

IABC/Toronto: Volunteer Engagement & Leadership Development

IABC/Toronto is IABC's largest chapter with nearly 700 members. We serve communications professionals across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in a variety of 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.

Engaging volunteers and future leaders at IABC/Toronto

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. Volunteers are primarily recruited and placed by our Vice President (VP) of Volunteer Services, but volunteer management and engagement is the responsibility of all Portfolio VPs.

Volunteer Services recruits and engages with volunteers to help members to not only contribute their skills and experience to the chapter, but also to develop skills or experience that will be useful to them moving forward. The VP also ensures that volunteer engagement and satisfaction are top-of-mind for each VP. Volunteer Services also runs our mentorship program, which allows both mentor and mentee to learn from one another, and aid in volunteer and career development.

Members and volunteers are kept further engaged by ensuring that there are opportunities to volunteer and take leadership positions within affinity groups. For example, many independent communicators choose to volunteer with the Professional Independent Communicators (PIC) – a group managed by the VP of Special Interest Groups.

Goals & Objectives

| Goals | Objectives |
|---|--|
| Fill all necessary volunteer and leadership positions required within a Board year. | Recruit an Executive Vice President (term commitment of 3 years) to prepare as incoming President. |
| | Recruit a full Board slate of qualified volunteers to join the 2020-2021 Board of Directors. |



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| | Regularly communicate with VPs to determine their volunteer needs; fill all available volunteer positions. |
| Engage senior leadership to stay connected and contributing to the chapter. | Recruit a minimum of 64 judges to judge OVATION award entries. |
| | Host an online training webinar for OVATION judges. |
| | Execute a mentorship program with 7-10 pairs. |
| Create opportunities for engagement and recognition. | Host one volunteer recruitment event, one mentorship event, and at least one volunteer recognition event. |
| | Host Annual General Meeting for IABC/Toronto members; attain quorum. |
| | Create a series of member spotlights promoted via social media and through our newsletter to highlight the work of IABC/Toronto's diverse membership and volunteers. |

Implementation

Strategic planning:

Succession planning for the Board is always top of mind at IABC/Toronto. With a Board of 12-14 Directors, in any given year, ensuring that there is a pool of qualified, engaged, and interested candidates requires careful consideration. Our strategy is to draw on engaged, skilled professionals to fill volunteer and leadership positions within the chapter, and to help ensure that the goals they have identified for themselves are met. The chapter depends upon the dedication and time of our members; however, it is equally essential that our members are able to use their time volunteering with the chapter for personal and professional development.

Volunteer recruitment:

The President role requires the highest level of commitment and dedication. For that reason, this is a three-year term, beginning with the Executive Vice President role. This volunteer learns and assists the President throughout the year, taking advantage of leadership training and resources offered by the association, and begins to plan for their Board year. The President runs the chapter during their year, with the main objective of providing direction and support for each of the VPs. It is the President's role to ensure that VPs have the information and the resources they need to succeed. The President also draws on the Past President to provide guidance, advice and support.

Recruitment for Board positions often begins several months before the end of the Board year, by first assessing which Board members are interested in returning, and, if so, which roles would be most fulfilling to them. Directors within the portfolios that are likely to be vacant are then approached to assess their interest, followed by personal contacts identified by Board members.

As IABC/Toronto is a large chapter with a heavy Board load, 12-14 portfolios, and a variety of volunteer needs, our volunteer management has had to be decentralized. Each VP who has volunteers in their portfolio is tasked with ensuring their volunteers' goals are met during the year. Upon recruitment, volunteers identify their main goals and/or reasons for volunteering with the chapter, and are asked to identify the skills they would like to develop. VPs are encouraged to revisit those goals at least twice throughout the year to ensure volunteer needs are being met. This is our pool of future leaders, so engaging with them and helping them get the most out of their involvement with the chapter is critical to their success, and to the future of the chapter.

Current and past volunteers are encouraged to continue to find fulfilling ways to donate their time and expertise through personal invitations and via email. Recruitment for positions is also accomplished via our digital channels: our newsletter (*eLert*), our social media channels, our website, and in some cases, direct emails. There is typically a large, general push for applications at the beginning of the Board year, followed by specific promotion of remaining positions, or new positions as the need arises throughout the year.

Judging for our awards program and participation in our mentorship program are treated as volunteer positions and recruitment for those positions follows the same process as any other.

