

Communicator

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FROM THE EDITOR

SEE YOU ONLINE :)

There are two anecdotes I like that seem to reach opposite conclusions about change.

The first is an email a friend sent me a while ago, with two photos. One, captioned “1993,” showed a Palm Pilot, a video camera, a laptop, a watch, a cordless phone, a Polaroid instant camera and a Walkman.

The other, captioned “2013,” showed an iPhone.

Whether mundane or revolutionary, change is constant, and as communicators we must keep up, lest the technological wave—to borrow our latest Head to Head’s memorable phrasing—washes us out to sea.

The same movement that turned half a dozen bulky electronics into a slim wallet-sized computer has taken several casualties with it, notably from our country’s ever-slimming newspapers, which according to Statistics Canada saw a 13 per cent decline in revenue between 2008 and 2013.

The *Toronto Star*, *Globe and Mail*, *Sun Media* and *Postmedia* have all made significant staff cuts during the past year (as I write this, *Postmedia* shuttering its Ottawa bureau is the most recent example). Meanwhile, the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism famously (online, at least) concluded that since 2011 more people receive their news from websites than newspapers.

Perhaps following this stream, IABC’s flagship magazine, *Communication World*, retired its print edition last year and published its first online-only edition last May.

Starting next issue, *Communicator* will follow suit.

While the current IABC/Toronto Board and this magazine’s editorial team weren’t the first to suggest the makeover, they were aware there might be some resistance from well-meaning members who call the paper version of *Communicator* one of their favourite perks—an enjoyable read that educates about our ever-evolving industry.

Yet despite the fearmongering many of our colleagues apply to that evolution, is it really so earth-shattering?

My second anecdote is from XKCD, a webcomic, which in one entry lists several quotes:

“The art of letter-writing is fast dying out,” moaned *The Sunday Magazine* – in 1871.

“The art of conversation is dying,” *Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly* said in 1890, long before current pundits blamed a surplus of Internet feeds.

“Intellectual laziness and the hurry of the age have produced a craving for literary nips,” said *The Bachelor’s Club* in 1891.

“Those who are dipping into so many subjects and gathering information in a summary and superficial form lose the habit of settling down to great works,” proclaimed an 1894 address by British statesman George Goschen.

The medium changes, but the message doesn’t.

With that in mind, what better theme for our final print issue than change?

Eric Emin Wood
Managing Editor

Eric Emin is a reporter with the Town Crier group of newspapers, and has been an IABC member since 2011.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE

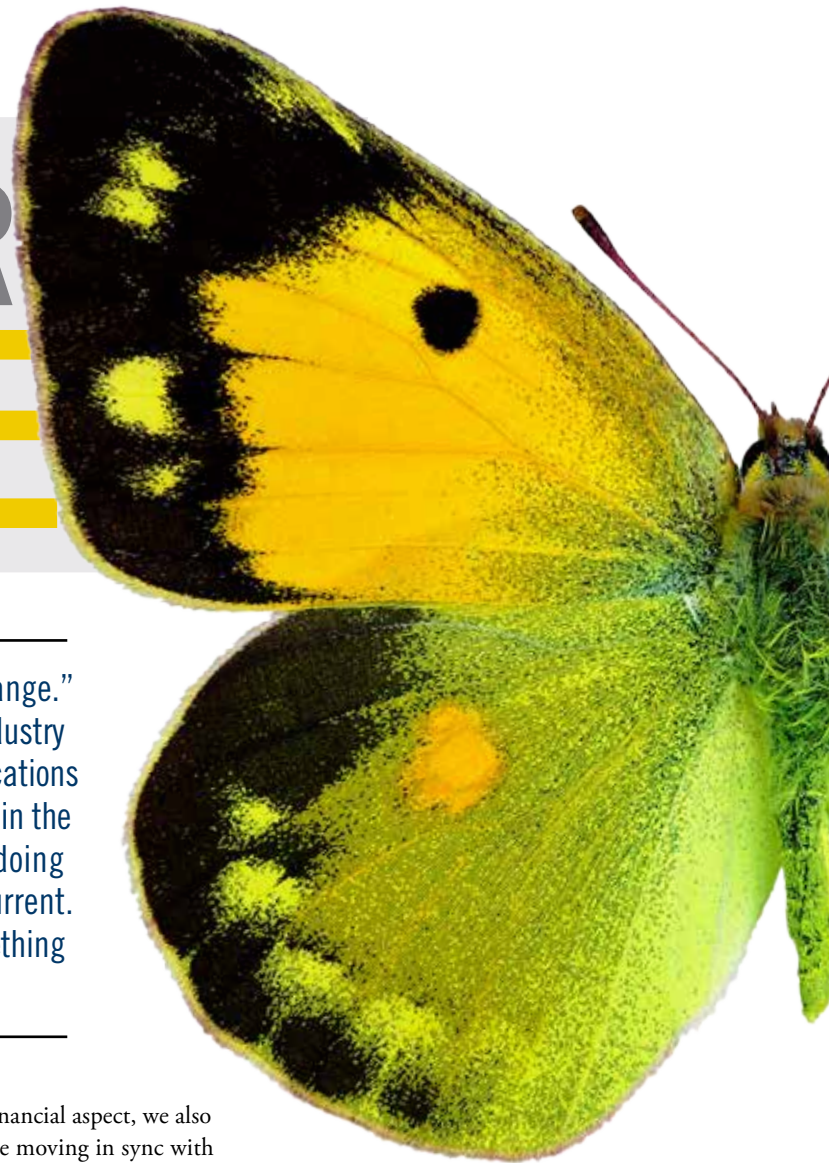
If there's one word that captures the last decade, it's "change." There's social change, climate change and an entire new industry—change management—has sprung up. In the communications sector, we have seen more changes in the past decade than in the previous 50 years. We have had to adapt to new ways of doing business and rapidly upgrade our skill set, just to stay current. And we've done it well; after all, thinking on our feet is something we're already good at.

