social event attendance in years at our Fall Kickoff and Holiday Social, we broke even at those events!

Post World Conference Social

The IABC World Conference was an amazing time for the BC Chapter. We welcomed more than 1,200 communications professionals from around the world to Vancouver, and we received highly positive feedback for our dedicated volunteer task force of 40 amazing local members.

Now came the challenge of harnessing that energy and using it to convert non-member local attendees to IABC members. To accomplish this, we planned an informal social at a pub with beautiful views of Vancouver's north shore mountains on a sunny evening. We invited board members and local conference attendees and we served free food and beverages while showing the best hospitality to our potential future members.

Fall Kickoff

For our signature kickoff, we switched things up. Suspecting that the decline in attendance in recent years might be due to our local audience growing tired of the same time of format, our directors leveraged our connection to local sponsor Bananatag, and planned the whole evening at their amazing downtown Vancouver offices.

An office with a tech vibe, we took inspiration from all the games at Bananatag—video games, life-size Jenga, board games, pool, table tennis— and created a theme of “games”. The dress code was informal and we invited members to let their hair down and have some lively fun.

Because we couldn't fit a cash bar into our budget, we provided three free beverages with the low ticket price of \$25, which was more than enough!

Holiday Social

After the success of the low-cost informal Fall Kickoff, we tested whether our audience still had a taste for a higher price point. (Turns out, yes!) We used the beautiful, waterfront Vancouver Convention Centre and planned an elegant evening and ice breaker game, networking time, drinks, canapés and speeches.

At this event, we gave away **our most valuable door prize ever** – two roundtrip plane tickets to Nanaimo, British Columbia– on the beautiful west coast, bordering the Pacific Ocean. Our new sponsor Pacific Coastal Airlines (secured at the Fall Kickoff) donated this prize worth \$1,250.

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Leader Lounge

Back by popular demand for its third time, this was our last in-person IABC/BC event *to date!* Leader Lounge is a simple but effective event. An intimate gathering of senior comms professionals, we set the topic—this time “Leading and Growing Resilient Communications Teams” and invited only those with 15+ years of experience. We then recruited a senior comms professional to facilitate the lunchtime conversation by asking a few guiding questions.

The setup: We reserved the private lounge at Gotham Steakhouse and Bar (an upscale downtown restaurant) and had attendees pre-order their three-course meals. Then the conversation flowed!

Virtual Event: Rise and Yoga

One month into COVID-19, our members were stressed. Our board members were stressed and their time stretched to the max. There was *no* shortage of online crisis comms events for members. So we tried something different. We put our new chapter zoom account to the test and planned a stress-reducing virtual morning yoga class. Our Director of Student Development and his certified yoga instructor wife facilitated an exclusive class for communicators one morning before work. We received wonderful anecdotal feedback.

Webinar: Climate, Conflict & COVID-19

The crisis webinar. We brought together three local experts in crisis communication—one from healthcare, one from government and one from nonprofit— and interviewed them on best practices in communication management during a crisis.

Webinar: Long Distance Relationships – You and Your Employees

This was a timely topic! With most organizations going remote, we brought together a talented panel – featuring IABC Cincinnati President Jackiedra Wilson – to talk about the role of communication in fostering employee engagement in a work-from-home world.

Virtual Social

After several months of trial by fire for communicators, it was finally time to allow ourselves to have a little fun. We brought together our members for informal cocktails and talk, including numerous facilitated breakout rooms.

Volunteer Team

Directors

Nicole Adams, ABC, Co-Director (Board member)

Jinny Wu, Co-Director (Board member)

Volunteer roles

Communications Coordinator

Communications Manager

COVID-19 and its Impact

We had already begun registration for our crisis communications Pro-D event and were getting good numbers, when it became clear that we had to shift to an online event. Instead of this being a revenue generating event, we decided to make it a free webinar. It garnered 200 registrations. Similarly, we had to move numerous events online and learn how to make money off them. (The following year, we would adopt a by-donation policy for online PD events.)

Challenges

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Starting the year with two new directors and no volunteers was not easy. This significantly hampered our ability to deliver PD in a timely fashion. Meaning our first PD was in the latter half of the board year. There was a challenge in navigating our online resources, and not having a portfolio Director from the previous year to orient us meant that much time was spent learning processes.

Measurement

Associated Chapter Goal	Portfolio Objective	Target	Result
Engage. Increase engagement by providing valuable member experiences.	Achieve an average of 15% attendance at chapter events	15%	16%
Grow. Increase brand awareness and membership base	Hold three brand new engagement opportunities during the board year	2	4
Engage. Increase engagement by providing valuable member experiences.	Double total portfolio volunteers, creating director pipeline	4	4

Results

What a time for flexibility and persistence! Our two main social events – the Fall Kickoff and Holiday Social – each drew in 75 people with rave reviews. And then... we had to change everything, naturally. Because we were particularly late rolling out PD, and then COVID-19 happened, we were quite late to the game with PD. But when we *did* kick off our offerings, they shined. Our crisis communication webinar attracted 200 registrations, our highest ever. Still, another event – our signature storytelling event – could not be held this year based on our timing. All in all, we learned how to deliver captivating, fun and varied events. *And* we learned where director onboarding, coaching and mentoring needed to be stronger in future years. Still, we are incredibly proud of the events we planned and continue to plan. And we continue to be inspired by amazing chapter events from around the world!