



## **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

The International Association of Business Communicators – Calgary Chapter is Calgary’s largest communications professional organization. With 465 members, IABC/Calgary consists of members from government, corporate, education, non-profit, creative agency, and independent consultants at all stages of their careers from student to senior communicators. Chapter members are located mostly in Calgary, but some members are located in surrounding cities and towns. This means IABC/Calgary is communicating to not only a diverse membership, but one that has some geographic diversity as well.

In 2017-2018, IABC/Calgary adopted the IABC international #1720 strategic direction, and in our chapter strategic planning, we aligned our goals and tactics to the updated vision and purpose:

**Vision:** Professional communicators at the heart of every organization.

**Purpose:** To **advance** the profession, create **connection** and **develop** strategic communicators.

**Philosophy:** IABC pledges to:

- Represent the global profession.
- Foster a diverse community.
- Focus on insights and results.
- Honor our Code of Ethics.

We will achieve this by being open, contemporary and professional

Starting in 2015 and continuing to the present, our members are facing challenging times with economic decline, specifically in the energy industry, and a large number of members are experiencing challenges at work as a result (budget cuts, staff reductions and job losses). This means the chapter is competing for attention and needing to better show its relevance to both internal and external audiences.

IABC/Calgary is governed by a board of directors comprising of 14 portfolios: President, Past-President, Vice-President (making up the executive team), Administration, Finance, Membership, Member Communications (website and e-newsletter), Sponsorship & Community Partnerships, Professional Standards (Certification), Career Services (CareerLine and Mentorship program), Marketing/Social Media, Professional Development (Events), Volunteer Services, and Student Development.

IABC/Calgary, perhaps not unlike other large chapters, has found it a challenge to engage senior level communicators. Approximately 60 per cent of IABC/Calgary members have 10 or more years of experience, making up the majority of our membership. And we’ve found consistently in our annual member survey that senior level communicators were less satisfied with professional development opportunities than the other experience groups; we needed to find a way to keep these senior level individuals engaged in the chapter. The Mentorship program was launched in the 2015-2016 board year to both address keeping senior level communicators engaged and helping newer communicators propel their careers forward. In the five years since it’s been running, the program has become a signature program for our chapter.



## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Considering the IABC international #1720 strategy, as well as our individual chapter member needs and learnings, as part of our annual strategic planning, for 2017-2018 board year, IABC/Calgary greatly simplified our chapter goals as:

- Every member feels connected to IABC at all stages of their career.
- Calgary communicators believe IABC/Calgary is the source of continuous learning for communications professionals in Southern Alberta.
- IABC/Calgary is a recognized and well-respected brand.

To meet chapter goals, the Career Services co-director responsible for the Mentorship program, set out the following objectives for the program:

- Increase engagement of senior communication members in IABC/Calgary.
- Provide opportunity for newer communicators to be mentored through their early stages of career.
- Engage mid-level communicators to be part of the mentoring program (While we have successfully engaged senior communicators through this program, we have also recognized that we needed to use this program to engage mid-level communicators so that every member at all stages of their career feel connected to IABC.)
- Increase satisfaction with Mentorship program by Mentors and Mentees

## IMPLEMENTATION

IABC/Calgary's Mentorship Program has progressed since its inception in 2015-2016 to become one of the chapter's most important programs for members. The program intake has continued to increase over the years. Please note that our program runs from November to June every year so this entry will be a combination of 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 as we just started the program and have included new aspect that is worth bringing forward.

### **IABC/Calgary's Mentorship Program - an overview**

Each year, the program Director works with a dedicated team of volunteers – both senior communicators representing the mentor perspective, and junior communicators representing mentees – to assess and improve upon the program.

Each September, a callout goes out via IABC/Calgary's communication channels asking for applicants to the Mentorship Program. At the same time, a pair toolkit is developed (See Appendix 1) and updated with resources such as role overview and expectations for mentors and mentees, goal setting templates, conversation starters, and extra reading resources for those keen to make the very most of the program.



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The Director confirms all volunteers for the program, including a Mentorship Manager, Matching Coordinator, Content Curator, as well as Thought Leaders.

