

Application: Membership Marketing			
Chapter	IABC Ottawa Division 1 - Large	Chapter Board Term	July 1 to June 30
Region	Canada East	Timeline	July 1, 2018 - Nov 15, 2019
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1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

With over 200 members, IABC Ottawa brings together communications, marketing and creative professionals to develop skills, create connections, and learn about best practices all within a welcoming, active and diverse community.

Our Value: IABC Ottawa focuses on connecting you with the people and insights you need to thrive in your career. Whether you are a communicator, marketer, or creative professional, we connect you to the opportunities, resources, people, and information you need to advance.

Our Benefits: Joining IABC Ottawa means you enjoy unparalleled access to events and programs that hone your strategic communication skills and expand your network with the following benefits: monthly professional development events, a Members Connect Mentorship Program, Free Monthly Member Meet Ups, Networking Nine Events, Professional Certification, Volunteer Opportunities and Jobline.

Chapter History/Challenges: Established in 1976, the Ottawa chapter of IABC has a rich history of striving for effective chapter management to benefit our members, community, and leaders. Despite stable finances and membership growing, we had a few challenges in the season that impacted doing everything to the degree that we would have liked, including: **1. Maintaining steady Board Member engagement & leveraging volunteers consistently across the season.** This included lack of effective cross-collaboration across portfolios, particularly MarComm and Professional Development.

2. Balancing member-only events that provide member value, while extending our reach to untapped audiences.

2. OVERVIEW

IABC Ottawa's focus is to empower communicators at all levels to build successful careers, develop skills, and create valuable connections. As part of the board's strategic planning, there has been a focus on *providing value to our members* as we work to keep them engaged in the chapter and in IABC more broadly. In June 2019 IABC Ottawa's Board decided to shift its focus slightly and place additional efforts on enhancing *how we communicate and bring awareness* of this value to both current members and prospective members.

3. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The overarching goal for membership marketing is to provide members with value that would lead them to renew their membership. This would be done by providing opportunities for members to deepen their connections in the community and opportunities for continuous development and learning. Overall the Chapter **goal for the 2018/19 season was to maintain an overall membership of approximately 185 members.** This was **updated in the 2019/20 season to an overall membership number of approximately 235 members** given a large number of student member "joins" in January 2019.

Objectives to meet this goal for the 2018/19 season were: (a) Enhance visibility of member benefits and opportunities; (b) Retain 70% of members; (c) Capitalize on key IABC moments to promote membership and offer new benefits; (d) Deepen the sense of membership community and prestige by providing members with tangible local benefits; (e) Feature IABC members and showcase their contributions and accomplishments in the community. In Fall 2019, the Membership team revisited these objectives and

determined that while each objective continued to be relevant, objectives a, b, and d would become the key focus as it is these objectives that best align with the results from a membership survey conducted in Summer 2019.

4. BUDGET

At the beginning of each season, the Board holds a strategic planning session and develops an operational budget to support these goals. In 2018/19 member dues brought in \$7098.37 (budgeted \$7000) and the membership expenses were \$1557.95 (budgeted \$2500). The main expenses were the member giveaways, member-only events, and the development of new member collateral. In the 2019/20 season we budgeted \$7800.00 in expected member revenue and \$2450.00 in expected expenses. In 2019/20 costs associated with mentorship and certification were included under the membership portfolio.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

Marketing Methods: To expand IABC Ottawa's presence and strengthen our connections with current and prospective members we used a number of strategies and tactics.

Social Media, Website & E-Newsletter: The Membership team works closely with the Marcom and Website teams to promote the programming and content of IABC Ottawa across social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) and through our website and e-newsletter. Between the Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 a number of challenges were identified that were impeding the chapter from fully reaching and engaging its members and prospective members: (i) the Chapter was not on Instagram, (ii) it did not have a "company" page on LinkedIn, only a group, (iii) there was no way to "sign up" for the e-newsletter online, (iv) online assets (social cards and e-newsletter) were outdated, and the colour scheme lacked versatility as we were confining ourselves to only one of the IABC brand colours. In the first half of 2019, the Board worked diligently to solve these challenges, including launching Instagram and LinkedIn pages, and redesigning the e-newsletter and its social media assets (WS #1). Similarly, in September 2019 the Board revisited its content strategy and noted it was only posted upcoming events, "throwbacks," or "ICYMI" posts on its social channels. As such, the Marcom team revamped its content strategy to ensure there was a better blend of content for our members that connected to IABC's three strategic pillars: create connections, advance the profession, and develop strategic communicators. New content now includes "Board Spotlight" articles to share the expertise of our Board members, sharing news from International and Catalyst Magazine, and an increase in efforts to promote national awards, and PD activities, such as the IABC World Conference and GCCC certification.

