



International Association
of Business Communicators
Newfoundland & Labrador

Chapter Management Awards 2019 Volunteer Engagement & Leadership Development

INTRODUCTION

Our small chapter of International Association of Business Communicators is located in Newfoundland and Labrador – a Canadian island in the North Atlantic and inspiration for the award winning Broadway musical *Come from Away*.

After centuries of making a living and raising families in a harsh ocean environment - a place referred to by many as “The Rock” - we have a work ethic known throughout the world and a culture that embodies the human spirit with warmth, creativity and humility.

It is in this environment - on the rugged rocks of the North Atlantic - that our small chapter thrives – bobbing and weaving with the economy that fluctuates with commodity prices and out-migration of our people who have gained a footing in business, industry and the arts throughout Canada and the world.

Here at home, our dedicated board of directors at IABC NL are helping to advance the profession, create connections, and develop strategic communicators in our province.

We are proud of our approximately 65 members who are the professional communicators at the heart of every organization and shine brightly throughout IABC nationally and internationally.

We continue to learn so much from our IABC colleagues and we are delighted to have the opportunity to present our work through the Chapter Management Awards Program.

This submission will explore IABC NL’s approach to Volunteer Engagement and Leadership Development, demonstrating how it has implemented the “lazy leader” philosophy into how the Chapter is managed.

Changing how we Work - Strategic Planning

Each year, the IABC NL chapter has undertaken annual strategic planning to help guide the year ahead, including revisiting our value proposition for our members, providing a relevant professional development program, certification options, and networking opportunities. Our strategic planning has been informed by research undertaken to find out what our members need. We also ensure steps are taken to align with the #IABC1720 strategic framework.



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Communicators are at the heart of every organization, and we believe the best way to demonstrate this is by planning with IABC's three pillars in mind: advancing the profession, creating connections and developing strategic communicators.

Our Board was also faced with a new challenge this year – volunteer recruitment and retention. During the last two years, we have had two board member leave their roles mid-year due to stress and personal issues. While these issues were not caused by work within our Chapter, we do believe that it was exuberated by a martyr culture that existed within our leadership, which likely stemmed from a reduction in board volunteers a few year back. We have also seen a decrease in event committee volunteers, putting the ownership back on the directors within the board. We realized that change was needed – and luckily two of our Chapter leaders found inspiration at Leadership Institute (LI) 2018 in San Diego where they learned about “lazy leaders”.

Lazy leaders became a theme for planning the 2018-19 year. The approach was proactive, aligning with IABC International best practices, and responsive, addressing chapter and member needs. Our hope was by implementing a new leadership and volunteer approach, we could avoid volunteer burn out and create a more engaged membership.

This approach will also ensure better succession planning and preserve board knowledge and retention year-over-year.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Our goal for the 2018-19 fiscal year was to expand and formalize engagement opportunities for members, creating value for IABC membership, while building a larger, sustainable IABC NL board of directors. More specifically, our objectives were:

- 1) Expand IABC NL 2018-19 Board by three voting support positions.
- 2) Formalize volunteer recruitment model and assign to a board director portfolio.
- 3) Revitalize the professional development portfolio by hosting more event.

IMPLEMENTATION

Volunteer Recruitment

Promoting Opportunities:

After returning from LI 2018 and recognizing our need to expand volunteer opportunities and board involvement, we decided to hold a free coffee event to discuss LI, lazy leader philosophy, as well as benefits of becoming a leader with our Chapter. We emphasized at the coffee the benefits



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of volunteering with the Board and the invaluable learning at Leadership Institute, which we send volunteers to each year (**Work Sample 1**).

We believe that becoming engaged with IABC is a great way to create connections, advance the profession and create strategic communicators. Leadership Institute is an incredible perk that really brings these three pillars to life. It also helps attract volunteers, and we look forward to supporting our Chapter's attendance into the future.

Changing Board Structure:

Expanding the board started with consulting our bylaws to confirm we were permitted to create new positions and opportunities for engagement. Once confirmed, three new support positions were created: Digital Communications Coordinator, Sponsorship Liaison and a Special Events Support Coordinator. These positions were determined through current leadership as they would provide support for the busiest portfolios.

In addition to the three new positions, we changed the scope of work of the Membership and Marketing Director position to take on the role of volunteer management, re-titling the position as Membership Director and Volunteer Coordinator. This provides interested parties an easy access point to reach our board and avail of any opportunities. This approach ensured that the Director was prepared to discuss opportunities with the potential volunteer, and there were choices as well.

We believe our board structure is optimized to help create connections and advance our profession. Additionally, the new resources will allow a better professional development program which will also help create more strategic communicators.

