



International Association
of Business Communicators
London

IABC London: Chapter Events

Chapter: IABC London

Category: Chapter Events

Division 2: Medium Chapter

Title: IABC London: Chapter Events – Ruby Jubilee: Celebrating 40 years of Impact and Inspiration

INTRODUCTION

IABC London is committed to investing in our members' futures, supporting career growth and elevating our profession. Founded in October 1979, IABC London chapter comprises a network of members who work in or study communications, public relations, marketing and related creative services. IABC London members represent a diverse range of professional experience, educational backgrounds and fields of expertise.

We are a medium-sized chapter with 175 members serving London, Ontario, Canada and the surrounding region. Throughout the year, the chapter hosts a variety of professional development events, social gatherings and an annual celebration night that recognizes excellence at the local level with the Virtuoso awards.

The chapter reached a significant milestone in 2019, marking its 40th anniversary. Throughout the 2018/2019 term, the chapter celebrated 40 years of **impact and inspiration** through a multimedia story-sharing campaign featuring past presidents, legacy members and students reflecting on the impact IABC London involvement had on their career and its contribution to the communications profession.

At the same time, we undertook an in-depth review of the chapter's annual project-based awards program, the Virtuosos, due to a noted steady decline in submissions over the last several years. To facilitate this review, it was decided that the program would be paused for the 2018/2019 term.

Despite the pause on the project-based awards which traditionally had been the main draw for the annual celebration evening, the Board felt it was important to proceed with the evening to recognize the 40th anniversary.

The chapter's other awards – the Outstanding Communicator Award which recognizes a community leader who is committed to supporting the communications function, and the four student awards – were presented as usual.

On June 6, 2019, the **Ruby Jubilee: Celebrating 40 years of Impact and Inspiration** brought London's communications professionals, community leaders and students together for an evening of laughter, networking and recognizing excellence.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In keeping with the year-long 40th anniversary theme of 40 years of **impact and inspiration**, the event planning committee's goal was to deliver an event that demonstrated the impact IABC London has had on the local communications community and that would help to inspire the next generation of communicators.

Objectives of the event were to:

- 1) Create a fun, entertaining event that would attract people in the absence of the traditional local project-based awards presentations
- 2) Recognize the contribution of members past and present who laid the foundation for the chapter's 40 years of successfully elevating the local profession
- 3) Reach event attendance of at least 150 people to showcase the 40th year celebration to a wide portion of the chapter's audience, and
- 4) Meet budget expectations.

BUDGET

Recognizing the special nature of the anniversary, the board decided it would invest up to \$5,000 to ensure the Ruby Jubilee was an event to remember. The chapter had a very healthy reserve and it was felt that it was appropriate to use a portion of these funds to celebrate the chapter's success.

The revenue that was generated through ticket sales and sponsorship (both cash and gift-in-kind) totaled \$21,723.75. The total cost of the event was \$25,608.10, resulting in an on-budget deficit of \$3,884.35.

In order to keep the ticket prices reasonable, it was clear that significant effort would be required to attract additional sponsorship. A total of \$5,000 in cash contributions was obtained which was an increase of \$4000 over the previous year, and nearly \$8,000 in gift-in-kind contributions were received.

IMPLEMENTATION**Event strategy**

It was recognized very early in the planning phase that, historically, people mainly attended the annual event because of the local project-based awards program. Without that, there was a significant challenge to create an event that would still draw people.

Following extensive discussions, it was decided that we would book the Toronto-based comedian Susan Stewart. Her motto is 'comedy with a purpose' and she focuses on mental wellness and encouraging people to not take life too seriously. Working in communications is often a high-pressure and high-stress career so it was felt this would be a good fit for the event to ensure it was fun and filled with laughter. Susan's brand of comedy also aligned with some of the Chapter's professional development events during 2018, including the Gift of Communication and "Let's Talk About Stress," which focused on mental health.

A second key part of the strategy was to engage past members to recognize their contribution to the chapter. As part of the year-long 40th anniversary activities, we reached out to all past board presidents to re-engage them in the chapter. This included producing short videos with several that were featured throughout the year and a personal invitation to the Ruby Jubilee. In the end, we were thrilled that 16 of our past presidents attended the event. We received feedback from many that it was a great reunion for them.

The program for the event combined opportunities to network as well as to recognize the anniversary and excellence in communications through the Outstanding Communicator Award and the student awards.