We're ready to make a major change at IABC/Toronto. After almost three decades of printing and mailing *Communicator* to our members, we are switching to a fully responsive, digital format in May. Some of you have asked for this for a while, a few of you will be disappointed but it's a necessary evolution for the publication and the organization.

So, why are we making this change? It's mainly economics. As a volunteer-run, member-based professional association, we are always looking for ways to be more financially sustainable and efficient. As such, we can no longer justify the costs of printing and mailing a newsletter to almost 2,000 recipients.

But in addition to the financial aspect, we also want to ensure that we're moving in sync with the people we represent and switching to a digital format is part of that. Our 2012 member survey included questions about this and we also held a think tank this year to get member input. We welcome your feedback on our first digital issue and with your help, I'm sure *Communicator* will continue to evolve.

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JACQUI ALLARD —

THE FACE AND PACE OF CHANGE

TOP EXECUTIVES DESCRIBE THE ROLES COMMUNICATION AND CHANGE PLAY IN THEIR BUSINESS SUCCESS

Leading major changes at an ever-accelerating pace has become the norm for Jacqui Allard, head of operations and CIO, Manulife Asset Management, the investment division of Manulife Financial. Recently, she discussed the role communications plays in change within her global and multifaceted executive role which includes leading operations and information technology in 12 countries across North America, Asia and Europe.

For Jacqui, leading and change go hand in hand. “For me, leading change is really the entire purpose of leadership,” she described. “Investment operations is not something that’s static. If it is, the business is likely not growing and not continuing to evolve itself. Whether changes come from entering new markets, taking on new clients, offering new products or from regulatory changes, we are constantly evolving.”

This pace of change is not only on-going, but it’s accelerating. “Definitely, the pace of change is dramatically faster than when I started in this industry,” she observed, with particular nod to regulation. “When it comes to regulatory changes, we are likely going to see continued acceleration,” she outlined. Introducing new products increases the velocity. “Financial products will continue to become more complex and will require us to adapt and change more quickly.”

Peers at Manulife Financial see the same velocity. “Everyone is facing change. Our industry as a whole is facing really fundamental changes in what investors are looking for in financial products, the transparency of their financial products and the diversification they want to see for risk management and mitigation,” explained Jacqui.

As financial services sector leaders like Manulife buckle in for a faster ride, what is Jacqui’s role as a C-suite leader? “Do not underestimate the role of the leader in making change successful. The role of the leader first and foremost to make that vision and goal well understood, clear and consequential,” she said. Being more specific she said, “Give people the meaning for what they need to rally behind.”

What is the role of communication and where does it fit in Jacqui’s executive toolkit? “Communication is very, very important. Change is difficult for people. People have different capacities for absorbing change and different

degrees of comfort with a changing environment. Communication must be multi-pronged and use varied media and approaches,” she said.

Her guiding goal is that “you need to make communication meaningful for people. They want to see how their part fits into the bigger whole. They want to be connected to the change and see what’s in it for them; knowing that they have skin in the game.”

For her communication to work, Jacqui knows she needs a compelling case. “Leaders need a vision that is clearly defined, understood and meaningful so that people see the purpose of achieving it. Changes need to have real and consequential impact on our business or clients.”

After focusing on vision she goes to roles and resourcing. “The second role of the leader is assembling a team with the requisite skill set to achieve that goal and ensuring they have well-defined roles and responsibilities. People need to understand their role in achieving the change and to be clear about expectations of them.”

“FOR ME, LEADING CHANGE IS REALLY THE ENTIRE PURPOSE OF LEADERSHIP”

Following these critical steps, she’s flexible about how she personally pitches in. “Once you set the vision and assemble the team, the leader needs to determine what degree of involvement they will have within that change. Sometimes your job is to direct, sometimes it’s to sell, other times it’s to coach and sometimes it’s just to get out of the way.”

Jacqui’s affinity for leading change goes beyond the halls and walls of Manulife Financial. Serving on the advisory council of Serve!, a not-for-profit here in Toronto, she helps to make tangible their mandate of “engaging youth for change.”

