IABC TORONTO

Communicator

THIS ISSUE

President's Message READ›
Editor's Message READ›
Annual Report READ›
FEATURE: The role of marketing communications — what's the story? READ›
THE X-PERIENCED FILES: Five ways to spend your dollars that don't involve TV, radio or print READ›
FEATURE: Surviving the post-holiday retail slump READ›
HEAD TO HEAD: Can celebrity endorsements help your brand? READ›
DIGITALLY SPEAKING: Cracking the viral video code READ›
THE INDIE SCENE: The benefits of hiring indies with subject matter expertise READ›
CAMPUS CORNER: Humber College's postgraduate PR program READ›
BOOK REVIEW: Trust Me, I'm Lying – Confessions of a Media Manipulator READ›
PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE READ›
HONOURING EXCELLENCE Gary Schlee receives Master Communicator distinction READ›

PLEASE NOTE: Articles in *Communicator* reflect the opinions of the writers and experts invited to comment but not necessarily those of IABC/Toronto.

IN THE KNOW

> Make sure you check out commVERSATIONS and read some of the great blogs from IABC/Toronto members. See what Eric Emin Wood, managing editor for this edition of *Communicator*, thinks about the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* and the threat to freedom of speech. And don't miss Part 2 to Rachel Baldacchino's article in this edition, The Role of Marketing Communications — What's the Story? Do you have something to say? Here's your opportunity… submit your blog on a subject of your choice and let your colleagues know what you think.

> Don't miss the Communicator of the Year (COTY) breakfast as we honour this year's recipient, Dr. Middleton, executive director of Schulich Executive Education Centre, co-author of two books: *Advertising Works II* and *Ikonica — A Fieldguide to Canada's Brandscape*, co-founder of the Cassie advertising awards and a 2005 inductee into the Canadian Marketing Hall of Legends. Come out and hear Dr. Middleton's story and the role that communications has played in his success. Join us for networking, breakfast and the official presentation on Tuesday, March 10 from 8 to 10 a.m. at the Toronto Eaton Centre Marriott. Learn more and register

> Hey students, do you demonstrate excellence in communications? What about leadership? Do you have strong writing skills? And finally, are you passionate about your academic and volunteer initiatives? Did you answer yes to all? Then you might have what it takes to be our IABC/Toronto 2015 Student of the Year. We are now accepting entries for the 2015 IABC Student of the Year Award — deadline is March 31. Visit the Student of the Year page on the IABC/Toronto website for more information and application instructions.

CORPORATE MEMBER LUNCH & LEARNS

We continue to offer IABC lunchtime presentations for GTA corporate members. Close to a third of IABC/Toronto members join through their organization, yet often as a result of staff changes, they have limited knowledge of IABC and all that it has to offer. To become acquainted (or re-acquainted) with the association, organize a Lunch & Learn at your office for five or more members. An IABC/Toronto Member Ambassador will stop by to lead an informative presentation and discussion. To sign up, drop Mary-Ellen Hynd, VP Membership an email at toronto-membership@iabc.com.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

IABC/TORONTO ROCKS!

I've just returned from IABC's Leadership Institute (LI), a two-day conference that brings together chapter leaders from across the world. It was a great experience to be with so many IABC members and have the opportunity to share ideas and learnings, and look to the future of the organization. LI is also a time to recognize successes with the announcement of the IABC Chapter Management Awards (CMAs), an awards program that measures the leadership abilities, management skills, creativity and teamwork of chapters/chapter leaders worldwide.

I'm pleased to report that Toronto cleaned up at the CMAs! We received Excellence in all categories we submitted in — Communication, Student Involvement, Professional Development (PD), Membership Marketing and Leadership Development! We also won Large Chapter of the Year and International Chapter of the Year! I can tell you it was a very proud moment to represent Toronto and receive the awards on your behalf.

The awards are a great nod to the IABC/Toronto chapter, and in this case reflect the successes achieved by last year's Board under the guidance of past president Louise Armstrong. They also speak to the strong engagement of our members and volunteers — so thank you, we couldn't have achieved this without all of you!

That is also the perfect segue to bring your attention to highlights of the 2013/2014 IABC/Toronto Annual Report which is included in this issue of *Communicator*. One of the mandates of any company or organization is to provide an overview of the fiscal year to stakeholders. It is in that spirit that we are pleased to include these highlights as an infographic, with the complete, detailed report available on the IABC/Toronto website.

