



**March 2009**

**IABC Research Foundation  
Has received a US \$50,000 Grant**

**From  
Vale, Odebrecht, CEMIG, Unimed Rio, Farm Credit Canada and IABC/Toronto  
to conduct research on**

**THE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE AND BEST PRACTICES**

**DEADLINE EXTENDED: 25 JUNE, 2009**

*Each communication department is unique, as its ability to be effective is impacted by the corporate culture toward communication, senior leadership support (or lack of it) and the resources available to support the greater organization with good communication. There is no one perfect formula for optimal structure and influence, but there are likely patterns that emerge in those communication groups, regardless of size, that are indicators of how well that group will be able to carry out its mission.*

<b>Background &amp; Purpose</b>	<p>Since the 1970s, IABC has conducted salary surveys that included some questions on communication structure and function, but did not offer the breadth and depth of information communicators needed in this area.</p> <p>For years, IABC members have requested information on communication department structures to compare their current or potential organizational structure to others in similar businesses, geographic locations and size.</p>
<b>Audience for Research Conclusions</b>	<p>This study will be of great value to communication leaders with strong involvement in planning, budgeting and staffing their communication departments, who can use it as a guide for evaluating and assessing the structures of their own communication departments and for future planning.</p>
<b>Recent research</b>	<p>Prior to writing the RFP an expert panel of senior communication department leaders met to identify challenges, trends and issues facing the heads of communication. Based on the panel discussion, a survey was sent to non-North American IABC members for additional input. (see appendix for sample qualitative questions generated by these two groups).</p>
<b>Description</b>	<p>This three-part international study calls for progressively deep investigations of top-performing communication functions within organizations, with the goal of identifying the factors that influence communication department structure and effectiveness.</p>
<b>PART 1 overview</b>	<p>A qualitative investigation of at least 15 globally representative large for-profit (more than 500 employees) and non-profit (more than 300 employees) organizations with outstanding communication functions and in which communication is viewed as an integral part of the organization's overall success. These top-level communicators will work in a mix of locations (i.e. Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America and South America).</p>

	<p>The project will focus on the communication department itself – its structure, functions, budget, staffing and competencies of the communication department. Organizations included in the study must have responsibility for traditional communication functions such as media relations, public relations and employee communication. The top communication officers in these organizations will be identified using a methodologically sound approach to be determined by the researcher. There is no requirement that IABC members be part of this group.</p> <p>A summary of the key attributes and best practices associated with these top-performing communication departments, as well as trends and important issues for the future, will result from these interviews.</p>
<p><b>PART 2 overview</b></p>	<p>Quantitative research consisting of a Web-based survey of IABC members examining the current state of communication structure. Questions will address the type of department structure (centralized vs. decentralized), reporting relationships, integration with other functions, budget trends, outsourcing, staff competencies, and member perceptions on the effectiveness of their communication department model. The survey will include organizations throughout the world, representing diversity in organizational type (industry type, profit versus non-profit, etc.), geographic location, and size (revenues, number of employees). The focus of this section is on quantitative survey data.</p> <p>The survey will focus on IABC members (aiming to reach the highest level member in each organization); only one survey response per organization. IABC will use its membership list to identify the most senior member per organization and will handle the distribution of the survey to members, and the researcher will handle data collection/analysis.</p> <p>One of the key “takeaways” for members will be to identify their business “group,” in terms of industry segment or size, and be able to see how their organization “stacks up” to the averages. For example, if your organization is a for-profit, mid-sized services company , what does the data show in terms of the number of communications department employees, type of organizational structure, reporting relationships, budget trends, etc.</p> <p>We also want the data to be segmented by geography (country-specific), so that members in a particular country can get highlights of the key attributes/trends in their geographic area.</p> <p>In addition, we also want to learn whether there are correlations and predictive relationships (using regression analyses) that emerge that would be useful to members. For example, is there a correlation and/or predictive relationship between communication organizations that are decentralized and those viewed as the most effective? Or, are certain competencies viewed as much more critical in certain industries or geographic areas?</p>
<p><b>Part 3 overview</b></p>	<p>Develop a sophisticated, fact-based diagnostic tool based on findings of Project 1 and Project 2 of this study.</p>