With her solid track record—across her community, executive roles and profession—of engaging others in change, actively leading change and fuelling its effectiveness with communication, Jacqui’s views on change and communication echo those of Peter Drucker. “And it is change that always provides the opportunity for the new and different. Systematic innovation consists in the purposeful and organized search for changes, and in the systematic analysis of the opportunities such changes might offer for economic or social innovation.” (P.F. Drucker, *Innovation & Entrepreneurship: Practice & Principles*)



Annette Martell, ABC, MC, IABC Fellow –
IABC chair (2002 – 2003) & Associate with Tekara
Organizational Effectiveness



VOLUNTEERING:

ONE WAY TO EXPERIENCE THE 2014 IABC WORLD CONFERENCE

The IABC World Conference is coming to Toronto this June, and local volunteers will be needed to augment the staffing provided by the IABC World headquarters team. I recently spoke with Katie O'Dell and Amalia Kyriacou to learn more about volunteering at the conference.

O'Dell works for Environics Communications, a full-service Toronto-based PR firm, as a senior consultant on the corporate and financial industry team. This is her fourth year with Environics and she assists clients with their communication strategies. Kyriacou is Delta Hotels and Resorts' corporate communications manager, developing communications for both hotel colleagues and the company's many external audiences, including media, industry partners and stakeholders.

O'Dell has volunteered twice with the World Conference—in 2003 as a greeter/host, and in 2010 as a volunteer coordinator. She recruited, scheduled and managed 80 volunteers from the Toronto area. Kyriacou previously volunteered for the annual conference, conducting a walking tour of Toronto and hosting a dine-around. This year, she is taking on the volunteer coordinator role.

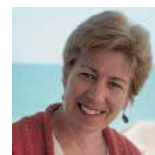
Available volunteer roles change from year to year, depending on the number of attendees and level of staffing covered by IABC headquarters. Exact requirements for this year's conference are still being defined. Nonetheless, IABC/Toronto will need at least 100 volunteers to assist with registration, greeting, staffing the hospitality desk, helping delegates find classrooms and activities, hosting dine-arounds and acting as local tour guides during the five-day conference and pre-conference. Volunteer positions cover varying

lengths of time, involving a commitment of anywhere from a half day to providing support throughout the entire five-day conference and pre-conference activities.

Kyriacou believes the more involved you are, the more you get out of something, which is one of the reasons she's taking on the volunteer coordinator role for this year's conference. She'll develop her people—and volunteer-management skills. Like Kyriacou, one of the main reasons O'Dell previously volunteered was to undertake some tasks she typically doesn't perform in her day-to-day job. She gained experience in event, volunteer and project management during the last Toronto conference. She also learned how to deal with changes in volunteer availability and other issues that cropped up.

O'Dell wanted to meet some of her peers from other parts of the world, and by volunteering throughout the conference, had many opportunities to network and chat with them. Which brings us to her recommendation for prospective World Conference volunteers: whatever your role may be, take the time to meet people and spark conversations. If you volunteer for multiple shifts, you'll see some of the attendees several times and get to know them better.

Kyriacou adds that volunteering at the IABC World Conference provides great opportunities for IABC/Toronto members to showcase our city while enriching the attendees' conference experience.



Debbie Cass is an independent communicator, working primarily in corporate communications in the IT industry. In the past she held several global marketing positions at IBM.



Stay tuned for additional details, and in the meantime, block some time on your calendar to volunteer at the 2014 IABC World Conference, taking place June 8 – 11 at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto.

NEED TO SHAKE UP YOUR CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY?

START BY THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

WE'VE ALL HEARD THE BUZZ—THESE DAYS, ORGANIZATIONS MUST EMBRACE CONTENT MARKETING OR RISK BEING LEFT BEHIND. IT MAY SEEM OVERWHELMING, BUT SOMETIMES THE FIRST STEP IS SIMPLY ADDING AN EXTRA DOSE OF CREATIVITY.

The concept of content marketing—providing consumers with content for the purpose of building trust, engagement and awareness—has many organizations around the world re-evaluating their entire marketing approach. It's not surprising; according to a 2012 study by AOL and Nielsen, 27 million pieces of content are shared every day.

While it's certainly necessary for companies to make engaging content a top priority, developing an effective content marketing strategy actually isn't as complicated as it sounds. Just ask Toronto Hydro.

As the largest municipal electricity distribution company in Canada, much of Toronto Hydro's communication with consumers has been reactive and customer service-focused by necessity. Media relations and public affairs advisor Tanya Bruckmueller knows from experience; it's a constant challenge to generate engaging content that allows consumers to connect with the organization in a different way.

"At Toronto Hydro, we work closely with local media and are often approached to speak about our day-to-day business," says Bruckmueller. "For us, the goal has been to move beyond that and come up with more ways to produce valuable content that we can leverage across all of our communication channels."

Over the past year, Toronto Hydro has managed to do just that—and they've done it by simply building an extra layer of creativity into their pre-existing content pillars. Knowing that many of us use more electricity during the summer months because of air conditioning, Toronto

Hydro wanted to show their customers how to save money on their bill. Instead of just sharing conservation tips, the team went one step further and developed a variety of healthy, low-electricity recipes that were posted on the company website and in a YouTube video. The concept was so well received that they decided to launch autumn and holiday-inspired recipes to help consumers choose more efficient ways to cook year-round and it worked. The recipe web pages were among the company's top-five viewed website pages for July and August.

