

IABC Kansas- City: Engaging Students & Young Professionals
Work Plan 2018-2019

Context

Kansas City IABC (KC IABC) is located in the heart of North America, straddling the Missouri and Kansas state lines. The organization began more than 60 years ago as the Kansas City Industrial Editors and has been named IABC Chapter of the Year eight times.

As a medium-sized chapter, KC IABC has diverse membership representing the professions of corporation communications, marketing, public relations and social media, design, videography and photography. Members work in communications for large and small businesses, agencies and non-profits. We also have a number of self-employed entrepreneurs in our ranks, as well as college students who are looking forward to a career in the field. Our membership is 120 communicators, and we have an active audience of approximately 800 professionals throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Through the decades, KC IABC has become synonymous with outstanding professional development and networking opportunities for business communicators in the greater Kansas City area. The hallmark of KC IABC's professional development is a highly successful Business Communicators Summit (BCS). This all-day conference, patterned on regional IABC conferences, provides diverse professional development to between 100-300 communication professionals in the Kansas City metro area every year. We draw people from as far as Topeka, Kan. (75 miles away from Kansas City), and Bentonville, Ark. (200 miles away from Kansas City).

The chapter's ongoing professional development events are also highly successful, with nine events a year. These are attended by a mix of members and non-members, of which the latter are often a substantial proportion. Additionally, our three special interest groups – Masters for seasoned professionals, IndyComm for independent entrepreneurs and Young Pros with a focus on emerging communicators – provide targeted opportunities for learning and networking for members and guests.

The biggest challenge for the 2018-2019 board year was dealing with a gradually declining membership. Despite this challenge, we continued to provide strong professional development, while maintaining a highly engaged board and an expanding corps of volunteers.

The strategic cornerstone of the board year was to sustain the excellence of our professional development offerings with the intent of engaging our membership and enticing guests. We also focused on rewarding board members by allowing them to attend monthly professional development events at no cost.

Reaching younger professionals and students was a critical component to engage members and entice guests. Focusing on our student relations initiatives and involving young professional members as volunteers were key strategies.

Goals & Objectives

The objectives in this area for 2018-2019 included the following:

- Deliver an IABC presence to college campuses and classrooms through panels of speakers called the KC IABC Career Roadshow, in both spring and fall semesters, with a goal to expand the number of events by 10% (+1 event) and increase the number of students reached by 20%.
- Expand the base of volunteers in the membership who participate in our campus outreach KC

IABC Career Roadshow by 20%, with at least 20% of volunteers in the young professionals category (within five years of graduation).

- Sustain and add at least two new contacts with educators at area colleges and universities, to build awareness of IABC and its abilities to create connections for students along with preparation for job search and the world of work in support of IABC's pillars.
- Extend contact with students reached at KC IABC Career Roadshows by inviting and adding at least 25 students to the email database.
- Maintain student attendance at the annual Business Communicators Summit of 15-20 students, through student registration scholarships and promotion for professors and instructors to bring groups.

Budget

The 2018-2019 student relations budget was \$650. This included \$500 for student scholarships to the Business Communicators Summit (February 2019) and \$150 for expenses in other categories, such as printing and mileage. Nine of the 10 \$50 scholarships were awarded, for a total expense of \$450.

Implementation

Engaging Students & Young Professionals Overview

Our chapter has historically maintained consistent outreach to students and young professionals, in order to build a bridge to future membership and participation. We are mindful that many clubs and professional associations have the challenge of declining membership, particularly as younger audiences are not as attuned to the benefits and rewards of live group and one-to-one interactions versus pursuing content and connections online. This year's board priorities of encouraging attendance, engagement and participation, through excellence in programming and fostering connections, has guided the objectives and projects to address students and young professionals.

As a perennially strong IABC chapter, a cornerstone of the KC IABC Board is to encourage each board member to embrace IABC's pillars (advancing the profession, creating connection and developing strategic communicators). We are able to focus on all three of these pillars in our student and young professional activities. By engaging these audiences, we are enhancing awareness of IABC, creating many opportunities to build connections through networking events, and providing education to further their communications skills.

