

IABC British Columbia: Sponsorships/Partnerships

Introduction

Currently the third largest chapter in the world, IABC British Columbia serves the province of British Columbia. While a large percentage of our members live in and around the city of Vancouver, we have members scattered all over the lower mainland and further afield which gives us unique challenges with regards to engaging and providing value to all our members. We also have a very diverse membership in terms of industries, career levels and professional development needs, and a large percentage of senior and corporate members.

Our aim is to increase our membership base and nurture a sense of community while raising the profile of IABC/BC to its members, and positioning communications as a strategic function in every organization. We believe that we can do this by building relationships with current and prospective members, other organizations, businesses and post-secondary institutions, while providing engaging and meaningful professional development and networking opportunities to our members, volunteers, sponsors, partners and communications professionals.

Our challenge: A stagnant sponsorship portfolio

In 2018-2019 our two key areas of focus were the people in the local IABC community, and broader business community - including our volunteers, members, non-members and sponsors and secondly our operations including our business structure, systems, and revenue streams to best serve us now and in the future. We believe that sponsorships and partnerships are a key component of a thriving chapter, and we knew that we needed a healthy sponsorship portfolio to help us grow our presence in the community as well as generate more revenue. IABC/BC has limited revenue streams, and sponsorships are a key source of revenue for us. Additionally, in-kind sponsorships are a great way for us to do more by providing us with services and resources. As a completely volunteer run organisation, it is always a challenge to balance delivering programming to members with creating 'lazy leaders', and in-kind sponsors are one way that we can achieve this.

Our sponsorship portfolio had been stagnant in recent years', so it needed immediate attention. There had been a lack of time, resources and focus on building new relationships, and we were also losing sponsors because they were dissatisfied with their relationship with IABC/BC. So, it was vital that we worked to improve relationships with existing sponsors, while also growing the sponsorship portfolio. We also lacked tools and tactics to attract and retain sponsors effectively. In 2018/2019 the sponsorships and partnerships portfolio covered advertising, Jobline postings, sponsors and partners. This CMA submission will focus purely on the goals, objectives and activities to attract and retain sponsors and partners.

Goals and Objectives

In close alignment with the chapters strategic plan, and International's 2017-2020 plan, we set three goals that were focused on growing and strengthening our sponsorship portfolio to generate more cash and in-kind revenues. Achieving these goals would help us to champion best practices, offer more programming to members and build the local IABC community in British Columbia. Please see **work sample #1** for the Sponsorships & Partnerships strategic plan..

Goal 1: Strengthen current sponsor relationships

SMART Objective: Retain 100% of current sponsors

We wanted to keep our sponsor base stable because not only are they highly valued, but it is also easier to retain existing sponsors than attract new ones. This goal was important to keep our sponsor base stable. Additionally, this goal would help the chapter to increase community engagement and create connections.

Goal 2: Build new sponsor relationships

SMART Objectives: 1 Platinum or Gold sponsor added

1 print, venue, video and/or catering sponsor added

We also had a chapter wide goal to increase sponsorship from higher education institutions from 0% to 100% year on year. This was an important goal for the chapter - the more sponsors we have, the more programming and value we can offer to

our members. Additionally, it's a great way to build connections in the business community, increase our brand awareness and ultimately grow our membership base.

Goal 3: Increase quality of sponsors

SMART Objective: Move at least one sponsor up one sponsorship level (e.g. from Silver to Gold level).

We knew that one way of keeping our sponsor base stable while offering our members more was by increasing the value and quality of our current sponsors, achieved by increasing their sponsorship package level.

These three goals supported three of our overarching chapter goals;

- Champion excellent chapter management by generating revenue and in-kind services for the chapter, and maintaining a healthy, stable pool of sponsors
- Increase community engagement by leveraging sponsorships to offer programming to members and non-members and build connections between sponsors, members and non-members
- Increase brand awareness and membership base by leveraging sponsorships to offer more to members and non-members, while also building new sponsor relationships and getting out into the wider local community.

These goals also supported IABC's pillars, "Create Connection and Advance the Profession".

