

**Chapter:** IABC London

**Category:** Strategic Planning

**Division 2:** Medium Chapter

**Title:** IABC London Strategic Planning: 2018-2019 - Learn. Connect. Celebrate.

## **INTRODUCTION**

IABC London is a medium-sized chapter that serves more than 150 members and reaches a total audience of more than 500 communicators in London, Ontario and surrounding regions. Founded in 1979, the chapter is a community and resource committed to investing in members' futures by supporting career growth and elevating the communications profession.

Starting 2018, IABC London was in a fantastic position. After several years of solid growth of the chapter, we were sitting on a solid foundation:

- Strong financial situation > an opportunity to take a strategic look at investing in our chapter and our audience
- Solid membership with opportunity to add more students and corporate memberships

Looking at the 2018-2019 year, the board recognized the opportunity to build on this success and raise things up incrementally over the next several years, particularly as we moved into the chapter's 40th anniversary in the 2019 calendar year. That meant looking at what we're good at... what our core function as a chapter is, as our building blocks to build on.

What we're here for is really quite simple, and that's where the **2018-2019 Vision "Learn. Connect. Celebrate." was derived.**

This vision directly supported the #IABC1720 vision in the following three pillars of the chapter's plan:

### **Help professional communicators Learn**

IABC International's Vision is "Professional communicators at the heart of every organization, and its purpose is to "Advance the profession, create connection and develop strategic communicators." By helping our audience learn this year, we support that vision and purpose. We will provide amazing learning opportunities this year for our audience.

### **Help professional communicators Connect**

We have seen that our audience simply loves the opportunity to meet each other and network together. Therefore, our ambition doesn't have to be to stage a blockbuster keynote speaker event every single month – we have the opportunity to focus on what we're good at: helping communicators at every stage of their career to connect with the people they want and need to reach. We will, this year, increase our networking opportunities for our audience.

### **Help professional communicators Celebrate**

A major opportunity is the 40th anniversary of IABC London in 2019. We will mark this occasion by resourcing an anniversary celebration that lasts for the full year. We will celebrate our history, involve those who have built the chapter's successes over the years, and get excited about our future. Part of the opportunity this year is to also take a careful, strategic look at our awards and celebration programming to align it fully with what our audience needs for celebrating excellence in the profession.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

IABC London saw a key goal for 2018-2019 of using the platform "Learn. Connect. Celebrate." to support even more professional communicators in their career goals and in elevating the profession, therefore the chapter's overall goal was to increase the total size of IABC London's audience this fiscal year by at least 10 per cent.

**The chapter's objectives to support the 2018-2019 vision of "Learn. Connect. Celebrate." were:**

1. To mark the chapter's 40th anniversary with a celebration event that is attended by at least 150 current and past members of IABC London's community, on budget and recognizes the significant contribution of past and current members to the chapter's success.
2. Engage stakeholders in a thorough review of IABC London's chapter awards program to inform future direction.
3. Offer professional development opportunities all aligning with the chapter vision of "learn, connect and celebrate."
4. Increase chapter membership by at least 10 per cent and conduct research to support the future launch of a mentorship program.
5. Develop a strengthened online presence for the chapter, increasing the social media follower base by 10 per cent.
6. Increase awareness of communications certification and increase the number of certified professionals in the London community
7. Retain current sponsors for IABC London and secure additionally one major sponsor for a PD event
8. Build on, and enhance, IABC London's strong financial position.

## BUDGET

Recognizing the special nature of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2019 and the very strong financial standing of the chapter (with reserves well in excess of one year's operating funds), the board decided it would invest strategic funds to ensure the celebration of the anniversary was a year to remember. This was seen as a strategic opportunity to support the growth of the chapter's audience, support engagement and give back to our membership.

The chapter's revenue for 2018-2019 was \$31,153.27 and expenses totaled \$37,841.38 – representing a one-time deficit year that supported the strategic direction for 2018-2019, supporting chapter growth and the objectives that would ensure future financial prosperity for the chapter.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Each objective of the 2018-2019 IABC London Strategic Plan was achieved by a volunteer team totalling 40 board directors, committee members and chapter volunteers:

Objective	Results
1. To mark the chapter's 40th anniversary with a celebration event that is attended by at least 150 current and past members of IABC London's community, on budget and recognizes the significant contribution of past and current members to the chapter's success.	The Ruby Jubilee was held June 6, 2019, and celebrated 40 years of impact and inspiration. 156 people attended, including 16 past presidents and the event received rave reviews. There was a great mix of members, non-members and students at the event that included a reception, two-hour program and an after party. The board of directors approved running a deficit on the event to elevate its calibre and secure a keynote speaker, motivational comedian Susan Stewart who culminated a successful celebration. A deficit of \$3,869 on the total event cost was considered a worthwhile investment for a high-quality event that significantly supported our audience engagement efforts in our 40th year.
2. Engage stakeholders in a thorough review of IABC London's chapter awards program to inform future direction.	We successfully conducted a fulsome review of IABC London's awards offering over this past year, through a plan consisting of three pillars: stakeholder engagement and feedback; a peer review to study awards

	<p>programming offered by other Canadian chapters; and a historical analysis to review the history of the Virtuoso Awards program.</p> <p>We heard from a total of 71 communications professionals from London and area through our digital survey and Think Tank event. They provided valuable feedback on our current awards programming and suggestions for improvement. We also engaged eight chapters through a peer review survey and follow-up conversations, and conducted additional research for an understanding of all chapter awards programs across Canada. Finally, we conducted a historical analysis of existing data from the past 25 years of the Virtuoso Awards program.</p> <p>Our committee took our findings and developed recommendations for the future direction of awards programming at IABC London. Based on feedback from our stakeholders, the committee recommended that we continue the Virtuoso Awards with a number of changes to refresh and enhance the program, including its marketing.</p>
<p>3. Offer professional development opportunities all aligning with the chapter vision of “learn, connect and celebrate.”</p>	<p>Five events were executed in 2018-2019, each with a different target of levels of the communication career arc.</p> <p>Five different individuals approached the PD directors this year inquiring about membership, and those individuals were introduced to the Membership Director to on-board as members.</p> <p>The PD portfolio maintained a balanced budget due to lower-than-expected expenses.</p> <p>Event surveys concluded that those in attendance at this year’s events felt the programming was aligned with their career development needs.</p>
<p>4. Increase chapter membership by at least 10 per cent and conduct research to support the future launch of a mentorship program.</p>	<p>Chapter Membership grew from 142 to 158 active members (June 2018-Aug 2019)</p> <p>A committee was formed to pilot a chapter mentorship program in 2019-2020.</p>
<p>5. Develop a strengthened online presence for the chapter, increasing the social media follower base by 10 per cent.</p>	<p>A robust online presence and daily social media posting schedule was implemented in 2018-2019, resulting in substantial online growth:</p> <p>Twitter = 2,138 (increase of 2.6%)  Facebook = 772 (increase of 7%)  LinkedIn = 268! (increase of 58%)  Launched Instagram &gt; Launched Instagram</p>

	with 232 followers, 62 posts, great use of stories during events
6. Increase awareness of communications certification and increase the number of certified professionals in the London community	Welcomed two new certified members to IABC London through hosting a Certification exam in April 2019.
7. Retain current sponsors for IABC London and secure additionally one major sponsor for a PD event	Retained almost all of our existing sponsors, and were also successful in securing some new ones for the chapter, aligned with our 40th Anniversary Celebration. These partnerships allowed the portfolio to exceed its financial targets this year, and contributed to the financial health of other portfolios as well. A sponsorship prospectus was also developed this year. Sponsorship gift-in-kind contributions totaled more than \$11,000 in addition to cash sponsorships.
8. Build on, and enhance, IABC London's strong financial position.	All finance processes reviewed and refined as needed, resulting in greater chapter efficiency and understanding by each board member of the budget process. A new cloud-based and cost-effective bookkeeping solution was implemented. Operational expenses reviewed, efficiencies put in place resulting in more than \$200/year in savings for the chapter. Strategic investment in key chapter activities while maintaining a reserve of one full year of expenses was met. A finance policy developed and approved by the board.

## MEASUREMENT

IABC London's goal of the 2018-2019 "Learn. Connect. Celebrate." strategic plan to grow the total audience of the chapter by at least 10 per cent was exceeded through the result of meeting each of the plan's objectives: in fact, the total audience size grew by 18.57 per cent in one year!

September 2018 non-member email distribution list: 160 contacts September Facebook Page followers: 715 September Facebook Group followers: 80 September Twitter followers: 2084 September LinkedIn followers: 176 followers Total Audience September 2018: 3215	June 2019: non-member email distribution list 239 contacts June Facebook Page followers: 839 June Facebook Group followers: 107 Created Instagram: 227 followers June Twitter followers: 2138 June LinkedIn followers: 263 followers Total Audience June 2019: 3812
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**Difference: 597 net new audience members of IABC London**