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IN THE KNOW

> **The IABC/Toronto OVATION Awards** offers the communications profession an opportunity to present its best work. It advertises the excellence of individual award winners while fostering a greater appreciation of the communications profession. The awards program is open to all GTA communications practitioners—members and non-members—from juniors to independents to veterans and all those in-between.

- Early Bird deadline: February 4
- Final deadline: February 18
- Last minute deadline: February 25

This year, IABC/Toronto is offering a \$5 discount off submission fees for your 10th and any subsequent entry. For further details about submissions and fees, please visit toronto.iabc.com/award.

> **Disruptive innovation and the sharing economy with Ted Graham:**

Disruptive innovation is a hot topic these days, with the sharing economy gaining momentum as a business model—and Ted Graham, Innovation Leader at PwC Canada, has a bit of firsthand experience, having recently served as an UberX driver. While Uber alone may not have invented the sharing economy, its business model has most certainly been disruptive.

On Tuesday, February 23, join Ted at The Spoke Club (600 King St. W.) between 6 and 8:30 p.m. to hear firsthand about the lessons he learned working for Uber. Find out how the sharing economy is evolving, and about the opportunities, threats and challenges it brings. Learn how you can become the driver of innovative change in your own business or organization.

Follow Ted on Twitter: [@etdgraham](https://twitter.com/etdgraham)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Last year, we were surprised and utterly delighted to win five IABC chapter management awards for communication, student involvement, professional development, membership marketing and leadership development. We also took home trophies for the prestigious large chapter of the year and international chapter of the year awards. Because of this, we had the privilege of judging this year's chapter management awards. It's been a great experience learning more about how chapters from all corners of the world approach the challenge of continuing to raise the bar in serving their members and other communication professionals. The final results are being tabulated now and the winners will be recognized at the annual Leadership Institute (LI) event occurring in the first weekend of February. LI is also a great chance for us to connect with IABC international, regional and chapter leaders and hear more about what we can expect in the year ahead. I promise to share what I learn in an upcoming issue of *Communicator*.

And speaking of awards, anyone who knows me knows I'm passionate about IABC awards, whether it's Gold Quills, Silver Leafs or Toronto's very own annual OVATION Awards. Why do I love them so much? I think it's because of the multitude of opportunities they bring to our members to get involved, so I encourage you to submit an entry (or two, or ten). It's a great way to be recognized by other communication professionals for the exceptional work you've done during the past few years. But there are other ways to get involved; you can volunteer to help plan and execute our May awards gala. And, if you've been a communication professional for at least 10 years, I encourage you to sign up for a session to learn how to be a judge. Many of our seasoned communicators will tell you judging awards is one of the activities they look forward to most on the IABC/Toronto calendar each year. All you need to do to get involved is email Toronto-info@iabc.to and you'll be connected with the appropriate chapter leader.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also mention the IABC/Toronto Communicator of the Year award. As I write this, our panel is reviewing the submissions we've received to determine who we'll honour at an event to be held in March. Stay tuned for more details.

If awards aren't your thing, I hope one of our upcoming networking or professional development events appeals to you. If not, is there something else you want from your association? Email Toronto-president@iabc.to and let me know.

Suzanna Cohen, ABC, CMP
President, IABC/Toronto

MANAGING EDITOR'S MESSAGE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As communicators, we're usually trained to aim our efforts away from the organizations that hire us. Whether it's designing a social media campaign to maximize anticipation for a product launch, teaching executives how to best respond to a scandal, or speaking to an irate customer, we often find ourselves on the front lines when it comes to defining our client's public image, as if each business we represent is a single autonomous entity.

Of course, smart companies—and the communicators who work for them—know this isn't the case. They realize what is said between a company's walls can often matter more than what is said outside of them. The maxim of satisfied customers telling between two and three people about a wonderful experience, but complaining to between eight and 10 about an awful one, can just as easily apply to employees, and have an equal effect on an organization's morale—and bottom line.

This internal communications-themed issue of *Communicator* is for those practitioners and their employers. Despite the equal or greater importance of internal strategies to business communications, it's the lessons and guides and seminars and books and folk wisdom about engaging the public that seem to loom highest in our field's collective imagination. We think it's time internal comms stood up and was counted.

Diane Bégin's Digitally Speaking article about how we can inspire colleagues to use social media when talking about our employers—and help create a positive work environment so that they'll want to—touches on this relationship between employee morale and an organization's bottom line, citing a study from no less an authority than Dale Carnegie & Associates.