Budget

The bulk of our sponsorship and partnership activities are focused on revenue generation. Using the previous years sponsorship financials as a baseline, we projected that our efforts would increase both our cash and in-kind revenues. We forecasted that we would generate \$41,000 income through cash sponsorships (\$11,000) and sponsorships in kind (\$30,000). Expenses for this portfolio are typically minimal so other than the in-kind sponsors where we do not physically receive any money, we only budgeted \$245 for meetings with sponsors and volunteer recognition.

Implementation

To meet our three sponsorship and partnership goals, our efforts were split between retaining existing sponsors and securing new ones. As the portfolio required a lot of time and resources, we added a Client Services Manager to help with executing tactics and managing some of the day to day work enabling the Sponsorships & Partnerships Director to focus primarily on strategy and developing new sponsors.

Developing Tools

Before we could engage existing or prospective sponsors, we had to revise our existing sponsor package which hadn't been updated in a long time. We needed to make sponsorship levels, benefits and opportunities clear to sponsors, while also ensuring a balance between what the chapter would get, and what sponsors would get in return. See **work sample #2** IABCBC Sponsor & Partner Detailed Package 2018/2019. We also created a high-level pitch deck that could supplement in-person conversations with current and new sponsors. See **work sample #3** for IABCBC Sponsor & Partner Package Presentation Deck 2018/2019. As well as a detailed sponsor package and presentation deck, we also needed a templated Sponsorship Agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) that we could use for all sponsors to streamline the development and finalization of sponsor agreements. See **work sample #4** for the IABCBC Sponsorship Agreement Template 2018/2019.

Sponsor benefits

For simplicity, our current and potential sponsors are now given the choice of four different types of sponsorship package:

- Platinum Sponsor (\$5K cash/in-kind, 1 yr. commitment)
- Gold Sponsor (\$3K cash/in-kind, 1 yr. commitment)
- Silver Sponsor (\$1K, 1 yr. commitment)
- A la carte (under \$1K cash/in-kind)

Alongside these packages, we provide them with choices of online and offline benefits including recognition on our digital channels, promotions at key chapter events and complimentary registrations for events. The intent is that the sponsors end



up with tailored tiered packages that suit their needs and ours. By creating packages, and a menu of benefits it has made it easier to have conversations with both existing sponsors and prospective new ones.

Retaining and developing relationships with existing sponsors

To retain and develop relationships with existing sponsors, our overarching strategy was to ensure that current sponsors felt that they were getting good value from their sponsorship arrangement. To do this we began by analyzing our current sponsorships with informal discovery sessions to ensure that level, value and benefits were in alignment.

We were then able to use the revised sponsorship packages and pitch deck to confirm MOU's for 2018/2019, as well as upsell where appropriate to increase sponsor levels. Finally, regular outreach with sponsors had been a major issue previously, so monthly check-ins were introduced.

Building new sponsor relationships

We used a combination of marketing and communication efforts, in-person pitches, and leveraging existing relationships in the community to attract new sponsors which was very effective. In alignment with our new detailed sponsors package and pitch deck, we updated our website content to showcase the benefits of sponsorship. See **Work Sample #5** for our sponsorship website page content. We also promoted our existing sponsors consistently on all of our digital channels. Our new sponsor package was sent out to all potential sponsors that we had made connections with, and in-person meetings or calls to pitch to prospective sponsors in the pipeline were set up. Existing relationships that members of the IABC/BC Chapter board had in the community were also leveraged to develop connections and potential sponsorships for the chapter. An example of this was the Vice President working with a post-secondary institution to secure very positive student membership partnership. With 'lazy leadership' in mind, we knew we had to be tactical about who we approached and pitched to so at the start of the year we audited our current sponsorships to identify gaps in sponsors or areas of need such as venues and a video sponsor. This helped us to put our time and energy into the right areas.

The Chapter's profile was also raised, and relationships with other organizations deepened through members of the chapter executive presenting and hosting IABC and non-IABC events including an international marketing conference held in Vancouver and IABC world conference.

