



2020 Chapter Management Awards – WORK PLAN

Chapter: IABC London, Ontario Canada

Category: Professional Development

Division 2: Medium Chapter

Title: How IABC London Elevated the Professional Development Portfolio to the Member Needs

INTRODUCTION

IABC London is a medium-sized chapter with 175 members serving London, Ontario, Canada and the surrounding region for 40 years. Throughout the year, the chapter hosts a variety of professional development events, social gatherings and an annual celebration night that recognizes excellence at the local level with the Virtuoso awards.

Professional Development is the core pillar of IABC London chapter, supporting the #IABC1720 vision of “investing in our members’ futures, supporting career growth and elevating our profession.” Built from this vision, IABC London’s 2018-2019 strategic direction was to “learn, connect and celebrate” prospective and current members.

To help guide the development of the 2018-2019 programming year, research findings were pulled from previous years PD events during our planning stages (occurring in July 2018). Those findings concluded that actual versus expected attendance rates of PD events were lower than planned for and event fatigue was common (along with budget barriers to attending so many events specific to their overall professional networking and development). This ultimately impacted overall membership rates and member satisfaction.

GOAL

For 2018-2019, the PD team aimed to provide educational, networking and celebratory activities to members and non-members that support their career growth, elevate the communications profession and ensure value of chapter membership while improving member satisfaction. This could be achieved by all PD programming aligning with the chapter vision of “learn, connect and celebrate.”

OBJECTIVES

The following were the overall objectives for the IABC London Professional Development portfolio in the 2018-2019 season:

1. Successfully host two (2) tier one events, one (1) tier two event and two (2) tier three events throughout the 2018-2019 year, commencing September 2018. [note: tiers of events are explained in the SOLUTION section]
2. Each event hosted must align in an obvious way to one of the Chapter’s goals and vision: Learn. Connect. Celebrate.
3. Gain a minimum of one new IABC chapter member as a direct result of a non-member attending a professional development event.
4. Maintain a balanced budget (\$3,100) for all Professional Development projects executed (see below for a detailed description of how budget was determined) and secure \$1,000 worth of in-kind sponsorship.
5. Measure the relevance of topics delivered to members, non-members and board members.

SOLUTION

IABC London’s 2018-2019 vision was to learn, connect and celebrate prospective and current members. As such, the Professional Development portfolio developed events that provided opportunities for all members and non-members to experience these actions while bringing together communicators in the London, Ontario, Canada region.

Our first solution was to strategically reduce the total number of Professional Development events. Instead of 12 throughout the year (as was held in the 2017-2018 programming year), the team hosted five core events. This created more time for the PD team to research trends in the field, develop creative, conduct event planning, promotion and distribution, and reinvest costs from 12 into five high-impact events. This also gave more “recovery” time to our attendees, both members and non-members, between events to save money and avoid event burnout.

Next, we developed these events around three primary demographics within our Chapter, to align with audiences outlined by IABC’s membership categories. It is important to note that while these tiered events did target specific event audiences, they were not limiting. That is to say, all audiences were welcome to any of the events.

1. **Tier 1** - These events targeted a business leader who may or may not have direct communication responsibilities but are at a strategic/leadership level in a sector that is prominent in the London market. The speakers may be from outside of the London region, likely from IABC Toronto or Waterloo chapters, to engage a broader audience and provide insightful and relevant information to higher-level strategic communicators.

Primary target audience: *Strategic advisor | Business leader members | Non-members*

2. **Tier 2** - These events offered insights from a panel of experts on a topic that is meaningful to those who are in the trenches and face similar challenges in the communication field. The experts/speakers were from both in and outside of London and provide awareness around specific and specialized topics (from mental health in our field to best practices, etc.).

Primary target audience: *Specialist members | Generalist members | Non-members*

3. **Tier 3** - These events offer an opportunity for members and non-members to connect as the primary purpose of the event. They are social-based events that allow all audiences to participate in a fun activity and swap stories in a less formal environment.