KC IABC Career Roadshows & Outreach

After a number of years of successful annual Career Day or Career Night events, for which students from multiple colleges traveled to a location arranged by KC IABC, we shifted our approach four years ago to instead take representatives of the club out to campuses and classrooms. This was a strategic decision so we could reach more students each year and create more potential future connections for students with KC IABC professionals.

Roadshow venues for 2018-2019 included classrooms from 20 to 120 students, including nine events on five campuses. The typical format includes a speaker panel of three or four member volunteers plus a moderator, which has been the Student Relations Chair. After each panelist gives a brief 2-3 minute overview of their career path, the moderator guides a discussion with pre-drafted questions (**Work Sample #1**), giving the panelists an opportunity to address issues in launching a career, conducting a job search, basic networking, future trends, and the benefits of belonging to a professional association like IABC. Plenty of time is left for student Q&A, and then many students linger afterwards to make personal connections with the IABC speakers. For the upcoming spring semester, plans are underway for an additional four Roadshow events.

Student Attendance at Business Communicators Summit

For this annual, one-day signature event for KC IABC, we have encouraged student attendance and participation by offering scholarships (**Work Sample #2**) to fully cover the \$50 student registration fee. The event is a banner opportunity for students to gain a great deal of real-world exposure to both skill-building information and connections with area professionals who may be in a position to help them find employment in the future. An email campaign targeted our professor and instructor contacts at area colleges and universities, providing a “low bar” requirement for students to claim their complimentary registration scholarship (to email an explanation of why they would like to attend BCS). Following the awarding of scholarships, board members and member registrants were briefed on student attendance, and they were encouraged to sit with individual students and “host” them for various parts of the day’s programming.

Measurement

KC IABC Career Roadshows & Outreach

We have reached approximately 310 student attendees (approximately 5 times the number we could reach at a traditional annual Career Day event). We have also increased our volunteer speaker participation from 15 in the last club year to a total of 18 from mid-2018 through November 2019, with additional planned expansion in the spring semester. Having visited classrooms at Johnson County Community College, University of Missouri at Kansas City, Avila University, University of Central Missouri, and Rockhurst University, we plan to expand in the spring to add the University of Kansas and Baker University. New contacts have been established at three colleges (University of Kansas, Avila University, and Metropolitan Community Colleges), further expanding our contacts from the last club year.

Student Attendance at Business Communicators Summit

We successfully awarded nine of the ten available scholarships (identical to the previous year). In addition, several colleges brought groups of paid student attendees, for a total of 19 student attendees, also matching the record-breaking attendance of 2018. Seven colleges and universities were represented at the event, including Avila University, Johnson County Community College, Truman State University, University of Central Missouri, University of Kansas, Kansas State University, and University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Results

Objective	Result
Deliver an IABC presence to college campuses and classrooms through panels of speakers called the KC IABC Career Roadshow, in both fall and spring semesters, with a goal to expand the number of events by 10% (+1 event) and increase the number of students reached by 20% in 2019.	Exceeded. Successfully conducted nine Career Roadshows in 2018-2019, up from eight in 2017-2018, a 12% increase. We reached 320 students in 2018-2019 compared to 210 in 2017-2018, a 52% increase.

Expand the base of volunteers in the membership who participate in our campus outreach KC IABC Career Roadshow by 20%, with at least 20% of volunteers within five years of graduation.	Exceeded. In 2018-2019, the base of volunteers participating in KC IABC Roadshows expanded from 15 to 18 (growth of 20%), including seven new volunteers and four young professionals (22%).
Sustain and add at least two new contacts with educators at area colleges and universities.	Exceeded. Expanded contacts to three new contacts at area colleges and universities.
Extend contact with students reached at KC IABC Career Roadshows by adding at least 25 students to the KC IABC email database.	Exceeded. Added a total of 32 students to the KC IABC email database.
Maintain student attendance at the annual Business Communicators Summit of 15-20 students.	Achieved. At our 2019 event, 19 students attended, matching our record-setting 2018 attendance. Nine students were on scholarship, and ten were paid attendees, representing seven area colleges and universities.

Work Samples Attached in Support of Entry:

- Work Sample 1: Career Roadshow Panel Questions
- Work Sample 2: BCS Student Scholarship Application