In recognition of Pet Safety Week, Toronto Hydro partnered with the Toronto Humane Society for the second year in a row to share daily tips on how pet owners can keep their animals safe. The two organizations also picked their favourite pet Halloween costumes and Toronto Hydro encouraged its Facebook fans to share photos of their own pet. The result? Unique content successfully leveraged across the company's Facebook, Twitter and Flickr accounts.

Bruckmueller played a key role in developing several of the recent campaigns that have helped the organization boost its content offerings. In her mind, all they've done is continued to think outside of the box and focus on publishing timely, topical content.

"We wanted to create seasonal content that would resonate with our consumers, and we try to make our campaigns as fun and as visual as possible," she says. "Video content has proven to be very successful for us, and although it's time-consuming to produce, it's definitely worth it."

The changing communications landscape is also something that needs to be considered when developing an effective content strategy, Bruckmueller advises.

"As communicators, we no longer have to go through the media to get eyeballs on our organization's content. While we certainly still rely on traditional vehicles such as the Toronto Hydro website and e-newsletter, we're now looking at other channels we can use to engage consumers. It's all about experimenting with fun content and vehicles that convey our key messages," she says.

Speaking of other channels, video has become an increasingly popular tool for marketers. According to a recent study by ROI Research, users interact with content that incorporates images or video at twice the rate of other forms of content, and 44 per cent of respondents are more likely to engage with a brand or organization if they're sharing an image. Similarly, YouTube recently reported that one billion unique users use their site each month. It's clear that brands will need to embrace these kinds of visual storytelling tools if they want their content to be seen by the masses.

For 2014, Bruckmueller confirms that content will remain king for the Toronto Hydro team. "We're planning on focusing our efforts more and more on developing our own unique content. Over the past few years, we've really embraced our own social media channels and will continue to push these as primary ways of reaching our audience. We want to ensure we're publishing information where people already are."



Erin MacFarlane is a communications and social media professional currently working at C.S.T Consultants. Based in Toronto, she is passionate about writing and keeping up with the latest content marketing and digital trends. Connect with her on LinkedIn or follow her on Twitter at @ErinNMacFarlane.

IABC/TORONTO PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE



The ever-popular Proust Questionnaire, as seen on the back page of *Vanity Fair*, derives its name from the French writer Marcel Proust. He did not invent the questionnaire but was one of the earliest and most famous respondents. As part of getting to know our IABC/Toronto members better, we've incorporated this longstanding tradition into *Communicator* and are hoping to get a better glimpse into the lives of those who share our passions and careers. This month we approached IABC/Toronto past president Jo Langham ABC, MC.

If you'd like to be featured in a future Proust Questionnaire, please contact toronto-memcomm@iabc.com.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Play wrestling with my son... though as he grows I don't win as often as I used to!

What is your greatest fear?

Driving on the 400 in a snowstorm without snow tires.

Which person, living or dead, do you most admire?

Rosa Parks, the "first lady" of civil rights.

What do you consider the most overrated virtue?

Humility. Sometimes you just need to toot your own horn!

Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

"I don't hate it," which I've tried very hard to change to "I quite like it."

What is your greatest regret?

That my mum died before I made the move to Canada from England. She would have loved it here.

Which talent would you most like to have?

Being able to cook great meals without needing to refer to a recipe.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Lying.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

To be taller by about six inches!

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Raising a kind, caring son with a wicked sense of humour.

What made you join IABC/Toronto?

Sappy answer to follow: I wanted to give back to an industry and city that had opened its arms to me when I arrived in Canada.

How do you participate in IABC/Toronto?

I was on the board for nine years and am a past president of the chapter. These days I judge OVATIONS Awards, the Communicator of the Year Award (COTY) and have ushered many through the accreditation process.

What do you most value in your colleagues?

Smartness paired with a can-do attitude.

What is your greatest extravagance?

For the last 10 years I've had Friday night dinner in a restaurant with my son Alexei—who, by the way, once fell asleep with his head down in his pasta bowl! Way to start the weekend!

If you were to die and come back as another person or thing, what would you be?

If I were a boy...

What do you think are the three most common mistakes made in business communication?

- Letting lawyers write the messages during a crisis.
- Giving social media to the marketing department.
- Lack of senior management participation in communication.

What would your dream job be?

A volcanologist. I have always been fascinated by the way the earth has been shaped by wind, water and fire and I still remember the day at school when plate tectonics finally made sense of it all for me! I've been hooked on volcanoes ever since.

What is your motto?

Let it go.



Jo Langham, ABC, has won more than 50 communication industry awards, and recently received the Master Communicator designation from IABC.

LEADERSHIP BRIEFING:

47 TOUGH SOCIAL MEDIA QUESTIONS

Picture this scenario: You finally put together your social media strategy, and are about to pitch it to the senior leadership team. Unfortunately, they don't get it and send you back to "consider alternatives." Or perhaps you are one of those leaders: you certainly know the business, but not social media. With so much fluff being written about the topic, it isn't surprising that finding a list to help executives make better social media investment decisions is tough. Based on our client experience, here are 47* questions that can help—and one bonus:

STRATEGY

1. How does the social media strategy leverage and extend the corporate strategy?
2. How will it take advantage of our unique competitive advantage?
3. Does it change the Sales/Marketing strategy? R&D strategy? HR/recruiting strategy?
4. Where does this plan eventually lead? What does Phase Three look like?

