



IABC Malaysia: *Volunteer Engagement & Leadership Development*

CONTEXT & CHALLENGES

IABC Malaysia is a small chapter that was on the brink of closing in 2017. The bleed was slow but steady over the years – levels of commitment and engagement were low, and it was difficult to get board members to attend either board meetings or chapter events. The lack of engaged volunteers created a new problem – one of “martyr leadership”. The new Chapter President and one other Board Member were solely responsible for managing the chapter and running events, with the support of our Immediate Past President who was consistently willing to step into speaking roles.

When the new year rolled in, it became apparent that it was time to have the difficult conversations.

The catalyst for change arose when in 2017 the “Registrar of Societies” (ROS) notified the chapter that its association registration was on the point of cancellation. The ROS is a Government Organisation where associations such as IABC Malaysia, who wish to maintain a bank account in their name and manage funds, need to register and file annual documents. It came to the Board’s attention that the AGM (Annual General Meeting) minutes and other paperwork that should be filed on a yearly basis with the ROS, had not been done in 2012. This then subsequently resulted in the paperwork of all following years being unable to be filed as well, and the ROS therefore issue a letter stating that the association’s registration was going to be cancelled.

The current President attempted to get the paperwork filed for all past years but then found that the ROS now imposes a **minimum requirement of 7 board members**, for an association to be registered with them. Without registration, the Chapter would not be able to set up a bank account in order to receive payments from subscriptions or events. However, for the past several years, the number of board members ranged from 3 to 6 on average, with the current 2016/2017 board consisting of only 6 board members. **Of the existing 6 board members, only 3 (President, Immediate Past President & an out-of-state Board Member) were willing and/or able to continue** committing the time and effort necessary to fulfil their duty as board members.

As a small chapter, recruiting new board members / volunteers and getting attendees for our events was not one that we could source from our membership base. Thus, we had to employ a different strategy.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The urgent and immediate goals of the Chapter were glaringly obvious:

- Post an Open Call for Board Member Nominations and actively promote it in order to create awareness of the Chapter, as well as to recruit volunteers
- Formulate a sustainable marketing plan in order to market the Open Call and begin promotions in order to begin receiving applications from volunteers.
- Adapt and utilise recruitment head-hunting strategies in order to identify potential candidates for Board Roles, and to employ a “personal touch” that complements the online outreach programme
- Organise a Pro-Tem Nominating Committee who can review the applications, decide on candidate suitability and ensure transparency in the process of selection and recruitment
- Attract and retain at least 4 additional board volunteers for the 2018-2019 season
- Fulfil the Malaysian government requirement of a minimum of seven board members, and re-register the association
- Ensure the new Board members are aligned and committed to the chapter’s strategy
- Implement ‘Lazy Leadership’ so: i) The President was freed-up to focus on strategic matters ii) New board members were engaged iii) No volunteer had to handle event planning alone

MEASUREMENT

The nominating committee measured the effectiveness of the Volunteer Recruitment & Engagement process in the following ways:

- Ensure all materials developed and used in the process were well designed & conveyed professionalism and strength of the IABC brand
- Number of potential candidates approached
- Number of applications received
- The suitability of the candidates and their commitment to the Chapter
- Balancing the board in order to have sufficient members in two states
- Conduct an orientation meeting and ensure Chapter goals were outlined
- Tailor board roles so that they were customised to the passions of each Board Member
- Start hosting events throughout the year with the new Board, in Penang

THE PLAN

Volunteer Recruitment

Pro-Tem Nominating Committee

The Chapter President requested the advice and participation of an IABC APAC Regional Board member in the formulation of the committee, to ensure regional oversight was in place. The newly formed committee consisted of 4 volunteers: Immediate Past President of IABC APAC - Col Rajeev Kumar - who offered to serve alongside the 3 remaining IABC Malaysia board members.