I encourage you to read the report and see for yourself what IABC/Toronto accomplished in 2013/2014. Our current 2014/2015 fiscal year is carrying on from where we left off last year, and I'm confident that we will continue to deliver value to our members through our professional development sessions, networking/social events (the newly minted and ever-popular #After5's), improved, more targeted and relevant content (through Communicator, e-Lerts and the website), job-search assistance through CareerLine, advertising opportunities...and the list goes on. Membership indeed has its rewards!

In the end, however, the only people who can decide an organization's success are its members, so thanks for your ongoing support and commitment, and we encourage you to read the Annual Report.

Stephanie Engel

President,
IABC/Toronto

E-LERT:
GET NOTICED.
BE HEARD!

Looking to reach some **amazing communicators?**

The IABC/Toronto e-Lert has you covered!

Whether you're looking to promote your business or connect with experienced communicators, e-Lert can help you reach the right audience.

With e-Lert you can:

> Promote events that your business is hosting/holding
> Post promotional announcements
> Promote your business' services/products

Sent every second week to more than 3,700 subscribers across the GTA, e-Lert reaches communicators and subscribers who specialize in media, design, marketing, hospitality, social media, and advertising (among other areas).

The e-Lert is your gateway to making things happen for you and your organization. Start connecting, get noticed and be heard.

Read more or contact toronto-adsponsor@iabc.com.

TOP

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

WELCOME TO 2015!

It's a new year, which means dozens, if not hundreds, of magazine editors across North America have used their first public letters of 2015 to remind their readers about the spirit of the season — one of reflection, renewal, and… something else that begins with R.

(Our own president, of course, avoided this trap by penning one such column in September.)

I don't mean to deride such articles — they have their value — but it's equally important to acknowledge the bracing reality on the other side of them: that there is no ideal moment for reflection, renewal and resolution.

The new year's spirit and its accompanying promise is all well and good, but if I resolve to lose weight by, say, power walking for 30 minutes every day and avoiding cookies without any sort of plan in place for doing so, I'll be skipping walks within a week and reaching for the nearest Oreo like I have every day for the past year — only to wind up 10 additional pounds heavier and doing push-ups in a frantic struggle to fit into my dress pants before Christmas dinner the following December.

Any communicator (any company, really) who simply maintains the status quo for much of the year, saving their best plans for a specific moment, will soon find themselves in a similar emergency — by compressing what should be a steady, gradual process into the few hours or days before an arbitrary deadline, they do themselves and their clients a grave disservice.

Christmas isn't the marketing world's only important season — which is why many companies release new products throughout the year. Politicians can't afford to rest on their laurels until two months before an election. A company's internal communications department shouldn't be waiting until August to engage staff. The practitioners who come out ahead know this: for them, reaching difficult goals becomes a habit, one requiring consistent and careful planning, rather than a depressing annual tradition.

This, then, is the ultimate contradiction of New Year's resolutions: the people most likely to succeed are the ones who don't make them at all.

Which is a roundabout way of saying I didn't make any this year.

I think I'll go for a walk now, perhaps after another cookie…

ABOUT
ERIC EMIN WOOD
Eric Emin Wood is a journalist who primarily writes for the Town Crier, a midtown community newspaper, and has been co-managing editor of *Communicator* since 2012.

TOP

ANNUAL REPORT

THE YEAR WE 'WENT DIGITAL'

In previous years, IABC/Toronto has worked from a three-year strategic plan, but given the unpredictability of today's world, we decided to create a one-year strategy for 2013/2014. Our vision was to be the association of choice for GTA communications professionals and our overall goal was to provide relevant content and skills development to engage members and promote member value.

It was a challenging year for the chapter as we had to balance the delivery of local programs with advocating on behalf of our members to IABC International as it went through a period of transition. Despite this, we ended the year with a host of accomplishments.

PROMOTING MEMBERSHIP

Added Lunch 'n' Learn events to show corporate members how they can activate their memberships

Launched a student ambassador committee with reps from all postsecondary communications programs and **increased student membership to 252**

NETWORKING FOR ALL MEMBERS

7 events including successful student-focussed speed-networking event with 40 student and 13 senior members

Expanded awareness of our profession with another successful Communicator of the Year event

Honoured our latest MC, Jo Langham, ABC, at a special event for accredited and senior members only

COMMUNICATOR GOES DIGITAL

The inaugural digital issue had an open rate of 40% and click-thru rate of 15%

Moved our newsletter, *Communicator*, to a fully digital format, which will save us almost **$10,000** a year

Improved the calibre of newsletter articles by encouraging more senior members to write

