

## IABC/Toronto: Professional Development

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 and personal development.

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.

### Professional development at IABC/Toronto

Professional development for our members is the responsibility of several portfolios. The professional development (PD) portfolio Vice President (VP) has the sole responsibility of planning and hosting valuable PD events. They and their team use member feedback to develop a roster of events that span a variety of relevant topics that satisfy the professional development needs of communications professionals with different levels of experience.

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. The Programs portfolio 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. This portfolio is also responsible for promoting and executing the (S)CMP exam to help career development. Volunteer Services helps members contribute their skills and experience to the chapter and develop skills or experience that will be useful to them moving forward. Our mentorship program allows both mentor and mentee to learn from one another, with the mentor providing career guidance to new communicators and communicators in transition.

### Goals & Objectives

Goals	Objectives
Support PIC members to deepen their knowledge and broaden their reach.	Host four events tailored to meeting the PD and business-building needs of independent communicators.
Provide opportunities to connect and advance professional development.	Host four to six professional development events throughout the Board year (outside of PIC).
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.
Provide career development opportunities for professionals at various stages in their careers.	Host at least one CMP/SCMP exam, with at least 18 participants.

	Recruit a minimum of 64 judges to judge OVATION awards.
	Host an in-person event for Blue Ribbon Panel judges to judge the Gold Quill awards; recruit a minimum of 10 judges.
	Execute a mentorship program with a minimum of 7-10 pairs.
	Regularly communicate with VPs to determine their volunteer needs; fill all available volunteer positions.

## Implementation

### *Programs:*

Professional development opportunities is one of the top benefits members (and non-members) consistently identify as the reason they engage with IABC. Communications is a rapidly changing and evolving field, and we take very seriously our responsibility to consistently provide relevant, high-quality, useful and educational 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 of certain topics, and promote judging awards as an excellent PD opportunity for professionals with senior-level knowledge on a variety of topics. With such a large membership spanning over a vast geographical area, it is important that we create opportunities for affinity groups to connect. One such group is the Professional Independent Communicators (PIC) group. IABC/Toronto increases member value by creating opportunities for independents to learn and network in a space that is specific to their needs.

Through IABC's certification program, we also offer opportunities for communications professionals to get the CMP or SCMP certifications. This designation is becoming increasingly well recognized, which can promote career development and advancement. We have also heard many times from our senior communicators that it can be difficult for them to find professional development opportunities that deepen the knowledge of a professional who already has extensive experience in the field of communications. One excellent opportunity for professional development for this group is in judging award entries. Reviewing high-calibre communications campaign submissions presents an opportunity to learn from the best of the best. In 2019-2020 Toronto recruited judges to judge our local awards (OVATION Awards) as well as for the Blue Ribbon Panel - judging the Gold Quill Awards.

Finally, our volunteer program helps members who are interested in sharing their time and expertise to further develop their skills and work experience. In 2019, we revamped our volunteer application to ask about volunteer goals and which skills or experience they would like to develop. This information allowed us to place volunteers in roles that would be beneficial to their career growth and development. The mentorship program also provides an opportunity for career development. Mentees and mentors are paired according to areas of interest or expertise in order to ensure a pairing that will be most beneficial for helping the mentee gain the knowledge required to take the next step in their career.

Each year VPs typically set targets that see them improving upon or maintaining numbers from previous years. Our goal is to provide opportunities that will be utilized and valued by our members. Most PD events are generally open to both members and non-members. Overall, about 50% of 2019-2020 registrations were from non-members.

Timing	Event title	Target audience	Details
September 2019	Volunteer recruitment event	All levels	Recruit volunteers for opportunities that capitalized on existing skills or helped them develop new ones.