	<p>Description of diagnostic tool: The diagnostic tool should provide a means for a communication professional to assess the effectiveness of communication structure and function within their organization. It should offer an organized and easily understood form of comparison to other similar organizations. This tool should not be a simple checklist. The tool should be linked to methodologically sound criteria established by the study. It should be relevant, practical, simple, clear and easy to use. It should offer a method for communications practitioners to apply and share the value from the use of their tool with their professional colleagues and organizational leaders.</p>
<b>Key Questions We are Asking</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the attributes and best practices associated with high-performing communication departments?</li> <li>2. What factors (such as corporate history, CEO bias, type of business/industry, stability versus amount of change in the organization, etc.) appear to have the greatest influence on the communication department structure, and which structures/models seem to work most effectively in light of these factors?</li> <li>3. What are the major trends relating to communication department structure, functions, budget, staffing and competencies?</li> <li>4. How are communication departments structured, and what structures appear to be the most effective?</li> </ol>
<b>Research Participant Eligibility</b>	<p>We welcome proposals from researchers in various fields of study. However, individuals or teams of academics and/or practitioners with research expertise from the following fields are strongly encouraged to submit a proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational Communication</li> <li>• Media Relations</li> <li>• Organizational Psychology</li> <li>• Public Relations</li> <li>• Mass Communication</li> <li>• Business</li> <li>• Management Studies/Consulting</li> <li>• Business Forecasting</li> <li>• Related Field</li> </ul>
<b>Research Approaches</b>	<p>All appropriate research approaches to the aforementioned topics are eligible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both new and ongoing initiatives are eligible</li> <li>• Research must include a significant and meaningful global representation</li> <li>• Research should be relevant to communication practitioners worldwide and results should specifically account for and articulate any regional/geographic differences identified through the research</li> </ul>
<b>Research Preferences</b>	<p>Preference will be given to study proposals that include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional communicators on the research team</li> <li>• International and cross-cultural scope of issues</li> <li>• Demonstration of relevance to an international audience</li> <li>• Demonstration of experience with an understanding of communication department structures</li> </ul>
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Projects must include significant and meaningful globally representative</b>

<p><b>Requirements</b></p> <p><b>All reports must be submitted in Microsoft Word format.</b></p>	<p><b>data.</b></p> <p><b>All reports must be submitted via e-mail in Microsoft Word format.</b></p> <p><b>Reports and related articles must be submitted in English.</b></p> <p>Preliminary proposals must be submitted as an attachment to an e-mail message and must include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact information including name, title, organization, address, telephone, fax and e-mail address for primary and secondary contacts.</li> <li>2. Proposal of no more than 2,500 words, organized into the following sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief analysis of research topic</li> <li>• Major research questions project will address</li> <li>• Project outline with brief descriptions of plans for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Literature review</li> <li>○ Research design and method - Please provide rationale behind methodology choice(s) and a brief description of why they are the correct methodologies for a global study</li> <li>○ The process that is recommended to identify the communication leaders to be interviewed</li> <li>○ Outline of interim and final reports</li> <li>○ Preliminary description of diagnostic or training tool and how it will benefit communication professionals and the communication profession as a whole.</li> <li>○ Budget breakdown (IABC does not pay indirect costs)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Timeline, including delivery dates for interim/final reports</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Synopsis of researcher or research team qualifications</li> <li>4. Curriculum Vitae of principal researcher and research team, if applicable. Include listings of any published research in the past three years. Listings should include any URLs for published research available on the web (limit 5 pages total)</li> <li>5. Example of previous work</li> </ol>
<p><b>Deliverables Requirements</b></p>	<p><b>All reports must be submitted via e-mail in Microsoft Word format.</b></p> <p><b>All reports must follow MLA or APA format.</b></p> <p><u>Literature Review (Microsoft Word document)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bibliography must be annotated and organized by subject.</li> <li>2. References in bibliography must be ranked according to research validity, practical relevance and overall value.</li> <li>3. Must include web-based research, with URLs included in the bibliography.</li> <li>4. May cover reputable research reported in journals, web sites, business press, academic institutions, think tanks and interviews.</li> </ol> <p><u>Interim Report – First Draft (Microsoft Word document)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Executive summary: 10 pages or less</li> <li>2. The body of the report, including the bibliography and appendices:</li> </ol>