A RECORD-BREAKING OVATIONS PROGRAM

240 OVATIONS ENTRIES, a chapter record!

More than 60 senior members judged awards entries

600 tweets about the event and 670 views of our post-gala Storify page

OVATIONS Awards gala was a smash hit with more than 300 guests

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED

Placed more than **200 MEMBERS** in **volunteer** roles

Provided almost 30 on-site volunteers for the 2014 World Conference in Toronto

Exceeded mentorship program goals with 72 participants & 36 matched pairs

CHAPTER SUB-GROUPS

Professional Independent Communicators (PIC) held 10 PD & networking events

West End Group held 3 events for communicators in the Western GTA

ENGAGING WITH SOCIAL

Added a VP, Social Media to our chapter board roles

Held 22 weekly Tweet chats – one chat had 670 tweets!

Overall **SOCIAL MEDIA** engagement **UP 27%**

Facebook participation up 26%

Twitter participation up 31%

LinkedIn participation up 22%

PD EVENTS HAD GREAT CONTENT

Held 6 in-person PD events & 1 webinar

85% SATISFACTION rate in event surveys

Timely & relevant PD topics including:
> Managing career transitions
> Search engine optimization
> Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation

REPRESENTING TORONTO WITH IABC INTERNATIONAL

Kept chapter membership advised of changes and issues at IABC International with regular emails

Used chapter blog, CommVERSATIONS, to share news and details from IABC Leadership Institute and Annual General Meeting

A team comprising chapter leadership, regional leadership and engaged senior IABC/Toronto members met with the full IABC International Executive Board to share concerns and suggestions

ENHANCING OUR COMMUNICATIONS

Launched new format for e-Lert and working with MailChimp for improved tracking and measurement

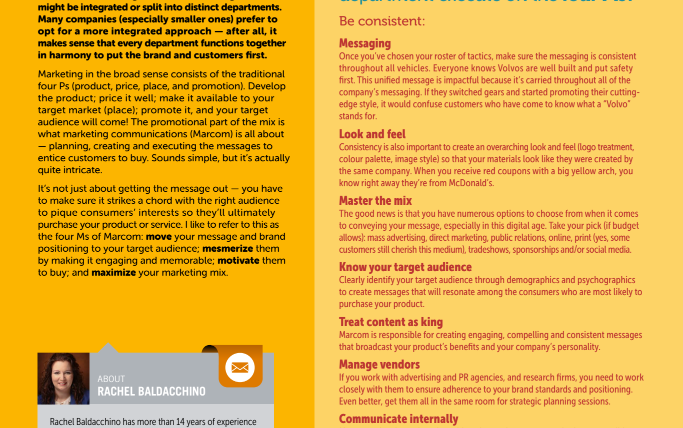
Followed best practices for CASL by reviewing our entire e-Lert distribution list and obtaining explicit consent from all recipients and ensured 100% CASL compliance

Launched mobile-friendly mirror website, iabc.to

READ THE ENTIRE ANNUAL REPORT GO

TOP

FEATURE



THE ROLE OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS
WHAT'S THE STORY?
PART 1

Ask a hundred marketing communication professionals what their department is responsible for and you're likely to get a hundred different answers. Depending on the size of the organization, marketing functions might be integrated or split into distinct departments. Many companies (especially smaller ones) prefer to opt for a more integrated approach — after all, it makes sense that every department functions together in harmony to put the brand and customers first.

Marketing in the broad sense consists of the traditional four Ps (product, price, place, and promotion). Develop the product; price it well; make it available to your target market (place); promote it, and your target audience will come! The promotional part of the mix is what marketing communications (Marcom) is all about — planning, creating and executing the messages to entice customers to buy. Sounds simple, but it's actually quite intricate.

It's not just about getting the message out — you have to make sure it strikes a chord with the right audience to pique consumers' interests so they'll ultimately purchase your product or service. I like to refer to this as the four Ms of Marcom: **move** your message and brand positioning to your target audience; **mesmerize** them by making it engaging and memorable; **motivate** them to buy; and **maximize** your marketing mix.

ABOUT
RACHEL BALDACCHINO
Rachel Baldacchino has more than 14 years of experience as a professional writer who creates clear, concise and customer-friendly materials for internal and external audiences. She currently works at Allstate Insurance in Markham.

So, how does a typical Marcom department execute on the **four Ms?**

Be consistent:

Messaging
Once you've chosen your roster of tactics, make sure the messaging is consistent throughout all vehicles. Everyone knows Volvos are well built and put safety first. This unified message is impactful because it's carried throughout all of the company's messaging. If they switched gears and started promoting their cutting-edge style, it would confuse customers who have come to know what a "Volvo" stands for.

