



IABC/Tulsa – 2021 Chapter Management Awards, Category: Community Involvement

INTRODUCTION

IABC/Tulsa plays a key role in enhancing the profession by building relationships with local entities, expanding the IABC brand, and establishing positive relationships among the local community. Our desire to enhance the reputation and experiences with IABC in our community is at the heart of our chapter.

IABC/Tulsa has consistently proven itself to be one of the premier professional organizations for Tulsa-area communicators with all the capabilities of any larger metropolitan chapter. The chapter is focused on providing value to members and nonmembers through high-profile professional development (PD) events, recognition through the Bronze Quill Awards program, opportunities to sit for the CMP and SCMP exams locally and unique networking and volunteer opportunities. While Tulsa holds a small chapter status at 58 members, we have a very engaged group of members and nonmembers.

While the majority of our members are communication generalists and internal communicators, we understand the importance of appealing to the needs of other members and potential members in other disciplines, e.g. public relations, marketing, community relations, event planning, consulting, etc.

In 2020, like all organizations, we were forced to dramatically shift our approach with events and volunteering due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to hold our March PD event in person before many area communities issued stay-at-home guidance; however, we canceled our planned in-person event in April so we could regroup to come up with a plan for virtual events. Although every event for the remainder of the year had to be adapted, we remained committed to providing high-quality opportunities for development and connection, which was critical as many in our communities were physically isolated due to the pandemic.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are set annually by the IABC/Tulsa board at its annual retreat in August. For 2020, goals were set in August 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Goals were reevaluated after all events moved to a virtual environment in April 2020. The goals listed are those relevant only to community involvement, not all-encompassing of IABC/Tulsa’s full chapter goals.

IABC/Tulsa Strategy: Provide IABC/Tulsa members with the greatest membership value by increasing member diversity and engagement and strengthening the awareness of IABC in the community.

2020 Chapter Goals (Pre-Pandemic)	2020 Chapter Goals (Modified for Pandemic)	Why was this important?
Increase member engagement: Host a certification exam, utilize nonmember board volunteers and define volunteer roles.	Continue to host events virtually and for free, if feasible. Host a certification exam (if environment is safe).	Continuing to host events for our members and nonmembers in the community allowed us to maintain that deep connection and communication even amidst the pandemic.
Create greater awareness: Partner with other communications-related organizations on events.	Host at least three professional development events virtually from April to December 2020, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An event on DEI. 2. Communicators Summit. 3. A virtual meetup for networking and connection. 	Partnering with other organizations in different ways shows how connecting with others is at the heart of who we are. We wanted to remove the “competition” barrier from our community making us more unified to work together.
Host an event on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) to promote IABC’s	Honor Bronze Quill Award winners.	The Bronze Quill Awards give our community a way to receive recognition



Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Code of Ethics, as well as emphasize the role communicators play in ensuring and communicating equity.		for their work that they may have otherwise never received. We strive to introduce new companies to participate and even had two new companies enter this year that have never entered before. Hosting it virtually allowed us to think outside the box and honor our entrants in a new way.
Host PD events that align with survey results.	Host Gift of Communication virtually.	The Gift of Communication opens the door for so many members and nonmembers to volunteer their time giving back to the community, which is a big part of who we are at IABC Tulsa.

BUDGET

As a board, our philosophy is to spend the majority of our funds on our members, including PD programming, community volunteer opportunities, networking and awards. Overall, the chapter finances are in a strong place, with more than one year’s operating budget secured.

We recognized early in the pandemic that organizations and members would be financially impacted by COVID-19, limiting their ability to pay for events and memberships. To help do our part as a chapter, we decided to offer virtual events for free to all participants to the greatest extent possible, even if that meant the chapter took a loss on the event. Our 2020 chapter events budget, set in August 2019, was \$14,000 for Professional Development, \$8,500 for Bronze Quill and \$600 for Gift of Communication.