Building on this momentum, in October 2019 the Membership team sought to better articulate the "IABC Ottawa Value Proposition" and to more effectively describe the tangible member benefits. The updated wording would be used on the website, on member collateral, and in the e-newsletters to members and prospective members. The team redeveloped this text in late October 2019 and received approval from the Board. It is currently being updated across chapter platforms (WS #2).

Member Profiles: In an effort to showcase the diversity in our members and to illustrate the unique makeup of our community, the Membership team, supported by the Marcom team, drafts 2-3 "Member Profiles" per season (see WS #3). These profiles are shared on our social channels and through the e-newsletter with the goal of enhancing connections among the membership. One challenge in 2018/19 was that only two profiles were written, and both were of young professionals, which potentially didn't connect with our more experienced members. At the beginning of the 2019/20 season, the Membership team proposed a new strategy for selecting members to be profiled. The first new Member Profile was in development in November 2019 and is expected to be released publicly in December 2019.

Hard Copy Collateral & Promotional Material: In mid-2018, the Events team, working together with the Membership team and Marcom team, noticed a gap – when hosting chapter events, IABC Ottawa did not have any branded hard copy material (besides a pop-up banner) to display or give away. The chapter also continued to use plastic lanyards, which were becoming expensive and difficult to recycle. Together these teams developed and printed postcards outlining the key benefits of membership. Reusable button name-tags were also designed to easily recognize members at events (see WS #1).

Recruitment and Retention: One key challenge in 2019 was the migration of the IABC member database. IABC Ottawa heard from members that they had difficulty renewing or joining for a period of time, and internally we found it challenging to trust the data, in particular for corporate members. A number of strategies have been put in place to re-focus efforts on recruitment and retention of members.

Membership Month Promotion and Prizes: During Membership Months, IABC Ottawa focuses on promoting membership and encouraging current members to take advantage of savings and renew. In March 2019 this was done through a social media campaign where members shared their stories using the #MyIABCStory and #MemberMonthIABC hashtags. A draw for Visa gift cards was used as an incentive. The 2018/19 IABC Ottawa President also participated in an IABC Podcast episode, bringing additional focus to the value of membership. Fewer activities were conducted in October 2019 for Membership Month, but dedicated emails were sent to all soon-to-lapse, or lapsed members. Overall the Chapter saw positive results for both months, ranking within the top three chapters globally (see WS #5).

Member Thank Yous: In early 2019 IABC Ottawa sent personalized thank you cards and a small gift of appreciation (a laminated IABC Ottawa coaster and IABC logo sticker) to each one of its 250+ members. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with some members noting that it made them feel valued.

Member Survey: In June 2019, the Board began to reflect on its season and noted that it felt challenged to develop new programming without data-driven insights from members. As such, in June 2019, the Membership team designed and distributed a survey to members (and engaged non-members) via eblast and social media. The chapter was pleased to have 64 responses, with over 80% of respondents being members or lapsed members. This data was reviewed, summarized, and presented at the Board strategy session in September 2019 and served to inform the work of each portfolio for the year (see WS #4).

Better Communication to Members: One of the key pieces of feedback that came out of the 2019 survey was to better communicate activities and benefits to members. Based on this feedback, in October 2019 the Membership team recommenced sending emails to those who joined or renewed outlining the key activities of the chapter (WS#5). To date positive feedback has been received from new members.

Corporate Membership Strategy: In October 2019 another gap was identified by the Membership team - IABC Ottawa did not have a fulsome Corporate Membership Strategy, nor were the benefits of Corporate Membership well understood among chapter leaders. As a result, one member of the team launched a plan to research Corporate Memberships and collect information from other chapters globally on best practices for marketing and retention techniques. This work commenced at the start of November 2019.

Student Member Ambassador: In the 2018/19 season, the Membership team secured a volunteer student member on its team to better help students and young professionals understand the value of an IABC membership. Through this work, the volunteer was able to secure an entire college cohort as new members in January 2019, increasing the IABC Ottawa membership by 54 members (approx 25%).

Special Services: Offering specific and tangible member benefits has become a key focus for our chapter.