Look and feel
Consistency is also important to create an overarching look and feel (logo treatment, colour palette, image style) so that your materials look like they were created by the same company. When you receive red coupons with a big yellow arch, you know right away they're from McDonald's.

Master the mix
The good news is that you have numerous options to choose from when it comes to conveying your message, especially in this digital age. Take your pick (if budget allows): mass advertising, direct marketing, public relations, online, print (yes, some customers still cherish this medium), tradeshows, sponsorships and/or social media.

Know your target audience
Clearly identify your target audience through demographics and psychographics to create messages that will resonate among the consumers who are most likely to purchase your product.

Treat content as king
Marcom is responsible for creating engaging, compelling and consistent messages that broadcast your product's benefits and your company's personality.

Manage vendors
If you work with advertising and PR agencies, and research firms, you need to work closely with them to ensure adherence to your brand standards and positioning. Even better, get them all in the same room for strategic planning sessions.

Communicate internally
Marcom, often in conjunction with an internal comms team, is also responsible for employee communications and crafting messages for senior management. Although you're capturing various voices, consistency is still critical.

Set the strategy and budget
Develop an annual marketing communications plan outlining your objectives, positioning statement(s), key messages, integrated tactics and associated budget.

Measure
You need to implement the proper analytics to measure results. For example, using special phone tracking numbers or URLs will help you determine which vehicles work best.

Get innovative
Marcom must be on top of trends and know what balance to strike with the marketing mix. Haven't yet ventured into social media? Now might be the time to try, especially if your target market is very connected.

Case Study

When it comes to the four Ms, the financial industry may not exactly spring to mind, but TD Canada Trust has certainly mastered them. This is evidenced by its number one ranking (for the ninth year in a row!) among the top five banks in J.D. Power's 2014 Canadian Retail Banking Customer Satisfaction Study and its top spot in the 2014 Interbrand ranking for best Canadian brands.

Think about TD: picture the iconic green chair, comfort, convenience, flexibility and accessibility. Since TD set out to make banking more comfortable, they've **moved** their message; **mesmerized** by creating a long-lasting brand position; **maximized** by building consistency among their marketing mix and delivered on what they promised (as for the fourth M, **motivating** customers to buy — well, the profits speak for themselves!). And as demonstrated by their "automated thanking machines" video, that has generated over 18 million views on YouTube to date, they've embraced digital and social media like it's been around forever.

Not every company has the same budget or resources as TD, of course, and they all have their own unique mix of Marcom elements. But the key to success is the same — ensure synchronization by selecting the right combination of promotional tactics that are best suited to your target audience.

Above all, create **your** story:
One that engages customers, elicits a positive reaction and evokes an emotional connection. This is the key to influencing purchasing habits and nurturing long-lasting relationships.

In part two of this series, we'll explore what you need to consider if you're thinking of expanding your career into marketing communications.

READ PART 2 ON THE BLOG GO

TOP

THE X-PERIENCED FILES

FIVE WAYS TO SPEND YOUR DOLLARS THAT DON'T INVOLVE TV, RADIO OR PRINT

Let's face it: few organizations can afford a $4 million TV spot during the Super Bowl. Yet every company must relentlessly market itself to stand out, grow and stay at the top of consumers' minds. Fortunately, you have countless opportunities to promote your brand in 2015 without breaking the bank.

TV, radio, and print can be effective at generating awareness, but if you have a limited marketing budget, you can still successfully promote your brand by using non-traditional marketing channels. That's the advice of seasoned marketing professional David Pullara, who has worked for such global brands as Starbucks, Yum! Brands (owners of KFC, Taco Bell and Pizza Hut), and Coca-Cola. "If you have a targeted message and you're willing to be creative, you can achieve great results," assures Pullara.

ABOUT
LISA GOLLER
Lisa Goller is a strategic freelance writer and editor who helps businesses tell their stories. Connect with her on LinkedIn.

Today's effective marketing channels

For the first time, digital advertising surpassed all other forms of advertising in 2014, according to the Interactive Advertising Bureau of Canada. The mass channels celebrated in *Mad Men* are no longer your only options: If traditional media isn't a viable strategy, Pullara recommends the following five non-traditional channels:

1 **PUBLIC RELATIONS:** PR is a powerful, yet often neglected, marketing channel. For it to be most effective, "you want to find the right people who can authentically talk about your brand — and the key word is 'authentically,'" Pullara says. "Consumers today usually know when a celebrity is just talking about a product because they're being paid, and it's less effective than when a star is a true brand advocate." Media coverage is another valuable form of marketing, so start building relationships with reporters.

