

# STRONGER TOGETHER

## IABC2025



International Association  
of Business Communicators

# INTRODUCTION



Decades from now, historians will write about the coronavirus pandemic of the early 2020s and the impact it had on the world. The elimination of in-person gatherings, the international cooperation that developed vaccines in less than a year, and changes in the way we worked, communicated, and thought about our world will all be fertile areas of analysis.

Last year also marked a significant milestone for IABC. Fifty years earlier, people from a variety of disciplines, who saw the power of communication, came together, combining two organizations to form what we now call the business communication profession.

The visionary leaders who created a platform from which every communication professional could have the opportunity to understand what it means to be a strategic communicator, would surely be proud of how our volunteer leaders and members led through this crisis. It was a time for all communication professionals to shine. As integral parts of our organizations, we helped navigate – through the power of communication – a once-in-a-generation event.

As we look toward 2025, IABC is at a critical point. Our global community has never been more connected, yet our traditional business model and revenue streams are under immense pressure. In addition to the impact of the pandemic on every professional association, IABC is confronting global trends that have accelerated in recent years and continue to impact on our industry. Among these trends are: Speed and evolution in communications; Population growth and demographic change; Technological disruption; Societal realignment; New world order; and Digitalization: 4th Industrial revolution.

Just as the world is changing, IABC must also evolve.

- We need to be more flexible and agile. We need real time insights and knowledge about our members and the organizations we serve. Our value proposition needs to evolve.
- We must more effectively leverage our competitive advantage in the ‘International’ and the ‘Business’ of IABC.

- We should have a distinctive point of view on professional communications and how it adds value to our clients (the organizations our members and our profession serve). In so doing, we will set up our members and the broader profession for greater success and a positive impact in the world.

Perhaps most importantly, we must have a strategic alignment between International, Regions and Chapters. We need to co-create our future. If culture is the core of business success, volunteers are the metaphorical fuel of IABC. Just like real fuel, however, volunteers are a precious resource and must be replenished. We need to reach and engage the next generation of volunteers and leaders with a compelling call to action.

If we take these steps and others, we will position the association as the leading experts in the profession of business communications, with measurable steps along the journey.

IABC2025 is our ambition. It is also our response to the changes impacting our world and our profession.

What energizes us is that it is in our hands to make this happen.

## **We all lead IABC.**

International Executive Board, June 2021

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# WHO WE ARE



## OUR WHY

In leadership surveys, qualitative discussions, and conversations within the Board and with staff, there was broad support for a purpose statement that included three elements:

- Highlighting the impact of our profession;
- Taking action, not merely providing words; and
- Tackling the challenges of our age, from local to global communities.

Our statement of 'Why?', encapsulates that viewpoint:

**USE THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION TO DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING, INSPIRE ACTION, AND TRANSFORM OUR WORLDS.**

Highlighting the impact of our profession

Deeds not merely words

Furthering humanity and tackling the challenges of our age

## OUR WHAT

Professional communication at the heart of every organization.

## OUR HOW

We advance the profession, create connection and develop strategic communication professionals.

## OUR CULTURE

Our culture of volunteerism, shared commitment to six key principles, and generosity toward others is the backbone of IABC. We are a relational – not transactional – community, with peer-to-peer relationships at the heart of a diverse, connected, global community that cares passionately about communication.

As we transform IABC, we will invest in our leaders so that they are able to lead our association into tomorrow. We must have the capacity and resilience to lead through change. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to galvanize our community around our shared purpose and fashion our future. When we succeed, we will elevate the value of strategic communication worldwide.

# WHO WE ARE



## HOW WE CREATE VALUE

IABC exists to create value for those we serve – our members, our volunteers, our profession, and the organizations and communities they serve.

This is a significant remit and we need to set priorities. There is no one-size-fits all solution.

Value is subjective, based on context, life/career phase, lived experiences, biases and expectations. It is more than the financial outlay of an IABC membership, event or training program, and more than espousing features and benefits. This is about fit for purpose. How do we do this?

## MEMBERS

We help business communication professionals along their career path to develop strategic, business and leadership capabilities, build their confidence and credibility, showcase their impact, give them tools to make their work easier, and connect them with peers and opportunities to grow.

Possible initiatives:

- Member concierge
- Revamp IABC website
- Increase peer-to-peer connection
- Access to a 'brains trust'
- Communicate the incremental value of involvement in IABC
- Develop think tanks
- Provide tools
- Gold Quill showcase
- Nurture 'The Hub'
- Increase trend watching

## VOLUNTEERS

Through active involvement as a volunteer, we provide members with the opportunity to develop their leadership capabilities, broaden their global perspective, expand their professional network, champion the profession and enable others to grow.

Possible initiatives:

- Leader Centre platform
- Board playbook
- Leadership development
- Mentor and buddy system
- Volunteer showcase

## BUSINESS

We help organizational leaders understand the impact that great communication has on business and society, as well as transformation and leadership, through access to evidence-based thought leadership, expert advisory and how to be better communicators.

Possible initiatives:

- Micro consulting and coaching marketplace
- Global research partnership
- Cross-functional collaboration
- Showcase success series
- Learning & Development subscription and Book Club
- Certified professional directory
- Gold Quill Showcase

## PROFESSION

We champion our profession as a value driver in organizations and an enabler of change in business and society. We can lift the standards of communication excellence, demonstrate the impact of strategic and ethical communication, and partner with like-minded associations to advocate for our profession and deliver to our purpose.

Note: Please see 'Champion our Profession' pillar for potential initiatives.