It's tempting to say that since social media is changing so quickly, planning for a future phase is futile. Not so. Choosing what a future might look like now is a critical double-check to ensure that, all else being equal, the current phase is directionally sound. Of course change will happen, but mid-course corrections are only possible if you know the ultimate destination.

5. How much of the initiative is defensive?

A defensive plan is one that does the absolute minimum, just so the organization doesn't embarrass itself in the marketplace. There is nothing wrong with this as a stopgap measure. On the other hand, most organizations don't have limitless resources, so spending time and money on a defensive plan takes away from the impact of a strategic social media plan.

6. How does the strategy take advantage of mobile?

Mobile now means several things: building web pages for different screen sizes; building apps; taking advantage of the user's location; taking advantage of the just-in-time nature of mobile alerts. If the social media plan only talks about establishing a presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter, then it is probably one of the best plans... of three years ago.

7. How long have you personally used social media?
8. What books have you read? What blogs do you follow? What do they say about this type of plan?

COMPETITORS

9. What are the competitors doing?
10. Is there evidence they are successful?
11. Do they already have a first mover advantage?
12. How do we know we're not too late?
13. How have they organized the implementation—internal/external mix?
14. What is their executive profile?
15. How has their strategy leveraged their unique advantages?
16. How might the competition respond to our strategy?
17. Can we leverage suppliers' or customers' social media strategies?
18. How has this plan worked in other industries?

WHO ARE WE TARGETING?

19. Justify the targeted sites.
20. Is there proof that prospects/customers/recruits are on the targeted sites?
21. What are our clients doing?
22. Will any external stakeholders be affected negatively?
23. Who are the most influential bloggers in our market? Which mainstream journalists are active in social media?
24. Does the strategy include anything of value for suppliers?

Very often, suppliers (and other sponsor/funding partners) are left out of the mix. Does the content and community being proposed include anything of value for these stakeholders? And separately, are there any new advertising or sponsorship opportunities that will become available as a result of the strategy? (Note: If the strategy is developed with a view to increasing sponsorship revenue, who will be responsible for actually selling it?)

WHAT WE WANT THEM TO DO

25. Does the plan have clear objectives?

This key question is one of the most important, but is often left for the end—or left out altogether. Having clear objectives suggests a number of other important activities: monitoring, measurement and accountability.

26. Is the social initiative built on third-party sites or our own? Who owns the data posted on these sites? Have you read the terms and conditions of use?
27. Has anyone done a benchmarking or best practices survey?
28. How will the initiative be launched?



Randall Craig is president of 108 ideospace, and the author of seven books including the Online PR and Social Media series and the Everything Guide to Starting an Online Business. He has been a consultant and speaker on web and social strategy since 1994; he can be reached at Randall@108ideospace.com and @RandallCraig.

***Interested in the other 19 questions? This article continues in the IABC blog, at <http://toronto.iabc.com/iabctoronto-blog/>**

Lack of focus has always been a barrier for me when it comes to writing. Often, rather than being immersed in the task at hand, I'd feel daunted by the blank space in front of me, frustrated by looming deadlines and I would constantly gravitate to the nearest distraction, often in the form of email, social media or my phone.

The result: writing that could feel haphazard and repetitive.

Distractions and anxiety are nothing new. The sensible approach is not to eliminate them entirely—which is impossible—but manage them in a way that allows your mind to focus on a single task.

This year, one of my new year's resolutions included meditating for a few minutes each day, after hearing from a musician friend that it made him a better and more focused composer. This involved a significant change in my daily routine. It is rare, after all, that any of us experience true silence—many leave our phones on even when we sleep.

I began to rise around 5 a.m. and sit cross-legged in the middle of my bedroom, breathing in and out. Getting up at that hour, spending it in silence instead of rushing to start the day, was entirely new to me. Thoughts would arise as I meditated, but my objective was to simply acknowledge them and continue breathing, resisting the temptation to dwell on them.

Within a short time, I saw my writing benefit from the practice. I effectively tackled new and unfamiliar projects, such as government relations. One of my most successful accomplishments was preparing briefings that were instrumental in new legislation ensuring greater nutritional education among Ontario's students.

Meditation has taught me to focus on a single process without giving in to anxiety. I'm not nearly as daunted as I once was by blank space or deadlines. These things haven't gone away, but my focus is less on them and more on bringing an idea to life.

My writing feels more inventive. Increased focus allows me to draw new ideas from the recesses of my mind, diving below the surface and beyond the conventions upon which it previously depended.

If you're not ready to sit still to build your concentration, there are alternatives. Take a walk on your lunch break and describe your surroundings internally without thinking about daily obligations. Standing in an outdoor setting and taking note of the environment can also train your mind to focus intensely. Such principles are at the core of what is referred to as "mindfulness": attention to the present without allowing the mind to wander to past or future concerns. The more you're pulled away from a task, the harder it is to regain focus, ultimately making you less productive and causing you to rush your work.

If you remain unconvinced that mindfulness practices are worth a try, consider the scientific backing for these techniques. A research team at Massachusetts General Hospital found that eight weeks of meditation



KEEP CALM AND WRITE ON

practice made measurable differences in participants' brains, particularly in areas of stress management and introspection. Participants who meditated regularly and reported a reduction in stress also displayed decreased grey-matter density in the amygdala, which triggers stress and anxiety. While the precise neural mechanics of meditation are still not entirely understood, first-person accounts from participants testify to meditation's ability to reduce stress.