New Member-Only Events: A second key piece of feedback - from the survey, but also through direct feedback to Board members - was the need for more tangible member benefits, including member-only events. While the Ottawa Chapter did hold four Special Interest Group (SIG) discussions throughout the 2018/19 season (which are free member-only discussion groups on specific topics) the Board's evaluation of these events was that they had become less "discussions" and more "presentations." The Board also noted that the name *Special Interest Group* was confusing and members did not fully understand that they were free and exclusive. Taking this into consideration, along with some learnings from the 2019 Leadership Institute and the Canada Eastern Region Board, the Board decided to put SIGs on hold and introduce two new member-only events: (i) "Member Meet Ups," inspired by the Montreal chapter, where members meet up at a local venue at the same time and date each month to enjoy some snacks and network, and (ii) "Networking 9" inspired by the San Francisco and Newfoundland chapters, where nine members get together to discuss a particular topic. For the Ottawa Board it was vital that these events remained free, and the Board budgeted accordingly. As of November 2019, new logos were created for these events (WS#1), descriptions were worked into the IABC Ottawa value proposition text (WS#2), and a venue partnership was secured for the Meet Ups. The first Meet Up was held in October 2019 with nine attendees and the first Networking 9 has been scheduled for January 2020.

Mentorship: In early 2019, the IABC Ottawa Chapter was proud to reinvent its mentorship program as the Members Connect Program — a members-only perk, designed to connect senior communicators with entry and mid-level communicators to advise them on career advancement. The program officially launched on March 1, 2019 and ran through to June 15, 2019. Promoted through social media, dedicated eblasts, and the e-newsletter, a total of 7 mentees and 4 mentors completed the program, with many continuing their mentorship relationships beyond the program. The program was evaluated by the Board in July 2019, and a new target of 15 mentees and 15 mentors over a 6 month period was confirmed. The program will run again in 2020.

Awards: Each year IABC Ottawa works to recognize the hard work and expertise of its members through highlighting members who receive Gold Quill and Silver Leaf awards on social media, and through handing out local awards for volunteerism, student excellence, and Communicator of the Year. In 2018/19 IABC Ottawa recognized or bestowed 13 awards, including the Communicator of the Year award to an entire team, who was also an active Corporate Member.

6. MEASUREMENT AND RESULTS

Objective A: Enhance visibility of member benefits and opportunities

- New logos and social assets created to promote chapter activities and new member benefits.
- Shared member benefits on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and new Instagram page to growing audiences: (i) Twitter: 4781 followers (up from 4691) (ii) Facebook: 1273 followers (up from 1126) (iii) LinkedIn: 188 followers on new company page (since Mar 2019) (iv) Instagram: 189 followers (all numbers as of Nov 2019). Showcased member benefits in 12 e-newsletters from July 2018 to Nov 2019 with growing number of subscribers (1379 subscribers up from 1342). Open rate was an average of 23.3%.
- Created chapter-specific value proposition and key messages for members and prospective members.

Objective B: Retain 70% of members*

Corporate Members: 3 active corporate memberships as of Nov 2019

Total Membership: Sept 2018: 198 members/10 lapsed/1 joins/7 renewals; Dec 2018: 200 members/8 lapsed/5 joins/4 renewals; February 2019: 262 members/6 lapsed/64 joins/5 renewals; March 2019: 265 members (2% growth, 69% retention); June: 217 members (after migration to new database/no other info available); October 2019 - 240 members (5% growth) (68% retention)

**Membership numbers were measured approx every 8 weeks (and during Membership Months) up until the transfer to the new database in May 2019. Retention numbers are provided for 2019 Membership Months only (Oct and March) as it was discovered that IABC Ottawa volunteers were not calculating retention in the same way as International staff members. Data between May 2019 and September 2019 is not reliable due to corporate memberships initially not registering as part of overall membership numbers.*

Objective C: Capitalize on key IABC moments to promote membership & offer new benefits

- **Membership month results:** 1st globally (retention) for a large chapter & 3rd (growth) in Mar 2019, and 1st globally (growth) for large chapter for Oct 2019; sent “thank you” gifts Mar 2019 to 250+ members.
- Actively promoted World Conference, Catalyst Magazine, and National/International awards.

Objective D: Build a stronger sense of membership community & prestige by providing members with tangible local benefits

- Held 4 member-only SIGs in 2018/19 season. Launched 2 new member-only events in Oct 2019.
- Reinvented member-only mentorship program. Had 11 participants from March 2019 to June 2019.
- Enhanced communication efforts to members: updated content strategy, recommenced direct email, updated member value proposition text.

Objective E: Feature IABC members & showcase contributions/accomplishments in the community

- Wrote 2 member profiles in the 2018/19 season to highlight members; recognized 4 members on social media for achieving their SCMP/CMP certification between May 2018 and Oct 2019.
- Gave out 4 awards in June 2018 at the IABC AGM to recognize the hard work & expertise of members.
- Recognized 9 Silver Leaf and Gold Quill local winners via social media and e-newsletter.