2 **SEARCH:** When we want to learn about a product, category, or event, we often turn to Google, so it makes sense to ensure your brand appears near the top of online search results. Make time to learn how search-engine marketing works, as it can be a cost-effective way to build brand awareness and drive traffic to your website. While you're at it, help your target easily find your website on the most popular search engines by using search engine optimization (SEO). "It's not sexy," Pullara admits, "but it works."

3 **EXPERIENTIAL:** Experiential marketing is more than just "sampling." The trick is to identify the places where your target will be and capture their attention with a relevant, engaging message. Pullara cites Walmart Canada's recent set-up of a Santa's Workshop-themed kiosk in Toronto's financial district. "Choose the right place, attract the right people and deliver the right message, like Walmart did," he says. "They popped up at an unexpected location, invited shoppers to try the season's hottest toys and demonstrated the convenience and simplicity of ordering at Walmart.ca. And the result was some terrific earned media and likely a positive perception of the Walmart.ca shopping experience." While elaborate experiential programs can be costly, you can execute a very strong activation and deliver an exceptional return on investment for far less than the cost of creating and airing a television ad.

4 **DIGITAL COUPONS:** If you don't have the type of marketing budget to support experiential activation but you still want to drive product trial, try digital coupons. Innovative companies like Checkout51 and SnapSave by Groupon have brought traditional coupons into the digital age by helping companies give cash-back rebates to consumers who purchase their products. "These companies are still relatively new, but I like their creativity in getting consumers to try new products," says Pullara. And SampleSource.com allows you to mail free samples directly to consumers' homes. "SampleSource collects information about a user when they sign up, so they can help you get your sample in front of the people most likely to buy it the next time they're at a store," Pullara notes.

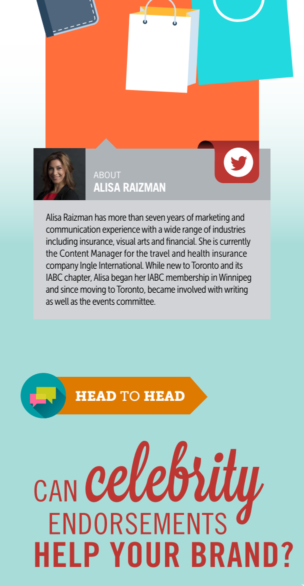
5 **SOCIAL MEDIA:** Leveraging social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can generate awareness — if you know what to expect. Social media users prefer brands that create authentic, interesting content rather than overtly commercial messages. "Your goal is to have brand advocates and influencers look forward to your posts, and share them with their networks because they find your content compelling. Done properly, social media can be extremely effective," Pullara says.

So, let Budweiser have the Super Bowl commercials. Take your 2015 marketing budget further by using non-traditional routes to break through the clutter, boost awareness and engage your target.

TOP

FEATURE

SURVIVING THE POST-HOLIDAY RETAIL SLUMP



ABOUT
ALISA RAIZMAN
Alisa Raizman has more than seven years of marketing and communication experience with a wide range of industries including insurance, visual arts and financial. She is currently the Content Manager for the travel and health insurance company Ingle International. While new to Toronto and its IABC chapter, Alisa began her IABC membership in Winnipeg and since moving to Toronto, became involved with writing as well as the events committee.

The start of a new year is also the start of a new retail season. While it's a nice break for shoppers and their wallets, it's a tough time for retailers and businesses relying on the everyday consumer — to say nothing of their marketing departments.

How do they deal with the post-holiday slump? While a conundrum in theory, the best marketing departments simply view the post-holiday season as another part of a strategic calendar of promotions and campaigns developed, if not a year in advance, then at least months in advance.

The best marketers prepare for the slump in the new year by researching and analyzing behaviour trends after each holiday season. By having one team update its research and another analyze the previous years' data, they can recognize and adapt to incoming purchasing patterns. If you're a company that sells groceries, for instance, you can monitor the specific types of food being sold month to month. Based on that data, an entire year can planned around these purchase trends.

For example, Shoppers Drug Mart uses the first few months of the new year to tap into the most common New Year's resolution: To improve one's health routine. As a result, consumers who enter a Shopper's Drug Mart in January will see lots of promotions for products like vitamins, weight loss systems, and supplements.

In fact, the marketing departments of large companies like Shoppers Drug Mart usually have January's promotional plan developed and ready to roll out in the fall. The creative has already been signed off, ads and media are booked, and the digital content is written and ready to launch. By the time January comes around, Shoppers' marketers are already busy working on the spring and summer campaigns.