These techniques ultimately involve a change in your routine. Maybe this means shutting off technology for a short time each day to be with your thoughts. They are about taking a rest from constant movement and stimulation to allow your mind to explore new horizons. For me, the biggest change meant letting go of my habit of constantly checking my email and phone while working, so I could focus on a single task. Such a small adjustment, and it made a big difference!



Ravi Singh is a writer/editor currently for hire with experience producing web and print copy in corporate and non-profit settings. He can be reached at ravimat.singh@gmail.com and you can follow him on Twitter @ravimatsingh.



HEAD TO HEAD:



DEREK MLETZKO – In Praise of Print

It's somewhat trivial to argue for one of these mediums versus the other. We are communicators spreading our ideas, and the larger the audience buying into those viewpoints, the better. To reach this end, both print and digital fit into an effective strategy. Communicators need not wrack their brain for hours weighing one over the other.

But the reality is that today, print does need to be defended as an increasing number of publications freeze their print runs in favour of online-friendly products.

If your organization finds itself in this situation, before you stop the press you should consider that a UK study of news consumption found that when reading newspapers, their domestic audience devoted 96.7 per cent of their time to print as opposed to websites or digital apps.

This staggering figure may surprise, but it's confirming something we already know: online audiences have short attention spans. Does your organization have a lot to say? You might want to think twice before slashing the ink and paper.

But maybe it's that news is consumed by older audiences who spend less time on computers and mobile devices. Perhaps this can be chalked up to demographics.

Apparently not.

Another study that targeted the reading preferences of 16 – 24 year olds—the demographic wave that could splash over our print publications, soggy our pages and wash them out to sea—found that 62 per cent still prefer printed books to ebooks and 47 per cent like to receive their news and magazines on paper.

We write our content for consumption and design our pages to intrigue. Placing our hard work solely on a dark corner of the World Wide Web does a disservice to the work and decreases the probability that our organizations will get the attention we seek.

If you need further proof, let's look at where Jeff Bezos is putting his money. The billionaire Amazon and Kindle founder is keeping busy with his recent purchase of the Washington Post, printed since 1877.

And hey, until Wi-Fi becomes more widely available (and a certain transit authority reverses its policy on staggeringly slow progress), those traveling underground will be thanking us for keeping the print medium alive.

WHICH IS THE BETTER MEDIUM— PRINT OR ONLINE?

EMILY CHAU — Rock, Paper, Clicker!

Online publications have been a looming threat to print media for many years. The old-fashioned pen-and-paper journalist is now overshadowed by website reporters—those who sleep, eat, breathe and think online, using the tablet as a writing pad and the Internet as a one-stop research shop. It's not the end for the print world though—they just have to share the mainstream media throne with their digital-savvy colleagues.

How can it be a mutually beneficial partnership?

Accessibility: Online print can be an extension of paper print—be it newspapers, magazines or academic hardcovers. Anyone on the planet with an Internet connection can access, view and read the words and photos published by authors and owners.

Space: While there is limited room in a print copy, this restriction does not exist in the online world. Authors can say whatever they want and write as much as they need without having to sacrifice important points.

Interviews: Even those conducted for print can be more in-depth online because the interviewer can include more questions and content. And when it comes to hearing from a bestselling author or inspirational leader, who wouldn't want to read more?

In print, “a picture is worth a thousand words”—and takes up almost as much room. However, in the virtual world, publishers can post an infinite number of photos, organizing them in multiple galleries. Returning to the interviewing example, they can link to photos of the person's work to go along with the written piece, instead of narrowing the story's visuals down to their top three photos.

Another fantastic thing about the online world? Interactivity! And I'm not simply talking about the author embedding a video within an article or linking to a specific photo they mention. How many articles have you read with an update at the bottom, or follow-up blog posts responding to a pertinent comment? Certainly print invites feedback too—readers can email their questions or thoughts—but it takes longer to receive an answer.

The opportunities with online print are endless. It's an addition and expansion of the paper model and should be treated seriously in the publishing world. After all, its purpose is to enhance the readers' experience and extend the brand for editors.



Derek Mletzko is Habitat for Humanity Canada's manager of marketing and communications and has overseen the organization's online and print publications (which have a distribution of 35,000) for four years.



Emily Chau is a mid-level communications and public relations practitioner in Toronto. When not traveling, she is a plain language advocate who loves to volunteer her time with various non-profit organizations.



COMMUNICATOR BOOK REVIEW

QR CODES KILL KITTENS: HOW TO ALIENATE CUSTOMERS, DISHEARTEN EMPLOYEES, AND DRIVE YOUR BUSINESS INTO THE GROUND

BY SCOTT STRATTEN OCTOBER 2013 BY WILEY; LIST PRICE \$22.00 (HARDCOVER);
AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.CA RANDOM HOUSE, FEB 2012; 371 PAGES)

CAUTION: If you buy this book, be prepared for curious looks from colleagues who may assume that, based on the title alone, it is about how to murder cats (like the cute kitten on the cover). I had to reassure one nervous co-worker who saw the book on my desk that it is, in fact, about avoiding various branding, social media, marketing and communications pitfalls—whether you rely on new media or old. Strictly speaking, communications isn't really the book's strong suit (it's more about marketing, branding, etc.), but it's still a great read for communicators.