Open-Call:

Once our positions were confirmed in line with our by-laws, it was time to create a fun and welcoming call for board volunteers. A recent chapter survey identified email as our strongest medium for communication, and as such, the call was shared via email and supported on social media in May (**Work Sample 2**). The call continued to be shared up until the deadline in June 2018. Our call to member provides detailed board descriptions, as well as information about the Chapter and IABC.



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The call was successful, with a number of new volunteers stepping forward. We were however having difficulty filling the “Special Events Support” role, and as such, made another call in October 2018. We did in fact have a volunteer step forward!

Onboarding and Development

Creating these three new board positions not only provided additional opportunities, it also divided the workload of three of the busiest portfolios – Communications, Professional Development and Pinnacles- and shared the workload over two members, not one as was traditionally done the past few years. This model also addressed the worries around burnout and retention for the future board.

The board, ahead of the annual general meeting announcing the new slate, met for a strategic planning session to review the communications plan drafted by the incoming president, share a meal and get to know one another ahead of the first formal event of the year. The Incoming president then connected with each new board member sharing the position description again, and addressing any of their concerns. Individualized training sessions are also held by outgoing members with the new members, to ensure they are familiar with all of the tools they need for a successful year.

Our Chapter also maintains a Google Drive, which has proven to be a great tool for succession planning and knowledge transfer. The drive contains branding guidelines for the chapter, templates, resources and more. After the annual general meeting the President then updates international to ensure that all members have access to the Leader Centre, which we use frequently to guide chapter activities.

Our Chapter also takes part in Leadership Institute, and utilizes this opportunity to train and develop its top leaders. Each year our incoming vice-president and incoming president attend the conference together, allowing them to apply learnings into their own leadership style, such as the lazy leader philosophy (**Work Sample 3**).

Additionally, our president is engaged with the Canada East Region Board, attending monthly meetings. While most meetings are completed over the phone, the president does get to attend two meetings with other leaders in person at the beginning and end of the year. Additionally, the incoming president also attends the final CER meeting for the year to ensure an efficient and successful hand-over, where they can also meet their colleagues for the upcoming year.



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Finally, our chapter always participated in the CMAs as we believe this provides an incredible development and learning opportunity for our board members. Even preparing the entries is a good practice and helps develop strategic thinkers.

Engagement and Volunteer Support

Our board has new faces this year and it was important they felt valued and connected. It was decided that each board member would have a “vote” this year tying into the importance for board members to feel equal and valued at the table. Traditionally, supporting roles of the past were non-voting, and our Bylaws supported this new approach.

In addition to giving each member an equal vote, the three support positions were not called “member-at-large” positions as had been practice in the past. Instead it was decided before advertising these roles that giving these supporting positions an actual title would create value for the member and potentially create interest. This provided a member with an actual tangible title to add to their resume and a sense of purpose with a clear idea around the new role.

We also formally recognize the new board through a press release and at our AGM in September each year.

The board meets once per month at the President’s office. These meetings are engaging and focus on troubleshooting and celebrating wins. We also tend to engage in celebratory cupcakes!

Our Chapter also recognizes formally one Volunteer of the Year during our annual Pinnacle Awards each June. This honour is appointed by the President to a member who has given their time to the Chapter and is not a current board member. This provides a connection between the Chapter and the membership, recognizing those who give their time outside of the board as well.

Volunteer communicators are at the heart of our organization, helping make our events and programs successful. We ensure to thank our volunteers with every opportunity, and celebrate their accomplishments as well.

Looking forward, we hope to improve the number of non-board related volunteers, which will likely result in further volunteer recognition activities! One way we are doing this is by adopting IABC San Francisco’s Networking 9 program. Our plan is to have a member volunteer to lead an informal dinner with colleagues around a topic that matters to them. Our first is scheduled for early 2019 and will focus on municipal politics communications.



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BUDGET

This year, with the expansion of Professional Development offerings, the IABC NL budget was itemized, allocating funds and including more detail around sessions for end of year measurement and prudent, realistic fiscal management. (See *2018-19 Budget* in **Work Sample 4**)

MEASUREMENT AND RESULTS

While we are early in the execution of our plans, we have made incredible strides:

- We have successfully expanded the IABC NL 2018-19 Board by three voting support positions.
- We have formalized the volunteer recruitment model and assigned to a board director portfolio.
- The formal role for managing volunteers has been incorporated into the new Membership Director and Volunteer Coordinator position, with Marketing being transitioned to the Communications portfolio.
- We have increased our plans for PD and networking sessions for the 2017-18.
- Out of our 11 board members this year, more than half are new volunteers.

WORK SAMPLES

- Work Sample 1: Social Media of Coffee and Conversation to Volunteer Opportunities
- Work Sample 2: Call for Nominations for Board of Directors
- Work Sample 3: Social Media of our Leaders at Leadership Institute and CMAs 2018
- Work Sample 4: Media Clipping from Announcement of Board Slate
- Work Sample 5: 2018-19 IABC NL Budget