So what can the marketers whose clients don't have pockets as deep as Shoppers' learn from this? Even without the benefit of well-funded research departments, planning, or analyzing sales data as a matter of course can be done economically. Even for the big boys, there's always room for a last-minute promotion or campaign using simple but creative tactics. For instance, one Toronto shoe store hosts "customer nights" directed toward specific clientele in the neighbourhood. They also partner with neighbouring retail businesses to promote sales through shared social media events.

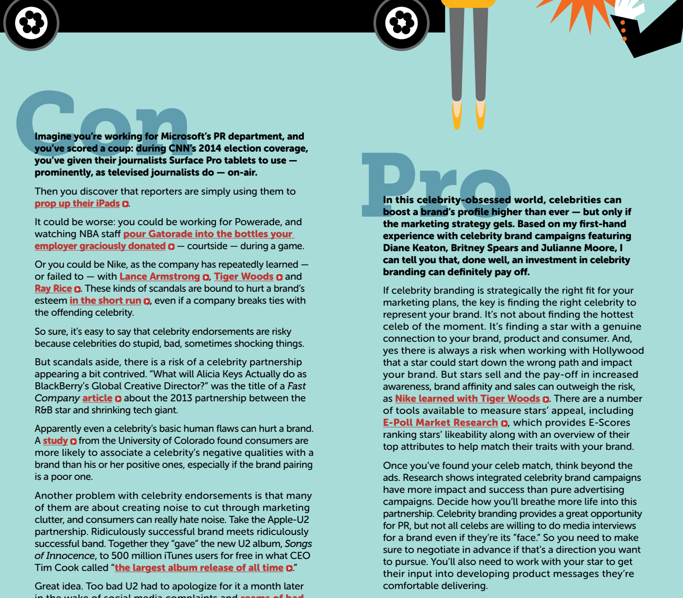
While advertising, especially in a city like Toronto, can be costly, there are direct marketing tactics that don't have to blow the entire year's budget before January ends. For example, many clubs, associations, and even condo villages provide niche markets for direct marketing, and companies such as Metroland can help you reach them for a reasonable fee.

Finally, all retail companies — even the big ones — know they're going to have reduced revenue in the months following the holiday season, and can budget accordingly. With a strong marketing plan based on consumers' past behaviours and purchasing trends, companies should be able to weather the winter months without taking a significant hit to their bottom lines.

TOP

HEAD TO HEAD

CAN celebrity ENDORSEMENTS HELP YOUR BRAND?



Con

Imagine you're working for Microsoft's PR department, and you've scored a coup: during CNN's 2014 election coverage, you've given their journalists Surface Pro tablets to use — prominently, as televised journalists do — on-air.

Then you discover that reporters are simply using them to prop up their iPads.

It could be worse: you could be working for Powerade, and watching NBA staff pour Gatorade into the bottles your employer graciously donated — courtside — during a game.

Or you could be Nike, as the company has repeatedly learned — or failed to — with Lance Armstrong, Tiger Woods and Ray Rice. These kinds of scandals are bound to hurt a brand's esteem in the short run, even if a company breaks ties with the offending celebrity.

So sure, it's easy to say that celebrity endorsements are risky because celebrities do stupid, bad, sometimes shocking things.

But scandals aside, there is a risk of a celebrity partnership appearing a bit contrived. "What will Alicia Keys Actually do as BlackBerry's Global Creative Director?" was the title of a *Fast Company* article about the 2013 partnership between the R&B star and shrinking tech giant.

Apparently even a celebrity's basic human flaws can hurt a brand. A study from the University of Colorado found consumers are more likely to associate a celebrity's negative qualities with a brand than his or her positive ones, especially if the brand pairing is a poor one.

Another problem with celebrity endorsements is that many of them are about creating noise to cut through marketing clutter, and consumers can really hate noise. Take the Apple-U2 partnership. Ridiculously successful brand meets ridiculously successful band. Together they "gave" the new U2 album, *Songs of Innocence*, to 500 million iTunes users for free in what CEO Tim Cook called "the largest album release of all time."

Great idea. Too bad U2 had to apologize for it a month later in the wake of social media complaints and reams of bad coverage. U2 frontman Bono described the idea as a "drop of megalomania, a touch of generosity [and a] dash of self-promotion." He was right. Intended generosity aside, the promo wasn't about users; it was about Apple and U2.