Onboarding and Development:

Board Members: At the beginning of each Board year, IABC/Toronto hosts an orientation session for both new and returning Board members. This is an opportunity to learn or re-learn important information and resources for leading the chapter, but also a chance to exchange ideas, plans and strategies for the coming Board year. The Board is provided with an orientation package which includes: Roles and responsibilities, the chapter constitution, a training manual, style-guide. They are also given an overview of Robert's Rules, their fiduciary responsibilities, resources available to them through International (including the Leader Centre), and expectations for how and when to complete deliverables. Members are encouraged to attend chapter events, utilize professional development resources provided by International, and attend the World Conference and the Leadership Institute (LI). The chapter budgets to help fund the attendance at LI for one member of the Board – typically someone who is interested in taking on the position of chapter President in the near future.

Portfolio volunteers and mentors: In 2019, we revamped our volunteer application to ask about volunteer goals and which skills or experience they would like to develop. This information allows us to place volunteers in roles that are beneficial to their career growth and development. Once placed in a position that matches their skills and goals, each new volunteer is given deliverables specific to their position, their portfolio plan, and a style guide. The mentorship program onboarding is similar. Upon applying, each mentor and mentee completes a questionnaire that details their skills and goals. They are carefully managed to allow for an effective and beneficial match. These pairs are provided with a mentorship package that outlines a possible timeline, goals and topics for discussion.

OVATION Awards judges: Judging for our awards program offers an exciting opportunity for senior communicators to connect with one another and learn from their peers. Year after year, our judges return to help identify excellence in communications. To help them have a smooth and productive experience, they are provided with a training session, a judging rubric and paired with a peer.

Engagement:

Ensuring that our volunteers and chapter leaders have a chance to create a personal connection, is extremely important. As is, ensuring that volunteers are recognized for the time and effort they have put into the chapter. To help make this a reality, we host a minimum of 3 complimentary events each year: our Meet-the-Board Volunteer Recruitment event, our Mentorship Mingle, and our Volunteer Appreciation Event. We also provide opportunities for volunteers to win prizes or tickets to future events through these events and throughout the year, and regularly profile IABC/Toronto volunteers via digital channels. We are constantly seeking out ways to say *thank you* for their commitment. Board members often get together for a drink or coffee before or after Board meetings to socialize and connect – and our December Board meeting is often kept short to allow time for a Board dinner.

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.

Challenges:

Volunteering and leadership development often involves opportunities to network and connect on a personal level. The pandemic has made that increasingly difficult, having interrupted the chance to connect face-to-face with peers and friends.

Budget

| Tactic/initiative | Budgeted | Actual |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Programs: judging | \$160 (not revenue generating) | \$0 (in-person events cancelled) |
| Volunteer Services & mentorship | \$2,800.00 (not revenue generating) | \$1,200.00 (2/3 in-person events cancelled) |
| Zoom | \$0 | \$374.63 |

Evaluation/Results

| Objectives | Results |
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| Recruit an Executive Vice President (term commitment of 3 years) to prepare as incoming President. | Objective met: Mandy Gibson accepted the role of EVP and was voted by the membership into a 3-year term. |
| Recruit a full Board slate of qualified volunteers to join the 2020-2021 Board of Directors. | Objective met: 13 of 13 positions were filled and the slate was approved by a membership vote. |
| Regularly communicate with VPs to determine their volunteer needs; fill all available volunteer positions. | Objective met: 35 available volunteer positions were filled. |
| Recruit a minimum of 64 judges to judge OVATION award entries. | Objective met: 64 volunteers were recruited to judge OVATION awards. |
| Host an online training webinar for OVATION judges. | Objective met: We hosted one virtual event for OVATION judge training. |
| Execute a mentorship program with 7-10 pairs. | Objective met: 7 mentees and mentors were paired up; total participation 14. |
| Host one volunteer recruitment event, one mentorship event, and at least one volunteer recognition event. | 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; attain quorum. | Objective met: We hosted one AGM, attained quorum; total of 51 registrants. |
| Create a series of member spotlights promoted via social media and through our newsletter to highlight the work of IABC/Toronto's diverse membership and volunteers. | Objective met: Member spotlights were promoted ~2/month via social media and our newsletter. |

Work samples

Work sample #1: Volunteer application form

Work sample #2: Mentee application form

Work sample #4: 2019-2020 Orientation PPT presentation