As the introduction states, “A lot of business books out there are going to tell you what you should be doing. Well, this one is a little different.” *QR Codes Kill Kittens* is going to tell you what not to do, and how not to do them—and it does so with a lot of very funny pictures, including photos of inappropriate use of those irregular checkerboard-like quick-response (QR) codes that seem to be everywhere these days. *QR Codes Kill Kittens* will have you laughing and asking “Why do QR codes appear in so many inconvenient places—like the tops of doors or on the backs of buses?”

Are there any shocking pictures in this book? Yes—the photo on page 74 should establish for all time that placing an ad inside a urinal is a terrible idea.

There are also tips on avoiding boneheaded uses of Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media platforms, what to leave out of your email signature, and so on.

Especially ineffective ideas are singled out and labeled in red boxes with the heading “A Kitten Dies...” Sure-fire ways to kill kittens include: dormant social media accounts (which Stratten compares to padlocked store fronts); poorly thought-out Facebook contests; and spending 38 weeks working through a committee to choose fonts for a brochure.

There are some business books that can be set aside for good after a single skim, or even a single read of a solitary chapter.

QR Codes Kill Kittens is one to hang on to as a reference tool. Some fans even suggest bringing it to planning meetings. That way, the moment you hear someone suggesting one of the awful gimmicks or half-baked ideas described in its 196 pages, you can whip out the book and shoot that gimmick down. Just remove the book's glossy cover if you do this—otherwise your colleagues might distract from your valid point by accusing you of being a cat killer.



Neil Hrab has been an IABC member since 2008.





INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND CHANGE

In the fall, I was chatting with an IABC colleague at a Munch ‘n’ Mingle about internal communications (IC). He told me about his experience with a previous employer in which a major change was coming that would impact virtually every employee. All departments seemed to be involved: IT, marketing, sales, finance, HR—and then, late in the process, IC. When my colleague asked the executive sponsor what the strategy was for informing employees, the response was “Strategy? Well... we just tell them!”

Today, many companies use a change-management model to prepare for significant changes in their organization. However, as my colleague’s anecdote illustrates, many companies and individuals lack understanding of the role—and value—IC plays in those initiatives’ success. While some comms are informational only (for example, “The company will observe Canada Day on Monday, July 3”), most are about change of one sort or another that requires the employees to act: to do something new, modify the way things are currently being done, or stop doing something altogether.

To be effective, IC has to be involved early in the change initiative’s planning stages so it can develop a strategy for doing what it’s supposed to: support the business partners and help prepare employees for the post-change world. Early collaboration with all of the stakeholders ensures IC can create an effective comms strategy and plan by understanding the initiative’s goals and objectives, the magnitude of the change, and most importantly, its impact on employees.

You can’t simply “tell” employees after a change has been initiated—regardless of how confidential a project is, it’s inevitable that word will get around, and chances are that inaccurate rumours could cause all kinds of stress and misunderstanding among employees. This can be very difficult to stop if IC is involved too late, and the result can be a Band-Aid solution instead of a carefully

thought-out plan. If you’re not “in bed” with the stakeholders early on, you may need a second chance to get things right; the effect of poor initial communication can be detrimental and difficult, if not impossible, to fix.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST “TELLING THEM.”

So what makes an effective change-management communications plan? “Communicate early and communicate often” is a fundamental best practice. Employees and people managers need the right information at the right time if they are required to change. They need—and want—to feel they are being kept informed and that their leaders are genuine and straightforward in their comms. Regardless of whether they’re “inside” workers or the face of the company, if employees aren’t in the loop and on board with change, in the end, the initiative—and the customer experience—will suffer.

Know your audience. Which messages are appropriate for them—and which ones aren’t. “One size” doesn’t fit all and general, non-targeted messages waste time, effort and resources. Tailor your communications to the audience. For

complex change, messages to the executive level will most likely need to be written in a way that won’t be appropriate for junior-level employees. And you need to know what communication vehicles they have—and don’t have—access to (remember, not everyone has their own computer), which ones they prefer, and most importantly, which are most effective.

Most studies show that conveying information directly from a manager to employees through face-to-face interaction, either individually or to a team, is the most effective vehicle. But that requires providing the manager with the right tools and, in some cases, training to ensure that all employees receive the same message at the same time. And if the change is complex, IC needs to play a role in creating and staging presentations (PowerPoint, town halls, webcasts, podcasts, internal digital signage and social media, etc.) to introduce and explain the initiative to all the stakeholders and employees. While all of these options can be very effective, they also require time, money and creativity to produce, distribute and present, which must be taken into account when creating internal communications plans.

Internal communications is much more than just “telling them.” As communicators, we are change agents who make a valuable contribution to employee understanding and engagement, the customer experience, and in the final analysis, the company’s success.



Dave Watt is currently the sole proprietor of Watt’s the Word Communications and a copy editor for Communicator. His experience includes internal, strategic and change-management communications with BMO Financial Group and media, public and artist relations with Universal Music Group (Canada).