Apple, which has heaps of data about iTunes users, surely knew that not every iTunes user was a U2 fan. How did they think those customers would react? With this and other celebrity marketing campaigns, the problem is that no celebrity, no matter how famous, is going to strike a chord with all your customers.

Now, compare that apparently $100 million campaign with some other, more successful, marketing campaigns from 2014. The most watched ad on YouTube in Canada was the #TDThanksYou video which shows a handful of TD customers receiving a personalized gift from an ATM. A story about the "Share a Coke" program, which features personalized Coke cans, was one of USA Today's 10 most-read stories of 2014. The ALS Icebucket challenge raised more than $16 million for research in Canada alone — and it didn't cost anything to execute because all of the content was made by and starred regular people (until it became so popular, celebrities joined in).

Personalized marketing works because it reaches consumers one-on-one in a noisy world. With the help of social media and lots of digital data about consumers, celebrities are out as stars of the show; consumers are in. Customers don't charge exorbitant fees and you won't suffer for their personal scandals. They also buy the products and services that keep your business going. If you're considering a celebrity partnership for your next communications marketing campaign, consider making the celebrity your customer. Famous celebrities aren't always worth the risk.

ABOUT
PATRICK BURKE
Patrick is a senior consultant at Merkato Communications, where he specializes in media relations. He graduated from the Public Relations program at Humber College in 2012 and had been an IABC member for almost three years.

Pro

In this celebrity-obsessed world, celebrities can boost a brand's profile higher than ever — but only if the marketing strategy gels. Based on my first-hand experience with celebrity brand campaigns featuring Diane Keaton, Britney Spears and Julianne Moore, I can tell you that, done well, an investment in celebrity branding can definitely pay off.

If celebrity branding is strategically the right fit for your marketing plans, the key is finding the right celebrity to represent your brand. It's not about finding the hottest celeb of the moment. It's finding a star with a genuine connection to your brand, product and consumer. And, yes there is always a risk when working with Hollywood that a star could start down the wrong path and impact your brand. But stars sell and the pay-off in increased awareness, brand affinity and sales can outweigh the risk, as Nike learned with Tiger Woods. There are a number of tools available to measure stars' appeal, including E-Poll Market Research, which provides E-Scores ranking stars' likeability along with an overview of their top attributes to help match their traits with your brand.

Once you've found your celeb match, think beyond the ads. Research shows integrated celebrity brand campaigns have more impact and success than pure advertising campaigns. Decide how you'll breathe more life into this partnership. Celebrity branding provides a great opportunity for PR, but not all celebs are willing to do media interviews for a brand even if they're its "face." So you need to make sure to negotiate in advance if that's a direction you want to pursue. You'll also need to work with your star to get their input into developing product messages they're comfortable delivering.

Case in point: During our work with L'Oreal Paris, our research showed that celebrities and experts are two of the three most covered topics of beauty editors at key woman's magazines in Canada. Recognizing this opportunity, we created an integrated marketing communications campaign around the brand's North American advertising spokesperson, beloved Oscar-winning actress and author, Diane Keaton. The campaign combined media relations, social media, consumer event and sampling and helped L'Oreal Paris maintain its market leadership and significantly increased sales of the featured products.

No, this kind of success isn't guaranteed simply by signing a celebrity and there can be downsides to celebrity branding. Costs are at the top of the cons list, as big-name stars do not come cheap. But if celebrity branding is a strategic fit for your product, and you have the budget and marketing smarts, I say go for it. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

ABOUT
CATHY COWAN
Cathy is president of Cowan & Company Communications — IABC Toronto's 2014 Boutique PR Firm of the Year. C&C's collaboration with L'Oréal Paris on the Diane Keaton/Age Perfect skincare campaign was recognized with OVATION Awards of Excellence for media relations and marketing communications.

TOP

THERE'S MORE! KEEP SCROLLING OR CLICK GO

DIGITALLY SPEAKING

CRACKING THE VIRAL VIDEO

The Internet makes it possible for organizations to boost their brand's profile but a direct pitch online is more than just a pitch — gaining popularity through Internet sharing ain't easy. Viral videos, once again, hits but is "sweeter" — but not inevitable.

What classifies as viral?

Viral is a term used to describe videos and YouTube celebrity Devin "Smosh" Graves defines it as a video that has more than 1 million views within three to seven days. Others suggest 500,000 views count as viral.

But many experts say that millions of views from a subscriber base, sometimes from a celebrity or a well-known brand, don't make a video viral to reach secondary or non-marketed audiences that are the key to success.