November 2019	Video marketing from A to Z: Support your clients and promote your own expertise	Beginner to mid level; In conjunction with PIC	The focus of this event was to help communications professionals adopt an under-utilized marketing tool.
	IABC/Toronto Reverse Mentoring Panel Discussion	Senior level	The goal here was to help senior communicators learn from emerging trends and the perspectives of new communicators.
	CMP/SCMP certification exam	Mid to senior level	Partnered with the Strategic Internal Communication Conference to offer the (S)CMP exam.
January 2020	Mentorship program launch	All levels	Introduce mentees to their mentors.
February 2020	Get business by getting found	All levels; PIC	Help independent communicators develop business leads.
	Blue Ribbon Panel in-person judging	Senior Level	IABC/Toronto hosted an in person BRP to evaluate the Gold Quill Awards.
March 2020	Re-PR-esent Talent Expo	New and transitioning communicators	At George Brown College: Connect new/transitioning communicators with potential employers who set up booths to attract attendees.
	Practice your crisis response: A virtual workshop	Senior level	In response to the pandemic, a crisis comms expert led an interactive workshop.
	OVATION Awards judging training session	Senior level	An online training webinar with opportunity for Q&A in advance of the award judging process.
April 2020	Are you saying the same thing as everyone else?	All levels	Amidst the repetitive messages coming from organizations; lessons learned from creative campaigns.
June 2020	Optimizing your LinkedIn profile: Build an “All Star” presence	All levels	Tips for getting the most out of one’s LinkedIn profile and engagement.
	The branding journey: A case study	All levels; PIC	Help independent communicators develop/revamp their personal brand.
	We’re all humans first	All levels	Bringing awareness to systemic issues around DEI.

**Providing value:**

In 2019, we conducted a survey to identify communications professionals with expertise in different areas, asking respondents to identify their knowledge level on their proposed topic(s), previous presenting experience and key take-aways. This allowed us to draw from a pool of experienced speakers with creative and relevant topics to satisfy many different goals and needs. Participants at each event are also asked to identify any topics of interest to them, allowing our PD team to choose in-demand topics for future PD events. We regularly promote chapter events and initiatives through our social media channels, with direct emails and through our newsletter. We also cross promote events and initiatives to participants, and provide links to webinars and resources offered through IABC International.

**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 and opportunities

for professional development. **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 and creatively through the pandemic, amplifying one's brand, and that provided PD and support around inclusion, diversity and equity.

### 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)
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 event cancellations)
Talent expo	\$1,00.00 (cost) \$2,000.00 (revenue) \$1000.00 (total revenue)	\$449.32 (cost) \$1,448.85 (revenue) \$999.53 (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
Zoom	\$0	\$374.63

### Evaluation/Results

Objectives	Results
Host four events tailored to meeting the PD and business-building needs of independent communicators.	<b>Objective exceeded:</b> PIC hosted five networking events and three PD events with a total of 168 attendees.
Host four to six professional development events throughout the Board year (outside of PIC).	<b>Objective met:</b> We hosted six PD events with a total of 384 participants.
Host annual talent expo for students and communicators in transition to connect with potential employers.	<b>Objective met:</b> We hosted one event, with a total of 38 registrants.
Host an online training webinar for OVATION judges.	<b>Objective met:</b> We hosted one virtual training event with 11 participants. Recording was available to all judges.
Host at least one CMP/SCMP exam, with at least 18 participants.	<b>Objective not met:</b> We hosted one exam, with a total of seven participants.
Recruit a minimum of 64 judges to judge OVATION award entries.	<b>Objective met:</b> 64 volunteers were recruited to judge OVATION Awards.
Host in-person event for Blue Ribbon Panel judges to judge the Gold Quill awards; recruit a minimum of 10 judges.	<b>Objective met:</b> 11 volunteers were recruited to judge the Gold Quill Awards and met in-person in February 2020.
Execute a mentorship program with a minimum of 7-10 pairs.	<b>Objective met:</b> 7 mentees and mentors were paired up; total participation 14.
Regularly communicate with VPs to determine their volunteer needs; fill all available volunteer positions.	<b>Objective met:</b> 35 available volunteer positions were filled.

**Work samples** - Work sample #1: Volunteer application form; Work sample #2: Mentee application form; Work sample #3: Blue Ribbon Panel thank you