

IABC Kansas City: Sponsorships/Partnerships
Work Plan 2018-2019

Context

Kansas City IABC (KC IABC) is located in the heart of North America, straddling the Missouri and Kansas state lines. The organization began more than 60 years ago as the Kansas City Industrial Editors and has been named IABC Chapter of the Year eight times.

As a medium-sized chapter, KC IABC has diverse membership representing the professions of corporate communications, marketing, public relations, design, videography and photography. Members work in communications for large and small businesses, agencies and non-profits. We also have several self-employed entrepreneurs in our ranks, as well as college students who are looking forward to a career in the field. Our membership is 120 communicators, and we reach approximately 800 throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Through the decades, KC IABC has become synonymous with outstanding professional development and networking opportunities for business communicators in the greater Kansas City area. The hallmark of KC IABC's professional development is a highly successful Business Communicators Summit (BCS). This all-day conference, patterned after regional IABC conferences, provides diverse professional development to nearly 300 communication professionals in the Kansas City metro area every year. We draw people from as far as Topeka, Kan. (75 miles away from Kansas City), and Bentonville, Ark. (200 miles away from Kansas City).

The chapter's ongoing professional development events are also highly successful, with nine events a year. These are attended by a mix of members and non-members, of which the latter are often a substantial proportion. Additionally, our three special interest groups – Masters for seasoned professionals, IndyComm for independent entrepreneurs and Young Pros with a focus on emerging communicators – provide targeted opportunities for learning and networking for members and guests.

Among the challenges for the 2018-2019 board year is declining membership, reflective overall professional development trends. Despite this challenge, we continued to provide strong professional development, while maintaining a highly engaged board and a strong corps of volunteers.

The strategic cornerstone of the board year was to ignite our professional development offerings with the intent of re-engaging our membership and enticing guests. We also focused on rewarding board members by allowing them to attend monthly professional development events at no cost.

Additional sponsorship support would be required to meet these goals. Fortunately, many different members of the board played a role in securing various existing and new sponsors.

Goals and Objectives

In 2018, major sources of chapter revenue were IABC International membership contributions of \$4,505, sponsorship income of \$13,700 (cash and in-kind) and event net income of \$20,089. With income from membership dues declining over the past several years, the value of sponsorship revenue is critical to the ongoing success of our chapter. Without it, we would be limited in the number of events, professional development opportunities, communications and promotional materials we could offer members, which would negatively affect our brand presence and membership numbers.

For the 2019 calendar year, the KC IABC board strategy was to further customize sponsorships to allow for a range of support levels. This allowed sponsors to receive maximum value for their commitment and enabled us to broaden our offerings and member benefits while offsetting costs. We focused on the following:

Goal 1: Achieve relevant support for chapter initiatives as outlined in the budget

- **Objective 1a:** Maintain 2018 financial support levels for the chapter (\$3,500 in cash and \$8,500 of in-kind services).
- **Objective 1b:** Secure one new organization as a sponsor for 2019.
- **Objective 1c:** Obtain in-kind audio/visual support from monthly event venue, saving \$90 per event, or \$900 total for the year (10 monthly events).

- **Measurement 1:** The amount of money and value of in-kind contributions received for the 2019 calendar year.

Goal 2: Ensure sponsor packages are sustainable and mutually beneficial to KC IABC and to sponsors

- **Objective 2:** Secure a 90 percent recommitment from sponsors year-over-year.
- **Measurement 2:** Company commitments to continue support with a 2020 sponsorship.

Budget

No expenses are incurred for sponsorship outreach efforts thanks to board volunteer time. Funds from sponsorships are combined with membership fees as part of the chapter’s annual budget. In 2018, sponsorships accounted for a total of \$13,700 (\$5,200 in cash and \$8,500 of in-kind services.) We successfully secured \$14,500 sponsor value in 2019 (\$5,600 in cash and \$8,900 of in-kind services).

Revenue 2018	Budget	Actual	Variance
Sponsorship (cash)	\$3,500	\$5,200	\$1,700
Sponsorship (in-kind)	\$8,500	\$8,500	-
Total	\$12,000	\$13,700	\$1,700

Implementation

Sponsorship Overview

For the chapter to effectively communicate to members and provide relevant events and professional development, we rely on sponsors to help subsidize costs through cash and in-kind services. Chapter sponsorship has consisted of two primary in-kind sponsors. One provides our chapter email communication platform and the other provides discounted rate on facility use for the Business Communicators Summit. Cash sponsorship focused on supporting the entire board operations, with percentages devoted to each area – professional development, communications, membership and administration – as well as specific event sponsorship.

We encountered an obstacle when one of our sponsors, NextPage, a full-service print vendor, decided not to renew its in-kind sponsorship package valued at \$6,000 due to internal leadership changes. As a result, the board decided to pursue other organizations for financial donations.