Primary target audience: *Foundation members | Non-member*

BUDGET

IABC London strives to have a revenue neutral budget for overall professional development programming. We determine our event ticket prices based on factors such as types of speakers, venue, overall topics, our audiences, and their financial thresholds. IABC London is up against a large number of local business professional organizations (such as TechAlliance, Pillar Nonprofit, Ladies Who UX, London Creative Network, and more) which means it’s critical we pay close attention to each event’s ticket price ranges. We also have a considerable number of student IABC members from Fanshawe College and Western University and we provide them with IABC student ticket pricing. The table below outlines the estimated budgeted and actual income and expenses for the five events occurring for the 2018-2019 programming year.

Financial Summary					
Event Name	Estimate Expenses	Estimated Income	Actual Expenses	Actual Income	Profit/Loss
Brains & Beers Trivia	\$625.00	\$625.00	\$577.55	\$681.00	\$103.45
Changing Workplace	\$875.00	\$875.00	\$1,022.54	\$920.00	-\$102.54
Let's Talk About Stress	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$516.38	\$519.00	\$2.62
Diversity & Inclusion	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$541.00	\$1,002.95	\$461.95
Summer Social	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$113.57	\$0.00	-\$113.57
TOTALS	\$3,100.00	\$3,100.00	\$2,771.04	\$3,122.95	\$351.91

IMPLEMENTATION

Research: Research findings were pulled from previous years PD events leading up to the first event on September 18, 2018. In the 2017-2018 year, the professional development portfolio received member, non-member and board feedback around our event frequency and relevancy. PD events were being held on a monthly basis, causing a high-saturation with only mid-level demand. The team saw an opportunity to enhance the overall PD experience by tailoring our events around three primary factors:

- Content Relevancy
- Attendee Career-stage
- Timing and Seasonality

By implementing events less frequently with higher relevance to tailored audiences, the PD team aimed to effectively increase attendance throughout the entire year’s programming, drive membership conversion, increase revenue, and boost overall event satisfaction. By listening to our members, gathering research, and remaining agile, the PD team aimed to elevate the overall

experiences in their sessions throughout 2018-2019.[see work sample attachment: survey results]. The input from the surveys informed decisions about programming topics and activities that were planned for the year.

Promotion: To support the goal of lifting attendance and membership, strong promotion was required. [see work sample attachment: digital creative]. Social media posting calendars and advertisement purchases were created for every event on Twitter (2150 followers), Facebook (785 followers) and LinkedIn (325 followers). Promotional materials were also featured in monthly e-newsletter promoting each event (500+ readership).

An innovative and successful tactic was to include members and non-members alike in our promotional materials [see work sample attachment: Let’s Talk About Stress Promotional Videos]. Giving our audience a voice and opinion in our materials allowed for a more personalized holistic approach to PD events.

Volunteers: To execute the Professional Development portfolio strategy for 2018-2019, a committee of three additional volunteers (in addition to the two co-directors for the portfolio) was struck. The committee assisted with key tasks such as scheduling audio-visual equipment bookings, arranging catering at each event, connecting with potential sponsors, and crafting posts for social media/advertisement/e-blast promotions. At each event, a volunteer social media correspondent was assigned who posted photos and at-event updates to IABC London’s social media channels.

Events: The PD team successfully executed five separate events with strong attendance (and one sell-out event) which ranged in tiers and topics:

1. Brains & Beers Trivia Night (tier three - focus on Connect & Celebrate from our Vision)
2. The Changing Landscape of Workplace Environments (tier one - focus on Learn & Connect from our Vision)
3. Let’s Talk About Stress (tier two - focus on Learn & Connect from our Vision)
4. Diversity & Inclusion: Journey Beyond Demographics (tier one - focus on Learn & Connect from our Vision)
5. IABC London Summer Social (tier three - focus on Connect & Celebrate from our Vision)

Obstacles: In regards to measuring our direct effect on chapter membership due to PD events, the system change with IABC international prevented us from seeing names of new members to cross reference with those who attended PD events in 2018-2019. However, we did have five different individuals approach the PD directors this year, inquiring about membership and those five individuals were also introduced to the Director of Membership and she had extensive discussion with each of them. Of those who reached out through a PD event, one now volunteers on the board for the 2019-2020 year.

