

AGM 2014 – President’s Report

Purpose, passion, dedication and collaboration. These are the words that best describe the past 18 months at IABC Victoria. The success of the Chapter is due to the collective efforts of those on our current Board and those who have come before us.

This term commenced in late August 2013 and was extended by six months when we conducted an Extraordinary General Meeting passing special resolutions to change our financial year to be in line with IABC head office in the US and update our rules under the *Associations Incorporations Act 2012*. In effect this board’s term was 18 months. The additional time has proven to be advantageous for the Chapter in achieving our goals and objectives.

These strategic goals are to deliver quality content, experiences and value across all IABC Victoria member touch points, whilst building the reputation of IABC amongst local communication professionals.

As a team, we refined our strategic plan for the Chapter, and developed realistic portfolio action plans with the following overall objectives in mind:

- Keep our members and our profession at the heart of everything we do;
- Provide valuable professional development and skills training opportunities to our members, our volunteers and the Board;
- Create sustainable partnerships that strengthen our brand, the financial position of the chapter and enable us to deliver value to our members;
- Expand our offering to suit practitioners at all levels;
- Provide recognition of global and local excellence in the profession;
- Regain and retain large chapter status, improve member retention, and increase the number of corporate members; and
- Provide timely and relevant thought-leading content.

Our success in achieving our goals and objectives is measured by tangible outcomes over this past term:

- We have gone against the grain of many other Chapters to record healthy growth in our membership numbers and attain large Chapter status, and a significant improvement in our financial position for the 2014 year.
- Our chapter had the best Gold Quills year to date with a record 9 Gold Quills which included two of the ‘Best of the Best’ and the prestigious ‘Business Issues’ award.
- We have developed strong professional partnerships with sponsors that are delivering value to our bottom line as well as improving our service delivery and offer to members at all levels.
- Our brand has been bolstered with increases in followers of our content and engagement via our newsletter and social media, quality events, as well as our newly formed Corporate Affairs Advisory Board (CAAB).
- We have created a voice for members through surveys, feedback into our professional development and via content in our newsletter and global blog.
- We have redefined our value proposition and service offer to resonate and connect with our membership.

- We have developed the CAAB, in partnership with Ampersand Executive, as a forum for senior business leaders in the profession to connect and engage on issues pertinent to them and the profession.
- Our Chapter now connects and provides value to members at all levels whether students, foundation level, mid-career and business leaders within the profession.
- Our Board has improved its level of efficiency and effectiveness with the adoption of best practice principles for the management of board meetings and reporting.
- We have received support and recognition from IABC globally with two visits from IEB Chairs, Robin McCasland (2013) and Russell Grossman (twice in 2014), our continued involvement in the Blue Ribbon Panel judging of the Gold Quill Awards, Monika Lancucki's role as the IABC Gold Quill Committee Vice-Chair, my involvement as Track Chair at the IABC World Conference Toronto 2014, on the IABC Brand Task Force and the IABC World Conference San Francisco 2015 Program Advisory Committee.

These positive outcomes have led the Board to enter five categories in the Chapter Management Awards in December 2014. These are judged by the International Chapter of the Year from 2013, IABC Ottawa, and will be announced at the Leadership Institute in Orlando in mid-February 2015.

The journey to success has also had challenges that the Board faced and has been able to overcome. These are challenges that face volunteer boards and not-for-profit associations like IABC all over the world. These have included:

- Retaining and engaging members - both individual and corporate;
- Delivering real and perceived value to members and converting non-members into members;
- The retirement of Board members during the term, which happened in the Professional Development/Events portfolio as well as the Treasurer/Secretary role;
- The loss of a professional partner in Professional Developments/Events portfolio and one in content provision;
- Student membership and retention across the six Victorian universities;
- The slow progress with accreditation and certification, and the development of the IABC Academy.
- The delay in the development of the IABC website, and the communication process for membership renewals.
- The tyranny of distance for leadership development in the US which is a costly exercise for Board members.

Despite the challenges, our Board delivered excellent outcomes, and I would like to recognise the highlights for each portfolio.

Membership

- Regained large Chapter status by increasing membership numbers from 193 (August 2013) to 217 by end of 2014 (note that this final figure reflects increased number - 30 - from one corporate member - the processing of which took more than a month).
- Retained a greater number of members than lapsed (121 vs 72)

- Gained three new corporate members (i.e. Federation Centres, EPA Victoria, MCEC), Telstra upgraded from Bronze member to Gold member status. Currently have new corporate member proposals with four prospects.
- Recognised by IABC as the Chapter with the largest growth in new members during the global membership drive initiatives.

Sponsorship

- Renewed the professional partnership agreement with Coral Communications;
- Secured three new annual professional partnerships with Ampersand Executive, Deakin University and Think HQ. A fourth agreement with RMIT University is currently in negotiation.
- Secured sponsorship for the IABC Victoria Bronze Quill Gala with Deakin University, Porter Novelli and Print Impressions.
- Established the CAAB, in partnership with Ampersand Executive, bringing IABC Victoria closer to the key-decision makers in the profession. This has led to CAAB members contributing to the IABC Victoria blog (one to CW Observer), CAAB members speaking at IABC Victoria events (and potentially at the World Conference), and CAAB members supporting our events through attendance with their teams. Two CAAB members have indicated their interest in corporate membership, whilst another is strongly encourage his team to join IABC.