In the X-perienced File, Priya Bates notes that too many companies measure employee engagement based on whether employees decide to stay with—or leave—an organization or go above and beyond the call of duty, without taking into account why they made their decision. We communicators are the buffer between management and the rest of our colleagues, and the importance of recognizing that role and knowing how to perform it well cannot be overstated.

Elsewhere, Warren Leppik offers a case study in how we can help bridge the gap between managers and employees through video without spending a fortune, while Merissa King's feature offers a step-by-step guide to creating and, through strong leadership, delivering an effective internal communications plan. Lynn Woods talks about how indies can help their clients' internal comms, and we take a look at the ongoing argument of digital vs. print.

We hope you find this edition as interesting and useful as we do. Let us know—feedback is always welcome.



ABOUT ERIC EMIN WOOD

Eric Emin is a freelance journalist and staff writer for IT World Canada, with a keen interest in the corporate communications field.





FEATURE

ABOUT MERISSA KING

Merissa King is an account manager with APEX Public Relations specializing in corporate communications and media relations. She has eight years of experience in finance, energy, legal and non-profit sectors handling internal and external communication, media relations, community relations, issues management, event management, and print and digital content development.

CAN YOUR LEADERS walk the talk?

The thing about best-laid internal communication plans is that **people have to implement them, and typically, there's a 99 per cent chance that you've assigned a senior leader to execute your ideas.** Email to staff from the CEO? Check. Quarterly town hall with a panel of regional directors? Check. Informal chat on Yammer with the senior vice president? Check.

It might seem like a simplistic list of internal tactics, but senior leaders play an immensely powerful role in fostering excellence in internal communication. At all times, they must be aware not only of your company's goals, but also the reasons behind your company's goals, and practice what they genuinely consider the best methods of reaching them.

Employees crave genuineness and openness when they hear from leadership, and unless your leaders truly believe in what they are saying—unless they can walk the talk—any message from them will come across as inauthentic and forced.

This is, of course, where you come in. Part of making sure your leaders walk the talk is creating an effective internal communications plan.

As with any public relations strategy, your company's organizational culture must serve as the foundation of your new internal communications plan. If you don't understand your company's organizational culture, use this opportunity to take a step back and complete an initial assessment through an internal communications audit. While it may be tempting to plow ahead with a one-off internal communication plan to say you've checked the box, these plans will not be as effective if they are out of sync with an organization's culture and goals.

If you don't have the time or resources to complete a full-scale, in-depth communications audit, a simple scan of your current organization's internal environment is still an important step. As renowned public relations academic James E. Grunig points out, environmental scanning by public relations professionals involves analyzing strategic decisions made by management, and processing those decisions against what's happening with internal (and external) environments.

Once you create your plan, senior leaders still need to share their messages in a way that will resonate with employees. As international public relations practitioner Benita Steyn articulates, the responsibility of a PR function with a strategic mandate is to counsel organizational leaders on their communication responsibilities toward their employees. Meaning, it's your job to evaluate the internal environment in which leaders need to communicate and then effectively set them up for success by making sure they have an authentic message for employees.

Before your leaders actually deliver their message, complete some up-front homework, develop a skeleton plan and have a frank conversation with the leaders you've identified to help you communicate with staff to determine their comfort level.

When the story told to employees matches what's actually going on at a strategic organizational level, the more naturally authentic communication will come to your leaders and the more likely they will be to lead by example.

It may take some coaching on how to be an effective communications leader, but the result—an inspired and motivated staff—is well worth the effort.

THE X-PERIEENCED FILES

REDEFINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Philosophically, we know that engaging employees is important, but many of us don't really know what "employee engagement" means and how to actually measure its success.

The definition I often use, and which many employee engagement surveys measure, focuses on if an employee **stays** with an organization; if an employee **says** good things; and if the employee **strives** to go above and beyond. However, I've personally had issues with the "stay" and "strive" elements of this definition.

Stay talks to employee retention, which seems to be harder to maintain today with many entry-level and customer-facing roles naturally seeing higher turnover. Strive talks to going above and beyond, but the way organizations measure this is through high-potential employees who usually account for less than 10 per cent of the organization. Imagine what's possible for an organization if they can get the majority of their employees to simply do their job!

I recently shared another definition of employee engagement during an IABC Academy workshop that seemed to resonate, so I thought I would share it here. These are what I call my 4Ps of Engagement.