MEASUREMENT

Measurement of overall success was based on specific metrics by objective:

Objective	Metric
1. Successfully host two (2) tier one events, one (1) tier two event and two (2) tier three events throughout the 2018-2019 year, commencing September 2018.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minimum of 60% of those registered, attended (tracked within Evenbrite via the check-in app feature)
2. Each event hosted, must align in an obvious way to one of the Chapter’s goals and vision: Learn. Connect. Celebrate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes/No - align with vision: Learn. Connect. Celebrate Ex. Learn: <i>attendees gained new knowledge on event topic</i> Ex. Connect: <i>networking opportunities with attendees</i> Ex. Celebrate: <i>informal networking with other communicators (no specific communicator topic for event)</i>
3. Gain a minimum of one new IABC chapter member as a direct result of a non-member attending a professional development event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As recorded by IABC London Chapter membership stats (cross-reference with event attendee lists) ● Membership Director follows up with all new members and confirms how they learned about IABC; confirmed if they had attended an event
4. Maintain a balanced budget for all Professional Development projects executed and secure In-kind sponsorship/gifts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure sales and expenses matched (each to be \$3,100) ● Track all gift-in-kind items based on services/MSRP-value (ex. prize donations, video services donations, facilitator services donation), to be valued at \$1,000 total
5. Measure the relevance of topics delivered to members, non-members and board members (based on engagement of content).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engagement rate average of 0.864% (across all FB, Twitter, LinkedIn, Eventbrite page, website traffic) for all content posted to promote all events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 0.864% based on average for nonprofits' Facebook, Twitter and Instagram content, from Rival IQ projections for 2019 ● Compile qualitative data from post-event surveys
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RESULTS

Objective	Results
<p>1. Successfully host two (2) tier one events, one (1) tier two event and two (2) tier three events throughout the 2018-2019 year, commencing September 2018.</p> <p>Metric: 60% attendance (based on check-in via Eventbrite)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hosted five PD events, ranging in tiers as listed in objectives. ● 67% attendance rate of those registered based on check-ins recorded through Eventbrite.
<p>2. Each event hosted, must align in an obvious way to one of the Chapter's goals and vision: Learn. Connect. Celebrate.</p> <p>Metric: Yes/No based on vision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tier 3 - Connect & Celebrate, Tier 2 - Connect & Learn, Tier 1 - Learn & Connect.
<p>3. Gain a minimum of one new IABC chapter member as a direct result of a non-member attending a professional development event.</p> <p>Metric: Confirmed new registration from Director of Membership's correspondence with new members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● While system changes prevented direct documentation, we do know that five new people approached membership due to PD events, and at least one converted to a member (and volunteer, now serving on the Board 2019-2020, thus requiring membership).
<p>4. Maintain a balanced budget for all Professional Development projects executed and secure In-kind gifts.</p> <p>Metric: balanced budget of \$3,100</p> <p>Metric: In-kind fits totalling \$1,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Budget was balanced. ● Final revenue = \$3,122.95 (more than estimated) ● Expenses savings left us with \$351.91 surplus overall (lower expenses than estimated) ● In-Kind gifts = \$3,635.
<p>5. Measure the relevance of topics delivered to members, non-members and board members.</p> <p>Metric: avg. engagement rate of 0.864%</p> <p>Metric: qualitative comments from post-event surveys</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engagement rate average of 1.1% (across all FB, Twitter, LinkedIn, Eventbrite page, website traffic). ● Event surveys concluded that those in attendance to this year's events felt the programming was timely given the state of the economy, society and technology businesses are facing in the 21st century. ● Anecdotally we also heard from a number of senior strategist/business leader members that they were pleased to have useful events to attend this year, something they felt had been lacking for individuals at their career level.