The program is marketed through IABC/Calgary's communication channels such as the website, weekly newsletter, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (See Appendix 2 for some of our blog posts and social media promotion). The program is open to any IABC member in good standing. It is not open to non-members. Additionally, the Mentorship Manager sends a personal invite to Senior Communicators (with 15 years or more experience) inviting them to be part of the program.

Once applications are collected, the volunteer team carefully matches them with appropriate partners keeping in mind career goals and personal interests.

In November, a kick-off workshop is hosted by the chapter, which introduces the program as well as some professional development typically focused on leadership. For 2018-2019 kick off, we had Stephanie Pollock, a leadership coach, present on "The five ways we hold ourselves back in our career development". For 2019-2020, we had Kristen Dyck present on how to build our personal brand.

Throughout the year, mentors and mentees choose their own schedule to meet when it's convenient for them. The program volunteers set several check-in meetings throughout to bring the group together for some further learning and success check-ins.

Mentees are provided with a Development Plan template that they are encouraged to use within the program.

In May/June, a wrap up event is hosted, which provides an opportunity for mentors and mentees to get together to celebrate their successes and we also offer another professional development opportunity. At the 2018-2019 wrap up, Susanne Dicocco, a partner at Deloitte presented on "The latest trends in human capital".

### **2019-2020 Program**

In the year of 2019-2020, which just started in September 2019, the program took in 18 pairs, 34 participants - 16 mentors, 14 mentees, 4 student mentees (4 participants requested to participate as both a mentor and mentee). This is a 20% increase in growth compared to the year before.

In an effort to continue to provide opportunities for new communicators, this year, we started a pilot with Mount Royal University to provide the mentoring program to their communication students. Four students have been accepted into the program, which is exciting to see.

Some other positive stats:

- 20 new participants in the program
- 2019-2020, we had a good mix of senior, mid-level, junior and students in the program
- 3 new members joined because of the program



**Alignment to the IABC #1720 Strategic Plan**

As we further our chapter’s alignment with the IABC #1720 Strategic Plan, we have made adjustments to solidify the Mentorship program’s alignment. For instance, we now directly market the program to SCMPs and CMPs as mentorship is a key component to help keep up certification. We also ensure through the program that we are not just pairing two like-minded individuals, but they are working to really develop strategic communications skills for mentees.

**BUDGET (2018-2019)**

Budget Item	Budgeted	Actual
Mentorship meeting expenses (Room rental, A/V, meal and speaker gifts)	\$2736	\$1026.79

We were able to have the venue and A/V sponsored by Work Nicer last year, hence we were able to keep the cost down. For 2019-2020, we are still monitoring our budget.

**MEASUREMENT**

The Mentorship program is measured against the portfolio director’s strategic plan objectives. Our chapter strategic plan and subsequent portfolio plans are set at the beginning of each board year, evaluated mid-year, and end of year.

It is also measured with regular check-ins with the pairs, as well as a year-end survey to provide insights into the program.

Lastly, we ask mentorship related questions in our member survey to gain insight into the value of such a program to our wider membership. Each year, the program is consistently rated as high value.

**RESULTS**

Objective 1: Increase engagement of senior communication members in IABC/Calgary.

Results: Through the Mentorship program, we have truly engaged over 35 senior communicators since the program started including mentors and program volunteers. This program is proving high value in terms of engaging our senior communicators. In addition, most volunteers managing the program are senior communicators who enjoy giving back to the IABC community. One of the volunteers won the Longstanding Volunteer of the Year. See the blog article [here](#).

Objective 2: Provide opportunity for newer communicators to be mentored through their early stages of career.

Results: Through the Mentorship program we have engaged 18 newer communicators as Mentees, including students. While we are still monitoring the results of this initiative, to have students apply to the program and be engaged at the beginning is a success.



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Objective 3: Engage mid-level communicators to be part of the mentoring program

Results: The 2019-2020 program saw an increase of 40% mid-level communicators participating in the program.

Objective 4: Increase satisfaction with Mentorship program by Mentors and Mentees.

Results: We continue to get positive feedback from the mentors and mentees. The fact that our mentorship program continues to grow year-over-year shows the strength of the program. See Appendix 3 for some of the key words that the mentors and mentees have described.