	<p>approximately 200-300 pages in length and written in language clearly understood by a general business audience</p> <p>3. Contents must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of the research approach and methodology</li> <li>• Thorough report of research findings, a summary of key attributes/factors and best practices associated with top-performing communication departments as well as identified trends and important issues for the future and appropriate cross tabulations</li> <li>• Implications to business communicators</li> <li>• Recommendations for strategies and tactics based on findings and implications</li> <li>• List of organizations interviewed</li> </ul> <p>4. Draft of diagnostic tool</p> <p><u>Final Report (Microsoft Word document):</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Same content as above with all changes received from Research Foundation on draft report implemented.</li> <li>2. Final report must include a downloadable presentation in PowerPoint.</li> </ol> <p><u>Additional Requirements:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Researchers must collaborate on a feature-style article that outlines the research results and their relevance. If approved by the IABC’s editorial team, IABC will publish the article in its <i>CW</i> publication.</li> <li>2. <b>Researcher will be asked to present findings in Brazil (include in budget breakdown).</b></li> <li>3. Researchers may be asked to present findings at IABC’s annual world conference held in June of each year (include in budget breakdown).</li> </ol>
<b>Copyright</b>	To ensure compliance with applicable laws and Foundation policies, the IABC Research Foundation is the sole owner of the research reports and other products resulting directly from the Study and may trademark, copyright or otherwise protect its property at its discretion.
<b>The IABC Research Foundation</b>	The IABC Research Foundation serves as the research and development arm of IABC.). The IABC Research Foundation is dedicated to contributing new findings, knowledge and understanding to the communication profession and to helping organizations and communicators maximize contributions to organizational success.
<b>About the sponsors</b>	<p><b>Vale</b> - is a diversified mining multinational corporation and one of the largest logistics operators in Brazil. In addition to being the second-largest mining company in the world, Vale is also the largest producer of iron ore, pellets, and second largest of nickel. Vale, besides being present in 16 Brazilian states is also present in 6 continents: South America, North America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania.</p> <p><b>Odebrecht</b> is a Brazilian business conglomerate in the fields of Engineering &amp; Construction and Chemicals &amp; Petrochemicals. The company was founded in 1944 and the group is present in South America, Central America and the Caribbean, North America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.</p> <p><b>CEMIG</b> is a Brazilian power company headquartered in the Belo Horizonte</p>

	<p>capital of Minas Gerais. The company is the largest combined power generator and distributor in Brazil, with around 50 power plants in operation, most of them hydroelectric. The company owns around 6,000 MW of generation capacity. Cemig also owns a cable television, internet and telecommunications business called Infovias which uses the company's transmission and distribution lines.</p> <p><b>Unimed-Rio</b> is a doctors' cooperative with 36 years of tradition and more than 650 thousand clients, which makes it a leader in the market of health plans in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Created and directed by doctors whose wish was for better conditions for the practice of medicine. Its objective is to secure a level of excellence for the biggest possible number of persons.</p> <p><b>Farm Credit Canada</b> is Canada's largest provider of financial services to farms and agribusiness. This organization's purpose is to enhance rural Canada by providing specialized and personalized financial services to farming operations, including family farms. Although once exclusively a farm lender, FCC is now also organized to provide funding to enterprises that are closely related or dependent on farming.</p> <p><b>IABC/Toronto</b> is the largest chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators, and provide access to products, services, activities and networking opportunities in Toronto and around the world. The chapter helps people and organizations achieve excellence in corporate communications, public relations, employee communication, marketing communication, public affairs and other forms of communication</p>
<b>Review Process</b>	All proposals are reviewed by a distinguished international panel of communications experts in accordance with the schedule outlined below:

<b><u>TIMELINE</u></b>	
<b><u>ACTION</u></b>	<b><u>DATE</u></b>
RFP Announced	March 23, 2009
Preliminary proposals received at IABC	June 25, 2009
Researchers notified of results	July 20, 2009
Agreement is signed	August 3, 2009
Project commences	August 3, 2009
Literature review due	September 14, 2009
Interim report	December 7, 2009
Final report due	March 15, 2010
Feature-style article proposal due	TBD



Send proposals by xxxxxxxx via e-mail to:

E-mail: [mpavia@iabc.com](mailto:mpavia@iabc.com)

If you have questions, contact Mari Pavia, IABC Research Foundation Director, at [mpavia@iabc.com](mailto:mpavia@iabc.com).

IABC Research Foundation  
One Hallidie Plaza, Suite 600  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Phone: (415) 544-4700 Fax: (415) 544-4747

APPENDIX

<p><b>Sample questions for Part 1 of the study</b></p>	<p>This qualitative phase involves interviews with the communication executives who lead departments viewed as top performers, the questions will focus more on the how and why -- for example, why a company has a centralized model; is it tied to business model, corporate history, geographic coverage, bias of the CEO, etc.</p> <p>These interviews not only will summarize the various “featured” departments’ organization/structure/services/staffing and budget trends, but will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What variables have affected the department structure (i.e., industry type, geographic area, organizational size, audience demographics, etc.)?</li> <li>• CEO involvement in communication</li> <li>• Shifts in audience demographics and impact on communication planning</li> <li>• Shifts in what tools are being used/viewed as more credible, and why</li> <li>• How they evaluate effectiveness/ROI</li> <li>• How the communication team communicates (how often, what forums, how they share information and what information, etc.)</li> <li>• The importance of reporting relationships versus access to/influence on senior executives</li> <li>• Most critical communication competencies</li> <li>• Trends</li> <li>• Challenges for the future</li> </ul> <p>The topics that seemed to generate the highest interest during the Expert Panel meeting and that should be considered in structuring the interview questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the optimal structure for a high-performing communication department?</li> <li>• What functions are outsourced, and why?</li> <li>• How valued is the communication function, and how do you assess value?</li> <li>• How do you assess the ROI of a successful department?</li> <li>• Regardless of reporting relationships, does the top communication officer have access to and, more importantly, influence on key executives? Is this (influence, credibility) the most critical attribute associated with a high-performing department?</li> <li>• If a traditional department organizes by key audiences (e.g. IR, PR, marcomm, employee comm., etc.), yet the audiences are blurring (e.g. employees are investors, employees are customers, etc.), how are communication departments addressing this ... how are they ensuring integrated communication and messaging?</li> <li>• Although there is clearly no “perfect” structure for a communication department, are there some exemplary models that can be explored? Can these be explored not only from the standpoint of how they’re structured but also why (in other</li> </ul>
--	---

words, what factors seem to have the most influence on the communication department structure: business model, company age/history, degree of stability versus change in the organization, CEO bias, credibility/influence of the top officer, etc.).

- What are the pros and cons of each of the major department structures that are associated with best practice organizations?
- What are the key competencies needed in a top-performing communication department?

The summary and conclusions of the interviews will help to address the following questions:

- Which communication department structures are considered to be most effective and why?
- How do these structures relate to the ability of the communication department to be most effective for the organization?
- Which communication functions/services are considered to be most critical to the success of the organization?
- What factors influence the stature/credibility of the communication function in the organization?
- How important is CEO involvement in the department's influence/credibility and in the overall success of the department in achieving its goals?