Education

- Best ever results for the IABC Gold Quill and IABC Victoria Bronze Quill Awards.
- Three Victorian awards received outstanding recognition at the 2014 Gold Quill Awards in Toronto - Transurban/VicRoads receiving the Business Issues Award, and Telstra and Cabrini Health both receiving the Best of the Best Awards.
- A global first with IABC Victoria conducting the first global 'pilot' accreditation program for the IABC Academy with one of our corporate members - soon to be announced. Special thanks goes to Adrian Cropley, his colleagues on the IABC Academy Committee, and Alison Gillies for all their work in getting this done.

Student and Academic Liaison

- Continued sponsorship and participation at the PR Student Forum in 2013 and 2014. Organised by academics from Deakin University, Monash University, RMIT University, Swinburne University and Victoria University this represents an important opportunity to raise the profile of IABC amongst the student and academic community.
- Introduced a 'Student Ambassador' program in late 2014. We have appointed our first two IABC Victoria student ambassadors in Jenna Waite (Deakin) and Brad Bowden (RMIT) to ensure IABC presence across campuses. If successful we hope to extend the program to across other universities.

Professional Development/Events

- Significant focus on delivering quality and diverse events to offer value to members. The Chapter delivered seven events in 2014 compared with nine in 2013. However, we had a total of 377 registrations in 2014 compared with 336 in 2013, reflecting a 46% increase in the average attendance numbers.
- Continue to attract a mix of members and non-members which is a sign of industry relevance and the quality of events being offered.
- On average the events rate 'good' or 'very good'.
- The IABC Victoria Bronze Quill gala continues to be the highlight of the year where we recognised excellence in the profession.

Brand/Communications

- A survey to gather member feedback and provide guidance to members on the key industry priorities for 2014. The survey attracted 151 respondents while the subsequent infographic and article became the most popular IABC Victoria blog on record;
- Eleven newsletters were published in 2014, compared to six in 2013;
- Annual web site unique users grew by 11% from 5,888 to 6,537;
- A drive to increase blog content and encourage members to contribute, including the development of a set of bloggers' guidelines was successful with 32 contributed articles (many from high-profile writers) in 2014 compared to 5 in 2013; Total blog page views grew by 69% from 4,891 to 8,285 (almost 700 views per month); Reader sharing of blog articles on their own social media channels grew by 62%;
- A more aggressive focus on social media - in particular Twitter, LinkedIn and the establishment of a new Slideshare channel. Social media followers grew by 63%, including 69% growth in Twitter followers and 42% growth in LinkedIn Group membership; 3,254 new visual content views (e.g. presentations, infographics and video) on Slideshare;
- Virtually all 2014 priorities were delivered successfully, although there were challenges in media engagement and finalising the web site re-design. Both these challenges will be addressed in 2015.

Thank you

Success at the Chapter level is not an individual effort but one of many. I would like to recognise the effort of those who have contributed to the success of the Chapter over this term.

The following people have been instrumental to the success of the board:

- **Monika** Lancucki - retiring from the Board, but moving onto the IABC Gold Quill Chair role in June this year where she will continue to shine.
- **Adrian** Cropley - an incredibly tireless and dedicated individual who gives so much of himself to the profession and has been a mentor to me during my Presidency.

- **Damien Batey** - my rock as Vice President, nothing is ever too much trouble for Damien.
- **Nicole Matejic** - astute, connected and the social media communication professional we'd all like to be.
- **Justin Rogers** - clever, kind and connecting us with the next generation of communication talent.
- **Megan Taylor** - a strategic thinker who thinks outside the square.
- **Wayne Aspland** - another tireless, passionate and dedicated individual always looking for ways to improve our Chapter.
- **Alison Gillies** - always happy to step up when needed.
- **Anna Chalco** - the quiet achiever who always delivers
- **Vanessa Snowden** - the conscientious organiser who makes things happen
- **Julie Weldon** - focussed, clever, reliable and super efficient.

I must also recognise and thank Louisa Graham, Louise Richards Green, Amanda Purdie and Julie McNamara who have all been valuable members of the board during the term. Thanks also to those who have volunteered at events, evaluated Gold Quill Award entries on the Blue Ribbon Panel, been part of the Board selection process on the Nominations Committee, or have spoken at our events.

Special thanks goes to our professional partners over the term who have been critical to our success: Coral Communications, Deakin University, Ampersand Executive, Think HQ, The Launch Box and Most Contentious. Looking forward the implementation of the plans for 2015 with our current professional partners - certainly exciting times ahead.

I must also express my gratitude to the senior leaders in the profession, particularly at Telstra, ANZ, EPA Victoria, Federation Centres, Victoria Police, BHP Billiton and Bupa who have championed the Chapter in numerous ways. They have been very generous with their time, advice and support.

Thanks also to Robin McCasland and Russell Grossman on the IABC IEB, Melissa Dark and Carlos Fulcher at IABC head office, the leadership teams in the other Chapters in APAC, and the Brand Task Force and World Conference Program Advisory Committees for their collegiate approach to working together for the betterment of the profession.

As the outgoing President, I extremely proud of my colleagues on the Board (past and present) who been selfless in their support of the members, the Chapter, IABC and my leadership. I hope I have been able to do you proud as well. I look forward to continuing in an active capacity in the leadership team on the new IABC Victoria board, and I welcome Damien Batey to the role of President.

Here's to another great year ahead.

Zora Artis

Board President, IABC Victoria Chapter