

IABC Kansas City: Engaging Students & Young Professionals – Work Plan 2019

Context

Kansas City IABC (KC IABC) is located in the heart of North America, straddling the Missouri and Kansas state lines. The organization began more than 60 years ago as the Kansas City Industrial Editors and has been named IABC Chapter of the Year seven times.

As a medium-sized chapter, KC IABC has diverse membership representing the professions of corporation communications, marketing, public relations, design, videography and photography. Members work in communications for large and small businesses, agencies and non-profits. We also have a number of self-employed entrepreneurs in our ranks, as well as college students who are looking forward to a career in the field. Our membership is 125 communicators, and we reach approximately 800 throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Through the decades, KC IABC has become synonymous with outstanding professional development and networking opportunities for business communicators in the greater Kansas City area. The hallmark of KC IABC's professional development is a highly successful Business Communicators Summit (BCS). This all-day conference, patterned off regional IABC conferences, provides diverse professional development to nearly 300 communication professionals in the Kansas City metro area every year. We draw people from as far as Topeka, Kan. (75 miles away from Kansas City), and Bentonville, Ark. (200 miles away from Kansas City).

The chapter's ongoing professional development events are also highly successful, with nine events a year. These are attended by a mix of members and non-members, of which the latter are often a substantial proportion. Additionally, our three special interest groups – Masters for seasoned professionals, IndyComm for independent entrepreneurs and Young Pros with a focus on emerging communicators – provide targeted opportunities for learning and networking for members and guests.

The biggest challenge for the 2017-2018 board year was dealing with a declining membership. Despite this challenge, we continued to provide strong professional development, while maintaining a highly engaged board and a strong corps of volunteers.

The strategic cornerstone of the board year was to ignite our professional development offerings with the intent of re-engaging our membership and enticing guests. We also focused on rewarding board members by allowing them to attend monthly professional development events at no cost.

Reaching younger professionals and students was a critical component to re-engage members and entice guests. Focusing on our Young Professional Special Interest Group (SIG) and student relation initiatives were key strategies.

Goals & Objectives

The objectives in this area for 2017-2018 included the following:

- Relaunch the Young Professionals SIG by designating a board role specifically

focused on this initiative to encourage attendance and engagement at events especially designed for that audience.

- Deliver an IABC presence to college campuses and classrooms through panels of speakers called the KC IABC Career Roadshow, in both spring and fall semesters, with a goal to expand the number of events by 20% and increase the number of students reached by 10%.
- Expand the base of volunteers in the membership who participate in our campus outreach KC IABC Career Roadshow by 25%.
- Sustain and add at least two new contacts with educators at area colleges and universities, to build awareness of IABC and its abilities to create connections for students along with preparation for job search and the world of work in support of IABC's pillars.
- Increase student attendance at the annual Business Communicators Summit by 20% through student registration scholarships and promotion for professors and instructors to bring groups.

Budget

The 2017-2018 student relations budget was \$650. This included \$500 for student scholarships to the Business Communicators Summit (March, 2018) and \$150 for expenses in other categories, such as printing and mileage. Nine of the 10 \$50 scholarships were awarded, for a total expense of \$450.

Implementation

Engaging Students & Young Professionals Overview

Our chapter has historically maintained consistent outreach to students and young professionals, in order to build a bridge to future membership and participation. We are mindful that many clubs and professional associations have the challenge of declining membership, particularly as younger audiences are not as attuned to the benefits and rewards of live group and one-to-one interactions versus pursuing content and connections online. This year's board priorities of encouraging attendance, engagement and participation, through excellence in programming and fostering connections, has guided the objectives and projects to address students and young professionals.

The board subscribes to the "lazy leader" theory to give opportunities for growth and development to every board role. While it is often easier to handle issues with the core group of board roles, KC IABC knows the value of developing skills and providing opportunities for volunteers. Engaging students and young professionals is a critical area for any IABC chapter seeking growth and having board directors for each of these areas has kept the importance of student and young professional efforts front and center as well as a topic relevant to the entire board.

As a perennially strong IABC chapter, a cornerstone of the KC IABC Board is to encourage each board member to embrace IABC's pillars (advancing the profession, creating connection and developing strategic communicators). We are able to focus on all three of these pillars in our student and young professional activities. By engaging these audiences, we are enhancing awareness of IABC, creating many opportunities to build connections through networking events, and providing education to further their communications skills.

Engagement and Relationship Building

Young Professionals Special Interest Group (SIG)

Our Young Pros group is geared toward those in an early career phase, with 10 years of experience or less. It's designed to provide peer-to-peer social and professional networking connections, as well as exposure to interesting and stimulating content. The objective has been to create a quarterly Young Pros function at a local company, hosted by a marketing or communications executive who can share the company's strategies, challenges and initiatives. There is always an opportunity to interact with an executive and to have Q&A, usually along with a presentation and a tour.