Ironically, viral marketing communication videos don't actively sell to viewers. Often, the brand's name or logo doesn't even appear until the final frame. Instead, as Mitch Joel says, these videos "entertain, educate or inspire."

The culture delights in the unexpected, inspiring stories that stir emotions and is eager to share contagious content.

Deliver the unexpected and make it shareable

All sources agree on one thing: a viral video must deliver something unexpected. Joel says, "Viral is a mindset. It's about how you can offer video an escalating war having a child's life again or hard to anticipate ways. And who could product the gifts or TD Canada Trust's Dancing Guy, Sony Bravia's Balls and Bicycle?"

In his book Contagious: Why Things Catch On, Wharton School marketing professor Jonah Berger lists a few principles that can make a piece of content go viral. The first is social currency, people want to look "remarkable" in the eyes of others. Berger says people like also gain that contagious content offers tells a story, includes emotion, is practical and useful, and is "in the right environment" "social currency" by making them look like they're "in the know."

The video itself is only part of the strategy. "Some think quality video rises to the top," explains David Ewalt, an award-winning tech video writer, director, editor and Centennial College professor — "it doesn't. Quality video rises to the top only when it's found." he says.

Frame it with a popular reference in the title

Joel says, "Viral is a mindset. It's about how you can offer video that takes a child's, mentor, or something else that's popular because 'you can't search for or find something that you don't know exists.' Viral is a mindset. It's about how you can offer something effective but also applies to other viral videos, such as Weight's Father's Day or or Evan's Sister Hair.

Studies show that when lowbrow, short bites of three words or less also encourage views. Many titles are lightened and strengthen their appeal by including popular terms such as #TBT/Throw or #Jesus #JesuisIci.

Promote to influencers in a timely manner

Joel says, "Viral is a mindset. It's about how you can offer video, you need to post it well in advance. If it's a parody, you need to be the first out in it's funky," he says.

Once posted, social sources recommend seeding the video with customers, advocates and other stakeholders. But don't stop there. Joel says, "Viral is a mindset. It's about how you can offer video that is", such as employees who work in a group appearing in a short. Scrapbooking.

Share on sharing buttons, keywords and tags on all appropriate web assets. Then promote in social media, leverage brand advocates' support and submit it to social news sites such as Reddit.

If you follow these steps, there's a chance your video might be shared enough to reach new markets and maybe catch a celebrity's eye. Joel says, "Viral is a mindset. It's about how you can offer video that is gone minute to the video and its impact."

LEILA NETHERTON

Leila Netherton, APR, MA, is a career strategist and integrated communications consultant. She is also a Centennial College (IABC/Toronto president and has an CMTCPA, as well as other industry designations. Leila teaches in Centennial College's post-graduate program in Public Relations Management at Centennial College.

IABC/TORONTO BOARD 2014 – 2015

President
Stephanie Kragl, ABC

Immediate Past President
Vacant

Executive Vice President
Suzanne Carter, ABC

Vice President, Association Management & Finance
Vacant

Vice President, Awards
Martha Ayres, FMP

Vice President, Marketing & Sponsorship
Derek Kirkwood

Vice President, Member Communications
Vacant

Vice President, Membership
Rosa Elena Ojeda, MBA

Vice President, Networking & Volunteer
Kyle McFarlane, ABC

Vice President, Professional Development
Vanessa Fisher

Vice President, Social Media
Vacant

Vice President, Volunteer Services
Lindsay Sak

COMMUNICATOR

Dave Mark
Editor-in-Chief

Eric Dane Wood
Managing Editor

Cara Gallen
Copy Editor

Stephanie Kragl
President's Message

Jacqueline Bird
Designer, Dave Through

Frank Deutschlander
Text

Nicholas Ferroni
Text

Carley Cowan
Writer

Lisa Gelber
Writer

Blaire Grant
Writer

Leslie Hetherington
Writer

Neil Frank
Writer

Rosemary Sarcombe
Writer

Jane Lapthe
Writer

Priscilla Quesnel
Writer

Alex Rickman
Writer

Advertising:
Sales Manager
sales@communicatormagazine.com

Graphic Design:
Fusion Design Group Inc.
416.516.4677 www.fusiondg.ca
info@fusiondg.ca

IABC/Toronto:
185 Queen Street East, Suite 1
Toronto, ON M5A 1S4
416.366.3224 toronto.iabc.com

IABC International:
601 Montgomery Street, Suite 1950
San Francisco, CA 94111
1.800.776.4222 www.iabc.com

COMMUNICATOR is a publication of IABC/Toronto. Copyright 2014 IABC/Toronto. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.