The goals of the committee were identified as follows:

- To market the Open Call
- To receive and review applications for the Board Roles
- To determine the suitability of the candidates
- To utilise video conferencing for board calls to ensure out-of-state board members were fully engaged

Open Call Process

- A “Board Member Info Pack” was drafted in order to clearly detail what was expected of Board Members, as well as what they would gain in return. To avoid re-inventing the wheel, this document was adapted from the IABC Asia Pacific Regional Board Pack, and tailored to the Chapter’s needs **(Work Sample 1)**
- As we would be targeting potential applicants outside of our member database (due to the limited pool available for a small chapter to draw from), we kept in mind that this process of board member recruitment would be going hand-in-hand with membership recruitment – as all new board member volunteers would most likely be brand new to IABC
- Our professional e-brochure (designed by the President) that detailed membership benefits, the IABC brand and strength of the network, was updated to be used during the recruitment process **(Work Sample 2)**
- A webpage was set up on the Chapter website with the “Board Member Info Pack” available for preview, and a simple digital application form was posted to ease the compilation of entries **(Work Sample 3)**
- Marketing collaterals and social media banners were designed to promote the call **(Work Sample 4)**. The banners were shared on various social media channels, whilst personalised invitation letters were drafted for approaching potential candidates.

Identifying & Recruiting Candidates

In order to maximise the reach of the Open Call, we employed a dual-strategy for identifying and approaching potential candidates.

- OFFLINE: CHAPTER EVENT

The President and Vice-President proceeded to organise an event in Penang, whilst the Open Call was still being planned. This event was used to assess the viability of shifting the Chapter's focus to Penang, as well as to get the word-of-mouth out on the Open Call. By implementing the **Lazy Leadership** tactic of getting people to attend an event, seeing what IABC is about, having fun *and then* approaching them about serving on the board, we were able to connect with strong candidates.

- OFFLINE: WORD OF MOUTH

The new Vice-President connected with board members of other leadership associations, and personally followed-up with each one of them. Various factors were taken into consideration: their experience of serving on boards, their work experience, the references and testimonials received from their co-workers, their interest in IABC Malaysia and their location.

This network was further expanded by first approaching a candidate, and then requesting their assistance in identifying others in their network who may be keen to join the chapter.

- ONLINE: LINKEDIN

For online promotion of the Open Call, we adopted a head-hunting approach to identify potential candidates. In addition to posting various social media channels, we utilised LinkedIn greatly due to ease of access to individuals in the field that we previously had no contact with. At least a hundred or more profiles were individually looked up, connected with, and subsequently reviewed. The factors used to identify candidates was a little different as it was limited to the information available on their LinkedIn profiles. We relied heavily on their stated work experience, any volunteering experience they may have, their responsiveness to messages and willingness to join IABC Malaysia as a member.

Personalised emails were sent to each suitable candidate, introducing them to the Chapter, the member benefits and inviting them to submit their application.

When the Open Call was closed, a total of 12 applications had been received. One of them being the speaker who had been invited to speak at the Chapter Event held to assess the Penang Market. When considering that these were applicants were both willing to volunteer *as well as* to subscribe as a member during a time of economic downturn (when the Malaysian Ringgit was faring poorly against the US Dollar), the Pro-Tem Committee could not help but be greatly encouraged.

We then had one-on-one conversations with the applicants to assess suitability, determine their commitment, highlight expectations, identify their areas of strength and passion, as well as to answer any queries. As a small chapter, our primary need is centred on creating brand awareness, event planning and membership marketing. This need was communicated to all applicants, and the Pro-Tem Committee made their final selections and the incoming board was ratified in December.

Lazy Leadership Strategy:

We relied on flexible roles for the new board members to avoid being too rigid. These roles catered to their areas of passion rather than simply their strengths. We did not want the new Board roles to be an extension of their existing jobs/careers. We instead wanted to give them the opportunity to contribute in a way they found meaningful. However, we balanced this against the needs of the chapter by sharing the workload of task-heavy activities such as event planning.

Onboarding and Development

IABC Resources

All Board Members were introduced to the Leader Centre as well as the Basecamp resources available to Chapter Leaders. During events, we highlighted relevant resources so that both volunteers and event attendees are made aware of the material available in the IABC member's area.

By Laws

As the association was being re-registered with the ROS, new bylaws were drafted and agreed upon, before being lodged with the government. This process ensured that all board members were introduced to the by-laws and were fully aware of what they were.

Sharing The Workload

With new board members split between two states, we have regular video conference calls at least bi-monthly in order to touch base, set short term goals and organise a local event.

As the most “task intensive” activity tends to be event planning & running, this is something that is shared by all board members in order to reduce the workload. By developing lazy leaders, we ensure that no single board member is overburdened, and that “many hands make light work”. The entire board shares the workload of identifying speakers, seeking out sponsors, organising the logistics and inviting attendees.

Leadership Development Opportunities

As a small chapter with limited funds, in an economy where the exchange rate is not in our favour, we do not yet have the means to directly support the expenses of board members in their pursuit of professional development.