We closed the year with PD net revenue of -\$6,657.92. This includes \$2,988.10 in payouts for revenue sharing with co-hosting organizations from the 2019 Communicators Summit. It also did not reflect \$600 in incoming revenue from those same organizations for cost sharing related to the 2020 Communicators Summit. Bronze Quill Awards netted \$2,318.85, and Gift of Communication did not have any expenses or revenue.

IMPLEMENTATION

Events are the cornerstone of successful membership engagement and recruitment of new members. To meet our goals, IABC/Tulsa set a strong, consistent schedule of PD events that addressed topics identified by members and nonmembers as areas of interest. This guiding tenet remained in place even after the pandemic hit; however, we altered some topics to address the need for connection due to social isolation and racial injustice in communities around the world.

All chapter events are promoted via email announcements to our distribution list (members, past PD event attendees, past volunteers and Bronze Quill participants), posts on IABC/Tulsa’s social media channels and through the chapter website. Here is a review of how we aligned strategies and tactics to achieve our goals:

Events

Create community in a pandemic: We hosted our first virtual Professional Development event in May 2020, inviting communicators to a virtual networking event. We slated two speakers to discuss how their companies were approaching COVID-19 response and communications, but the main intent was connection and networking while discussing a relevant topic. We had strong attendance, but more importantly, strong participation with attendees turning on their webcams and sharing strategies from their companies. Following the success of the initial networking event, we scheduled a second session for June 2020. Registration, however, was very low, so we canceled the event. Anecdotal feedback was that people were too busy with work and home commitments at that time.

- **Diverse speakers.** Our approach to planning events in 2020 included casting a wider net for speakers, which was well-suited and timed to a transition to virtual PD events. This approach recognizes the value in leveraging the IABC network and diverse approaches captured from other geographic areas. We were successful in bringing in Claire St. Amant from Dallas, Texas, for an in-person event in March 2020. Claire is an experienced storyteller who brought a wealth of knowledge from



her career as a CBS producer. Once we transitioned to virtual events, we secured Sia Pappageorgiou, FRSA, SCMP, from Melbourne, Australia, to talk about certification. Sia is a council member for the Global Communication Certification Council (GCCC), so she is an expert in IABC certification. Finally, for Communicators Summit, all speakers resided in areas outside of our chapter.

- **Relevant topics.** We continue to look to our members for guidance on professional development topics, which in 2020, included prevalent social topics, DEI and practical skills. To meet these needs, we hosted speakers on crisis management, highlighting a local public relations case study from the historic 2019 flood in Tulsa; tips for job searches from an award-winning recruiter; tapping into emotional intelligence as a communicator during a pandemic; and how your company can talk about DEI with transparency and authenticity. We also included a Communicators Summit session on connecting analytics to business goals. **[Exhibit I: Chapter Events]**
- **Advance the profession:** For the second year in a row, IABC/Tulsa offered the CMP and SCMP exams to members and nonmembers in Tulsa to promote accreditation locally but also support IABC globally. The more members who are certified, the greater impact and legitimacy for the organization. We offered the previously mentioned PD event three months ahead of the exam to give people time to prepare and submit their applications. We also originally coordinated the timing of the exam with the Southern Region Conference to allow two opportunities to take the exam within a reasonable driving distance to aid those who did not pass the first time. We followed up with event attendees to offer help and support as they considered sitting for the exam.

While it was an unconventional year for professional development events, the quick action of the chapter board to move events to a virtual environment allowed us to adapt and still have a very successful year. We adapted to Zoom technology and improved the flow of events with each session, adding as much interaction as possible to our free virtual events.