PERFORM

At the end of the day, when leaders are asking for employees to be more engaged, they are really focused on bottom-line performance. Are your employees performing so that your business or organization can deliver on its strategy with concrete results? For every engagement program you build, define what good performance looks like for the business.

PROUD

Are employees proud of your organization, its products and/or services? Although more difficult to measure, this "P" is integral to any engagement program. **Pride** is that intangible feeling that drives employees internally. Ask yourself what employees should be proud of; help them understand your organization's history; give them access to experience your products; help them celebrate your victories and milestones. Make sure you create engagement programs and messaging that build pride.

PARTICIPATE

Do employees voluntarily participate? What do you want them to do? Whether you want employees to deliver on the brand's promise, provide customer service that is up to a certain standard, take advantage of a benefits program, or volunteer for the community, clearly define what you want them to **do**. Don't be afraid to set a goal against which to measure success.

PROMOTE

Do employees promote your organization, its products, and its services? Do they recommend your organization as a great place to work? Do they buy your products or services? Do they say good things on social media or to friends and family? Build engagement programs that help and encourage your employees to promote your organization. Also, make sure you have a social media policy and training to give them permission to communicate responsibly.

Do you want more information on employee engagement?

Join Priya Bates on the IABC Academy for a four-part on-demand workshop: **Engaging your employees to deliver your strategy and brand** or contact us at www.innerstrengthcommunication.com.



ABOUT PRIYA BATES

In a career spanning more than 20 years, Priya has led communication for organizations including Loblaw's, HP, and Compaq, received the Master Communicator (MC) designation from IABC Canada in 2010, and is currently the president and owner of Inner Strength Communication.



DIGITALLY SPEAKING

4 STEPS TO INSPIRE INTERNAL DIGITAL MEDIA USE

A few years ago, the organization where I worked was getting ready to make a major announcement. The president at the time was very concerned with how much mainstream media coverage the news would generate. When asked how it would be communicated to the staff, the president's response was they could find out about it in the newspaper or on the evening news.

Despite being an organization that valued its employees, and even with all the platforms available back then, senior management didn't always place the necessary emphasis on internal communication.

They didn't realize—as many companies don't—that employees are the most intimate and powerful ambassadors of an organization's brand. An internal focus that promotes two-way dialogue can actually make our jobs as communicators more effective.

The top three reasons employees are not engaged include:

- 1 Lack of relationship with an immediate supervisor
- 2 Lack of belief in senior leadership
- 3 Lack of pride in working for the company

While we have limited control over some of these factors, our actions under the right circumstances can help defuse some of the reasons for disengagement.



ABOUT DIANE BÉGIN

Diane Bégin is an account director at APEX PR and instructor at the University of Toronto in #digitaledu. She's worked both agency and client-side. Her passion is in community through the use of digital and social media, with other specialties in internal and external communications, government relations and communications planning.

How do we as communicators encourage online staff engagement?

Using the marketing framework of AIDA (attention, interest, desire and action), you should provide staff with access to an internal social platform or platforms (such as discussion forums, blogs or a private social network). Then ask yourself how individuals will be guided through each step to commit to engagement.

The way I see it, there are four key ways:

- 1 **Create attention:** Regularly update a platform with content that will be of interest to your community. **Servus Credit Union** did this in partnership with **Habanero** by simply posting a new, compelling, community-related image every day on its intranet. Staff logged in daily to see it.
- 2 **Generate interest:** Free staff works on external social media, so why not try it internally too? **Air Canada** did this through **Yammer** offering swag to those who participated in the community. Even in a stressful environment, people can be interested given the right incentive.
- 3 **Fuel desire:** Organizations such as **Rand Worldwide** recognize the need for communication through corporate responsibility events such as food drives. Empower folks by sharing these events online because staff may not think of doing it themselves.
- 4 **Inspire action:** Years ago I worked on an internal community for managers in the non-profit sector. The turning point came in a meeting when someone unexpectedly mentioned that the community was the best resource our organization had ever built. Just like that, it took off.

Because of the nature of digital and social media—generally speaking, only a small portion of people will ever comment—the funnel of participants at each stage from attention to action will shrink. Not everyone will feel compelled to join you for the full journey. In fact, many people won't. But with the right strategy, most will figure out how to get what they need, and one day you'll have to get out of the way and let your community do its thing. That day will be magic.

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