Measurement

Following a period of inactivity in late 2017, the board responded by recruiting a member of Young Pros as a volunteer leader. This person took charge of planning events starting in the first quarter of 2018. Events were held on March 22, May 2, and September 26, all at area companies with known brand names. Hosts talked about aspects of their communications including branding, social media, promotions, public relations and paid advertising. Events have had a consistent level of attendance of 8-10 people. In addition, a Facebook page has been maintained for Young Pros, which has 113 "likes."

In order to foster expanded relationships for the future, a discussion has begun at the board level and also between the Student Relations Chair and the Young Pros Board Director – to envision a mentorship program. While still very much at the visioning stage, the idea is for such a program to create the opportunity for professional guidance and skills development, perhaps in a small group setting. Such a construct could provide opportunities for network building, awareness of skill-building needs, and an avenue for basic on-the-job problem-solving. These discussions are ongoing, along with gathering best practices for similar programs, looking toward a trial in 2019.

KC IABC Career Roadshows & Outreach

After a number of years of successful annual Career Day or Career Night events, for which students from multiple colleges traveled to a location arranged by KC IABC, we switched gears three years ago to instead take representatives of the club out to campuses and classrooms. This was a strategic decision so we could reach more students each year and create more potential future connections for students with KC IABC professionals.

Roadshow venues for 2018 included classrooms from 15 to 100 students, including eight events on three campuses. The typical format includes a speaker panel of three or four member volunteers plus a moderator, which has been the Student Relations Chair. After each panelist gives a brief 2-3 minute overview of their career path, the moderator guides a discussion with pre-drafted questions (**Work Sample #1**), giving the panelists an opportunity to address issues in launching a career, conducting a job search, basic networking, future trends, and the benefits of belonging to a professional association like IABC (with an explanation and preview of Young Pros). Plenty of time is left for student Q&A, and then many students

linger afterwards to make personal connections with the IABC speakers. For the upcoming spring semester, plans are under way to take the Roadshow to three additional campuses.

Measurement and Results: We have reached approximately 210 student attendees (approximately 3 to 4 times the number we could reach at a traditional annual Career Day event). We have also increased our volunteer speaker participation from an original core group of around eight in the last club year to a total of 15 from mid-2017 through the end of 2018, with additional planned expansion in the spring semester. Having visited classrooms at Johnson County Community College, University of Missouri at Kansas City, and Avila University, we plan to expand in the spring to add University of Kansas, University of Central Missouri, and Rockhurst University. New contacts have been established at three colleges (University of Kansas, Kansas State University, and Rockhurst University), which has roughly doubled our active contacts from the last club year.

Student Attendance at Business Communicators Summit

For this annual, one-day signature event for KC IABC, we have encouraged student attendance and participation by offering scholarships (**Work Sample #2**) to fully cover the \$50 student registration fee. The event is a banner opportunity for students to gain a great deal of real-world exposure to both skill-building information and connections with area professionals who may be in a position to help them find employment in the future. An email campaign targeted our professor and instructor contacts at area colleges and universities, providing a “low bar” requirement for students to claim their complimentary registration scholarship (to email an explanation of why they would like to attend BCS). Following the awarding of scholarships, board members and member registrants were briefed on student attendance, and they were encouraged to sit with individual students and “host” them for various parts of the day’s programming.

Measurement and Results: We successfully awarded nine of the ten available scholarships (increase from eight the year before). In addition, several colleges brought groups of paid student attendees, for a total of 19 student attendees, believed to be the highest ever student attendance at BCS and an increase from 15 student attendees in 2017 (increase of roughly 25%). Six colleges and universities were represented at the event, including Avila University, Johnson County Community College, Truman State University, University of Central Missouri, University of Kansas, and University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Results

Objective	Result
Relaunch the Young Professionals Special Interest Group by designating a board role specifically focused on this initiative.	Achieved. Successfully recruited an individual to serve in the newly created Young Pro Director board position.
Deliver an IABC presence to college campuses and classrooms through panels of speakers called the KC IABC Career Roadshow, in both spring and fall semesters, with a goal to expand	Exceeded. Successfully conducted eight Career Roadshows in 2018, up from six in 2017, a 33% increase. Additionally, we reached 210 students in 2018 compared to 180 in the 2017,

the number of events by 20% and increase the number of students reached by 10% in 2018.	a 16.6% increase.
Expand the base of volunteers in the membership who participate in our campus outreach KC IABC Career Roadshow by 25%.	Exceeded. For 2018, seven new volunteers joined the eight volunteers who assisted with the Career Roadshows in 2017, a total of 15 volunteers for an 87% increase.
Sustain and add at least two new contacts with educators at area colleges and universities.	Exceeded. Expanded contacts to three new contacts at area colleges and universities.
Increase student attendance at the annual Business Communicators Summit by 20%.	Exceeded. At our 2018 event, 19 students attended, up from 15 in 2017, a 27% increase.

Work Samples Attached in Support of Entry:

- Work Sample 1: Career Roadshow Panel Questions
- Work Sample 2: BCS Student Scholarship Application