Bronze Quill Awards

IABC/Tulsa opened entries for the annual Bronze Quill Awards program in late 2019 with a final entry deadline of February 14, 2020. The entry period was unaffected by COVID-19; however the awards ceremony planned for April 30, 2020, had to be totally revamped. After several delays of an in-person awards ceremony due to the pandemic, the chapter board ultimately decided the safest way to honor award recipients was to create a website to showcase winners and their work, which went live in July 2020 and has captured 452 users and 1,595 page views with a 2 minute session duration. **[Exhibit II: IABC/Tulsa Bronze Quill]**

Gift of Communication

A hallmark of our chapter, Gift of Communication is our opportunity to give back to the community by providing communications expertise to area nonprofits. Hosted annually in December, our chapter capitalized on experience gained by hosting virtual PD events to plan for a series of virtual sessions instead of the traditional half-day event. This approach allowed greater flexibility for organizations and communicators who could choose the day that worked best for their schedules. It also allowed communicators the option to join more than one session, which would not be possible with an in-person event. Ultimately, we hosted three sessions on December 9-11, 2020 and had 25 volunteers, nonmembers and members, assist three different nonprofits in the Tulsa area.

MEASUREMENT AND RESULTS

Event attendance and surveys help to measure event success. In 2020, we saw a 22% decrease in average overall attendance to 29 from 37 in 2019. This decrease, however, is attributable in great part to lower Communicators Summit attendance, which was the only virtual offered with a fee due to speakers’ fees. We remained relatively flat in average member versus non-member attendance, with greater average nonmember attendance, but saw a decline in student participation. **[Exhibit I: Chapter Events]**

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE FOR PD EVENTS	ATTENDANCE (MEMBER)	ATTENDANCE (NON-MEMBER)	ATTENDANCE (STUDENT)	TOTAL	TOTAL W/O COMM SUMMIT
2020 AVERAGE	14	15	0	29	25
2019 AVERAGE	17	17	3	37	28

While average attendance dropped in 2020, average registrations remained flat compared to 2019. This difference illustrates the increase we saw in 2020 no shows for PD events. Our no-show rate increased 19% year-over-year. We believe this is attributable to events being offered for free (no repercussion of losing money) and virtually (easier to not log in), as well as added work and home



responsibilities due to the pandemic. We have added a question to our 2020 event surveys to capture specific reasons for no shows. While an increase in no shows is not ideal, we believe the flat registration numbers combined with survey results show the value of our PD events. [Exhibit III: PD Survey Results]

NO-SHOW RATE FOR PD EVENTS	ATTENDED	REGISTERED	TOTAL
2020 AVERAGE (PRIMARILY VIRTUAL EVENTS)	29	41	29%
2019 AVERAGE (ALL IN-PERSON EVENTS)	37	41	10%

Key 2020 PD Event Survey Results:

- 89% of survey respondents said they are extremely likely or very likely to attend another event in the future.
- Used surveys to gauge interest for future events, e.g. rated potential topics for this year’s Communicators Summit then found speakers based on those results.
- Average event rating of 1.59 for all events on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is excellent and 5 is not good at all.

OBJECTIVE	RESULTS
Host a certification exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted an exam, which resulted in two additional certifications. IABC/Tulsa currently has eight certified communicators out of 58 total members, or 14%.
Host at least three virtual and free PD events from April to December 2020, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An event on DEI. - Communicators Summit. - A virtual meetup for networking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executed 11 chapter events in 2020, including eight PD events. Six events were hosted between April and December, including a virtual three-day Communicators Summit. • Maintained average registrations for PD events compared to 2019. • Hosted two subject-matter experts on communicating with transparency and authenticity as it related to social injustice. Used opportunity to highlight IABC’s Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Code of Ethics. • Hosted a virtual meetup for networking and connection to discuss COVID-19 response. • With the exception of Communicators Summit, all virtual events were offered for free to all attendees. Communicators Summit fees were affordable at \$10 per session, or \$25 for the three-day summit.
Host Bronze Quill Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received 54 award entries compared to 50 entries in 2019. • Created a website to honor award recipients when an in-person event was not possible due to the pandemic.
Host Gift of Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted three sessions with area nonprofits. • Twenty-five local communicators volunteered time as consultants.

While 2020 was challenging for IABC chapters around the world, the Tulsa chapter was successful in continuing to provide valuable professional development and networking opportunities for area communicators. The virtual environment presented new opportunities to engage industry-leading speakers from around the world and continue to engage with members and nonmembers from an even greater distance. In 2021, our chapter remains committed to creating value for our members and elevating IABC overall.