Results

For each of our goals, we set simple measurable targets based on the previous year's performance. This made it easy for us to track progress throughout the year.

Goal 1: Strengthen current sponsor relationships

SMART Objective: Retain 100% of current sponsors

RESULT: We achieved this objective by retaining, and strengthening our relationships, with all our current sponsors.

Through regular check-ins, sponsors reported that they felt more engaged with the chapter and felt, overall, that they received good value for their sponsorship.

Goal 2: Build new sponsor relationships

SMART Objectives: 1 Platinum or Gold sponsor added

1 print, venue, video and/or catering sponsor added

Additional Chapter objective: Increased sponsorship from higher education institutions from 0% to 100% year on year

RESULT: We exceeded these objectives. We secured two new gold venue sponsors, an event sponsor providing AV services, an event sponsor providing event and Board meeting space hosting, and a video sponsor. We also secured a new cash sponsor for our annual Wave Awards student award and secured a partnership with a university to grow our student membership base. We also piloted a partnership with a marketing agency to offer a discounted digital marketing course to our members. Overall this gave us a 100% increase in sponsors and partners in 2018/2019 which was fantastic. Other portfolio directors also developed relationships with two other post secondary institutions and two companies who kindly offered us free venues for student workshops, speed mentoring events and SIGS. Additionally, we partnered with

CPRS for our Holiday Social. In addition to all of the in-kind sponsorships that we were able to land, we were also able to secure in-kind sponsorships in partnership with CPRS who provided free beer, wine and other beverages, as well as raffle prizes at the event.

Goal 3: Increase quality of sponsors

SMART Objective: Move at least one sponsor up one sponsorship level

RESULT: We were able to move our main cash sponsor up one level, and we are continually strengthening the relationship with this sponsor. In addition to moving them up one level, they also provided a speaker for a PD event, and venue space for chapter events free of charge.

Financial Results

All of the current and new sponsors that we gained generated \$40,877 in in-kind sponsorship revenue which was a 23% increase year on year (\$33,250 in 2018). We found that cash sponsorships were much harder to secure, however and we fell short of our target as we were able to generate \$4,500 against a target of \$11,000. This was disappointing but it sets us up for more growth in the year ahead.

Challenges

Balancing sponsor value and benefits was tricky at times, particularly when we were revising the sponsorship package.

From a resource perspective, there were times when the workload was much higher than anticipated. So, while it was fantastic that we had so much growth it did put a strain on volunteers so we need to keep looking at ways that we can have a better balance between working towards chapter goals, and meeting operation needs with volunteer time.

The other main challenge was complimentary admissions for sponsors. The large increase in the number of sponsors that were provided complimentary event tickets put pressure on event budgets that were already very restricted. We didn't budget for complimentary admissions as an expense within the sponsorship portfolio and complimentary admissions were treated as an expense rather than a revenue for the events team and chapter finances overall. This created some friction between the events and sponsorship portfolios. However, this experience provided the chapter with good insights into how to budget for sponsors at future events.

One other potential minor issue was the preponderance of SFU sponsorships from different faculties and departments, putting a heavy reliance on one academic institution and therefore posing a slight risk. Additionally, with multiple SFU volunteers and sponsors it does make the chapter a little SFU-heavy from the perspective of our members, and this will be addressed by continuing to work on building relationships with other post-secondary institutions.

Overall, we had a very strong year, and either met or greatly exceeded the majority of our targets with the exception of cash sponsorships. The success that we have had with sponsors helped us to offer an array of programming at discounted costs, grow the reputation and reach of the chapter and increase community engagement. We were able to establish, as well as deepen, relationships with more than 14 organisations, companies and post-secondary schools and have set ourselves up for great success in the future.

Work Samples

1. IABC/BC 2018-2019 Sponsorships & Partnerships Strategic Plan
2. IABC/BC Sponsor & Partner Package Presentation Deck 2018/2019
3. IABC/BC Sponsor & Partner Detailed Package 2018/2019
4. IABC/BC Sponsorship Agreement Template 2018/2019
5. IABC/BC Sponsorships Website Event Page