# THE SIX PILLARS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

## HOW WE WILL OPERATE

STRONGER  
TOGETHER

DIGITALLY  
TRANSFORMED

DATA-DRIVEN

DELIVERING  
VALUE

CHAMPIONING  
OUR PROFESSION

ADVANCING MY  
CAREER

## HOW WE WILL GROW

# HOW WE WILL OPERATE STRONGER TOGETHER



In an uncertain world, bringing the IABC community closer together creates significant value by efficiently utilizing resources and technologies across the network. Through improved alignment between global, regional and chapter planning, structure and governance, the collective organization can take advantage of leading-edge digital systems and data management tools. It also allows for further integration of programming and content sharing, shifting from a member organization to a broader community with member benefits.

To be the voice of communication professionals and advocate on their behalf, we must build a strong, unified brand. We must develop a sophisticated digital presence to meet the growing needs of the digitally sophisticated communication professional. We can only do this collectively, pooling our resources, talent, and expertise to build the infrastructure and governance that will sustain this organization for the future.

## **Possible initiatives:**

- Single digital infrastructure
- Greater SEO
- More substantial digital brand presence
- More robust focus on chapter and regional strengths
- Central data bank and analysis that can monitor customer experience
- A single community platform
- Dynamic personalization data tools

# HOW WE WILL OPERATE DIGITALLY TRANSFORMED



Technology and innovation continue to transform how organizations operate and highlight the need to facilitate connection and digital transparency. Customers, members, and stakeholders expect that organizations evolve their technology practices to create and sustain value. To increase value for members and the profession, IABC will transform its technology platforms and level of service at pace with current innovations, to more effectively connect and engage members.

## **Possible initiatives:**

- Govern and manage data more effectively
- Adapt and evolve with new technology
- Deliver an omni-channel digital experience
- Access to a rich interactive, customized, and rewarding digital experience.
- Consolidate all IABC digital interaction

# HOW WE WILL OPERATE DATA-DRIVEN



IABC must become a more data-driven organization. A reality of our world is that data is the new oil on which organizational engines run. Access to high-quality and relevant data will allow us to better serve our members and other stakeholders with customized and personalized solutions. It will set us apart competitively and, used appropriately, could be a significant asset to monetize and create new revenue streams.

The fact that we need better data limits IABC. Moving forward, we should make decisions based on quality (and recent) data regarding things like content for professional development, membership recruitment and retention strategies, and resource allocation toward specific strategies.

## **Possible initiatives:**

- Consolidate all IABC database assets
- Establish a reoccurring research platform
- Utilize external and partner data to create a richer and more insightful database
- Clearly define metrics and data sources

# HOW WE WILL GROW DELIVERING VALUE



For IABC to deliver on its purpose and deepen the impact of the communication profession and expertise of business communications, it is necessary to design and develop products and services that meet the professional needs of the IABC community. Through partnership, research, and member engagement IABC seeks to provide more value for all member segments that align with the career roadmap.

## **Possible initiatives:**

- Define and evaluate products
- Curate content that is specific to the professional advancement needs of each IABC member segment
- Develop strategic partnerships
- Redefine the business model for products and services
- Leverage the expertise of the community and the voice of the member in identifying new areas of service that can be scaled as member benefits
- Adopt an experience mind-set in engaging and delivering value to members and volunteer leaders

# HOW WE WILL GROW CHAMPIONING OUR PROFESSION



As the business environment changes globally, communication professionals must shift how we work and lead within organizations. In support of our members, customers, and profession, IABC must be a champion for the significance of our profession to business. We must differentiate between communication as a skill versus the profession which focuses around the Global Standard of the Communication Profession – Ethics, Consistency, Context, Analysis, Strategy, and Engagement.

Though IABC has a strong global voice, we have the opportunity to become more powerful in championing our profession when we join forces with others to shape the future thinking and problem-solve for our world.

## **Possible initiatives:**

- Elevate the Global Standard as a guide and differentiator for communication professionals
- Enable our members and customers to be advocates for our profession
- Build recognition with the C-Suite and adjacent professions
- Bring together communication leaders to solve business problems, create research and thought leadership
- Foster peer-to-peer collaborative relationships with aligned business professions
- Collaborate with like-minded professional organizations
- Explore formal combinations with global organizations
- Be a voice for the value of diversity, equality, and inclusion

# HOW WE WILL GROW ADVANCING MY CAREER



IABC can help business communication professionals understand and navigate their career pathway from foundation, generalist or specialist, strategic advisor to business leader. We help business communication professionals identify gaps and learning opportunities, develop their communication skills and capabilities, broaden their network, and build their confidence and credentials.

A decade ago IABC initiated a global-first research-based initiative with thousands of communication professionals to define the career pathway and competencies for our profession.

The IABC Global Standard and Career Road Map clearly identifies a shared career purpose and six core principles that are the building blocks of strategic communication, and four key career milestones.

These have formed the foundation of IABC's professional development, Gold Quill Awards global communication excellence recognition and the Global Communication Certification Council's (GCCC) global certification programs.

Our Code of Ethics, Global Standard, Career Road Map, Gold Quill Awards and GCCC are brand assets that can be reset and repositioned to deepen our capability to help business communication professionals advance their career. We can broaden our ability to advance more business communication professionals if we demonstrate the relevance of these assets to an individual's career path.

## **Possible initiatives:**

- Map the Professional Development program to the Career Road Map and Global Standard
- Relaunch the Global Standard
- Celebrate the value of GCCC certification
- Reframe the value of volunteering
- Develop a career concierge to help mid-level professionals to connect, advance, and understand how to sell their value
- Provide a sounding board and listening circle based on individual need
- Uplift our training standards
- Elevate our Catalyst content to include in-house professionals