The evening started with a reception and ended with an after party that featured a D.J. and photos with our special 40th Anniversary step-and-repeat wall. The formal presentation was emceed by the host of the local radio morning show, Rebecca Zandbergen, and included:

- Short videos featuring each of the Outstanding Communicator Award nominees
- 40th Anniversary segment presented by former president John Finney which included a montage of several past presidents speaking about the value of IABC
- Presentation of four student awards
- Keynote presentation by Susan Stewart
- Presentation of the Outstanding Communicator Award

Event management

The success of the Ruby Jubilee was truly a team effort. Supported by the board executive, the planning committee was comprised of 10 volunteers responsible for the logistics, program planning, marketing and sponsorship.

Prior to bringing the planning team together, the Celebration Director consulted on theme and program ideas with various chapter leaders, including past and current board members and general members.

Ruby is the stone symbolic of the 40th anniversary so it was decided that would be the main colour for the decor and be incorporated into the event name. After considerable discussion, it was decided that the focus would be on creating a fun evening filled with laughter, networking and recognizing excellence.

The Celebration Team first met in December 2018. The team was presented with the theme, a mood board and the proposed line up for the program as outlined above. Once the direction was agreed upon, the work began in earnest.

Due to the limited budget and the cost of the keynote speaker, it was essential to increase the level of sponsorship to ensure that the event was an upscale one befitting the name ‘jubilee.’

We were able to secure two ‘silver-level’ sponsors – one was a marketing firm that designed all of the graphics for both the Ruby Jubilee and the complimentary look for the Outstanding Communicator Award, and the second was the local community college which provided a significant cash donation. Additional gift-in-kind sponsorship was obtained from the caterers, audio/visual provider, a sign company, the awards provider, photographer and others. Significant effort was put into obtaining nearly \$13,000 in cash and gift-in-kind contributions which allowed us to offer an upscale event that was fitting to mark our 40 years in existence.

The selected venue allowed for one area for the reception/after party where the upgraded appetizers, drinks and music were served up, and one for the program that was set up with tables so people could sit and enjoy the presentations. The rooms were both lit with ruby red accent colours and the tables were decorated with building blocks spelling out ‘**impact**’ and ‘**inspire**’ that were hand-made by the Celebration Team. Everyone also received a copy of Susan Stewart’s book and a stress ball which supported the theme of Susan’s presentation about relieving stress.

An expanded team of volunteers handled registration, in-the-moment social media posts and coordinated with the caterers and the video production team throughout the event.

Event Marketing

Early on in the planning, a full marcom strategy was developed to promote the event. In addition to selling tickets, the plan established goals of obtaining both advance media coverage in one of London’s business magazines and media coverage of the event by at least one media outlet.

The target audiences included both current and past members, non-members (in an effort to inspire new membership conversions) and students, and the key messaging focused on promoting it as an evening of laughter, networking and recognizing excellence.

The first step in marketing the event was creating the Ruby Jubilee webpage to promote the event on the IABC London website. This was the landing page for all supporting promotional tactics.

There were four main touch points with the target audiences:

- 1) Save the date – article in the chapter’s e-newsletter Connect, direct email to members, all social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Linked In and Instagram)
- 2) Ticket sales announcement – article in the chapter’s e-newsletter Connect, direct email to members, all social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Linked In and Instagram)
- 3) Promoting Susan Stewart which included a short video of Susan inviting people to the event – article in the chapter’s e-newsletter Connect profiling Susan Stewart, all social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Linked In and Instagram)
- 4) Ticket sales reminder – article in the chapter’s e-newsletter Connect, direct email to members, all social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Linked In and Instagram)

Individual outreach also included special emails to all past Virtuoso winners, and personal invitations to all past presidents and cold calls to corporations to promote table sales.

As a result of the marketing efforts, we obtained an article in London Inc., one of the city’s business magazines, media coverage of the event in the local daily newspaper and issued a total of 157 tickets to a diverse mixture of members (37), non-members (24), students (22), sponsors (10) and eight tables of eight that were a mixture of members and non-members.

MEASUREMENT

Success was measured via anecdotal feedback from past presidents and other attendees, ticket sales and the final budget.

RESULTS

| Objective | Results |
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| 1. Create a fun, entertaining event that would attract people in the absence of the traditional local project-based awards presentations | Overwhelming anecdotal feedback that the event was a great success and that people loved speaker Susan Stewart |
| 2. Recognize the contribution of members past and present who laid the foundation for the chapter’s 40 years of successfully elevating the local profession | Attended by 16 past presidents and included one as the main presenter for the 40 th anniversary segment of the evening |
| 3. Reach event attendance of at least 150 people to showcase the 40 th year celebration to a wide portion of the chapter’s audience | Attendance of 157 members and non-members |
| 4. Meet budget expectations | The total cost of the event was \$3,884.35, less than the \$5000 set aside by the board |