In order to work around this, we keep our board members apprised of other committees and open calls that might be available at the regional and international level. As serving on larger boards would provide them with the opportunity to connect with IABC members from around the world, whilst we embrace IABC values.

We also look out for various scholarships offered by the region or by IABC HQ and encourage board members to apply. Thanks to the generosity of IABC APAC, a board member was given the opportunity to attend the Fusion regional conference + leadership institute, and greatly benefited from the learnings.

Board Member Appreciation

Board Members who were able to attend the Penang event have been invited to a post-event dinner to show the Chapter’s appreciation of their efforts. Board member groups in the two different states also meet up together to further strengthen the team.

Lazy Leadership Strategy:

The Chapter President and Vice President try to incorporate ways so that the 3 hot buttons continue to be fulfilled. For a board member who is keen to learn, we highlight the opportunities available to join the regional conferences, webinars and LI. For the board members who have a passion for networking and educating others, we involve them in organising our Learning Lab events.

BUDGET

All marketing and promotion of the Open Call was done via word-of-mouth and online activities such as connecting with candidates via LinkedIn, and initiating conversations. Thanks to these headhunting strategies, **the Chapter did not have to spend anything on Board Member Recruitment.**

Marketing collaterals, the online application form and other tools used, were designed or developed by the Chapter President and Vice President. The cost of the Board Member appreciation dinners was also sponsored by the Chapter President's company, thus providing further savings.

RESULTS

Form a Pro-Tem Nominating Committee who was familiar with IABC Code of Ethics, and included one regional board member for oversight and advice	<p>Met Benchmark: No previous Pro-Tem committee has consisted of a regional board member</p> <p>Measure: Committee consisting of an IABC APAC Immediate Past President and 3 local board members was formed</p>
Market and promote the Open Call both offline and online, to receive at least 6 applications	<p>Exceeded Benchmark: No open call previously on record</p> <p>Measure: Total of 12 applications received</p>
Attract and retain at least 4 new board members	<p>Exceeded Benchmark: No "bulk recruitment" on record as board members were previously recruited individually, throughout the year. The latest attrition rates had reduced us to just 3 active volunteers in total</p> <p>Measure: Total of 5 new board members ratified</p>
Balance out the board members so that we have sufficient representation in both states	<p>Exceeded Benchmark: Previously we only had 1 board member in Penang (who had to coordinate any Penang event on her own)</p> <p>Measure: The new board now has 3 board members in Penang, 3 in Kuala Lumpur and one at large.</p>
Qualify for re-registration of the association with the Malaysian Registrar of Societies	<p>Met Benchmark: Since 2012, no board has been able to meet the minimum requirements or sort out the long outstanding issues</p>

	<p>Measure: Our registration has been approved and we are in good standing with the Malaysian Government, with all paperwork up-to-date</p>
<p>Seek out and identify sponsors</p>	<p>Exceeded</p> <p>Benchmark: Sponsorship was sporadic and mainly dependant on the board member's companies providing their venue for events</p> <p>Measure: Thanks to efforts made by the new Board, we have full venue sponsorship at the Regus co-working space in Penang. This is an agreement that allows us to utilise their space anytime we have an event.</p> <p>A new sponsor, Talent Suites has also fully sponsored the cost of our first paid-for event in exchange for a co-hosted event</p>
<p>Host more events in Penang</p>	<p>Exceeded</p> <p>Benchmark: Previous events were held sporadically with a gap of almost a year since the last event</p> <p>Measure: To date we've had 4 events. Three "learning labs", along with our first paid event in Penang that was fully sponsored (venue/catering etc).</p>
<p>Implement 'Lazy Leadership' strategies</p>	<p>Exceeded</p> <p>Benchmark: Previous events were generally organised by a single volunteer</p> <p>Measure: All board members now assist with the event planning, marketing and setup. Our volunteers in Penang will lend support on-the-ground, and board members from other states handle tasks that can be done remotely (banner designing, email blasts, locating / volunteering as speakers). Thanks to this, board members have also been freed up to acquire recurring sponsorship in Penang including: the free use of a venue space, free use of AV equipment, sponsor's lend us their staff during the event and more.</p>

WORK SAMPLES

- Work Sample 1 : Board Member Info Pack
- Work Sample 2 : Member Benefits e-brochure
- Work Sample 3 : Board Member Application Form
- Work Sample 4 : Open Call promo banners