CORPORATE JARGON BE GONE!

AS COMMUNICATORS, OUR GOAL IS TO WRITE CLEAR, CONCISE, COMPREHENSIVE CONTENT. WHETHER IT'S CONVEYING MESSAGES TO INTERNAL STAFF OR COMMUNICATING TO CUSTOMERS, READER-FRIENDLY IS IN — JARGON IS OUT!

So, follow these simple tips to avoid getting caught up in the corporate speak trap:

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Internal: Every organization has its own terminology and acronyms that they bandy about. You can get away with using some internal jargon and acronyms (who wants to keep spelling out Annual Employee Survey for Management when you can simply say, "AESM"). And you can certainly be more casual in tone. Instead of, "We are enhancing and delivering transformational changes across the business to assist in better identifying and understanding how we can leverage each department's expertise to be more efficient and effectuate change in order to sustain and build upon the momentum we are seeing," (What??), try, "We're using the expertise from each department to continue to make enhancements." See the difference?

External: When communicating to customers, be clear and use a friendly tone. For example, if you're expanding a new fitness facility, don't say:

"To ensure our fitness facility continues to strive to support the ever-changing needs of our members, we are endeavouring to ensure an enhanced, modern and innovative health facility which incorporates enhanced services with an emphasis on health improvement and maintenance, which are important components of a complete health continuum. The expansion will be completed June 1 at which time you can look forward to seeing our enhanced changes."

Yawn! Cut the repetition ("ensure, enhanced") and convoluted language ("components of a complete health continuum"). Customers will more likely remember:

"Great News! We're expanding our fitness facility, tripling our size to include new state-of-the-art equipment, two new classrooms and a

comfortable area for stretching! We look forward to serving you better with an improved facility, more fitness advisors and an enhanced class schedule, effective June 1."

THINK CLEARLY, WRITE CLEARLY:

We're all customers and we're all inundated by communications (employee communications, direct mail, content on blogs, newspapers and websites, etc.) so make yours short, concise and in plain language. Think clearly and eliminate those gargantuan, grandiose, profound, superfluous, perplexing words.

TONE DOWN EXECUTIVE SPEAK:

When you write for senior executives, there's a tendency to capture their words verbatim and not boil it down into succinct, digestible summaries. Leaders need to sound approachable and straightforward, to make them more relatable to their employees.

REDUCE REPETITION:

When conveying a message, don't get caught in the "repetition trap." Not only does this add to the length of your message, it's confusing and leads the reader to think, "Didn't I just read that?" If you're asking a customer to register on your website, instead of repetitive, rambling instructions such as "Registration steps: to register, go to the registration page and follow the steps to register for the first time and provide your name, create a new user ID and enter a new password as part of the registration process." (Huh?), Just get to the point: "Click here to register, create a new user ID and password." It's that simple!

So make a vow —when editing your communications, raise your right hand and solemnly swear to:

- > Get to the main message in the first paragraph, and reinforce it in the closing.
- > Edit the length, and remove corporate speak and acronyms your audience won't understand.
- > Eliminate wordiness.
- > Use plain, friendly language that makes the organization seem approachable and relatable.

- > Format copy with sub-headlines and bullet points to make the text easier to read.

Verbose and convoluted doesn't cut it. Be merciful and cut the corporate mumbo jumbo. Keep communications concise, impactful and engaging!



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, and can be reached at rbaldacc@yahoo.ca.

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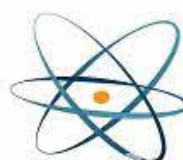
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IN THE KNOW

CORPORATE MEMBER LUNCH & LEARNS

We are now offering 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, IABC members within an organization 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.

Interested in writing for *Communicator*? Send an email to toronto-memcomm@iabc.com. We love getting ideas for articles and look forward to hearing from you.

HOT HAPPENINGS:

- IS YOUR IABC MEMBERSHIP PROFILE UP TO DATE?

We don't want you to miss out on any of your IABC membership benefits including future *Communicator* issues issued to your email address on file with IABC. Be sure to keep your information up to date at <https://secure.iabc.com/update/>

- IABC WEBSITE ACCESS INFORMATION REMINDER
iabc.to/iabc-website-access-information-reminder/

Just a reminder for members. We have three main websites that require passwords to access member-only benefits. For IABC/Toronto's CareerLine — careerline.iabc.to/

Starting in September 2013, access information for VIEWING job positions on CareerLine was changed. We sent all members detailed instructions on the change and their new access information. For CareerLine, access information is:

Username: the main e-mail address you have on file with IABC/Toronto.
Password: your IABC member ID number Any questions/comments about CareerLine access should be directed to toronto-info@iabc.com.

For the main IABC and IABC/Toronto websites
www.iabc.com & toronto.iabc.com

Access information for these two sites are the same and programmed by the IABC World Headquarters so IABC/Toronto is unable to provide this information. To retrieve your access information for these two sites, please go to www.iabc.com/login/findlogin.cfm.

- THE OVATION AWARDS GALA WILL BE HELD MAY 22 AT THE ARCADIAN COURT. DETAILS ARE COMING SOON!