Sponsorships is a critical area for any IABC chapter and having the sponsorship conversation on the monthly board meeting agenda kept the importance of sponsorship efforts front and center. It allowed new Board members to offer suggestions for other organizations to solicit. It also surfaced a new Friends-level sponsor for the chapter. T

Sponsor Identification, Recruitment and Management

The role of the Sponsorship Director is to engage all board members to solicit suggestions for companies and contacts who may be worth approaching about sponsorship. Personal connections are leveraged when appropriate. We begin by contacting past sponsors in the late fall, with a goal to secure commitments by January. Due to our Sponsorship Director not fulfilling her duties, these conversations did not begin until January.

Because some board members have served on the board for several years, it provided continuity with sponsors built on strong relationships. This allowed for:

- Strong understanding of how satisfied each existing sponsor was with their previous support
- Minor tweaks to current customized packages
- Ability to quickly secure renewal commitments

We began customizing sponsorship packages several years ago in an effort to provide the most value. Based on conversations with sponsors, we confirmed they find tremendous value in customized sponsorship packages. We also learned access and exposure to the KC IABC Board and attendees at professional development events were the most valued benefits of sponsorship. From these findings, the board chose to continue with sponsorship customization and keep levels consistent with the previous year as follows:

- Small Business - \$150
- Friend - \$750
- Developing - \$2,500

To begin the ask to secure 2019 sponsors, the Board reached out to 2018 sponsors by email and phone thanking them for their support and asking to recommit. Friend and Developing Sponsor levels received an updated contract outlining benefits and value. The sponsorship levels and corresponding benefits is submitted as **Work Sample 1**.

Sponsorship agreements for a Developing sponsor, HNTB, a Friends sponsor, LandaJob, and a Small Business sponsor, JBS Communications, are submitted as **Work Sample 2**.

We were able to obtain commitments from all but one of our 2018 sponsors. We gained one new Friends sponsor, bringing our sponsor count 10 financial and in-kind sponsors.

In addition to our increased cash sponsorships, our Program Director worked with the monthly event venue to obtain in-kind support of our AV needs for our monthly professional development events, saving \$900. And one sponsor provides a discount for facility use for our chapter's signature event, the Business Communicators Summit, valued at \$500.

For sponsors interested in promoting their business to our lists, we take steps to ensure information (such as email addresses) and the brand are protected. Sponsors do not receive member or guest data. We deliver relevant communication on behalf of the sponsor. Sponsors can promote products/services through KC IABC channels such as social media and at events. They are also able to request individual attendees' contact information when networking at events. This ensures adherence to IABC code of ethics.

Sponsor/Partner Value

The Sponsorship Director is responsible for ensuring each sponsor receives the agreed-upon recognition. This role provides social media content, web content, logos, etc. for digital and print acknowledgment. This task was shared by the Chapter President and Finance VP with assistance from other board members. We informally evaluate sponsor satisfaction and implement changes as needed.

In addition to the benefits mentioned above, all chapter level sponsors are recognized on KC IABC channels (**Work Sample 3**):

- Email newsletter
- Event email promotions
- Verbally at events
- KC IABC Website
- PowerPoint slides prior to meetings
- Social Media – Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn

Another valuable benefit is the ability for all sponsor employees to attend monthly professional development events at the member cost, which is a savings of \$10 from the nonmember rate. This allows them to network and gain exposure to members and attendees. In return it gives members the opportunity to learn more about sponsor businesses and potential resources.

New benefits were offered this year to further increase sponsor engagement and provide value to both KC IABC and sponsors.

- Provide additional opportunities for sponsors to engage and build relationships with KC IABC members by offering member prices to all sponsor employees, regardless of membership. Sponsors gain value through the discounted pricing and KC IABC gains brand awareness with sponsor companies while increasing attendance at events.
- Offer opportunities for sponsors to present educational topics to members at professional development events. Many took us up on this offer and provided excellent programming while receiving additional exposure. Our Program Director worked closely with sponsors to ensure the topics were consistent with non-sponsor sessions.
- Allow sponsors to share discount passes to our annual full-day Business Communicators Summit to their networks. This resulted in reaching new audiences, increasing KC IABC brand awareness and event attendance.

Our informal talks with sponsors indicated high satisfaction with their customized sponsorship packages and interest in continuing support.

Measurement

As indicated above, we measured effectiveness through:

- The amount of money and value of in-kind contributions received for the 2019 calendar year.
- Anecdotal conversations with sponsors and event evaluations.

Results

Objective	Result
1a: Maintain 2018 financial support levels for the chapter (\$3,500 in cash and \$8,500 of in-kind services.)	Exceeded. All but one of our 2018 sponsors recommitted at their existing level. Additionally, we secured one additional cash sponsor. Total: \$5,600 in cash and \$8,900 in in-kind support.
1b: Secure one new sponsor in 2019.	Achieved. Secured a new Friends sponsor at the \$750 level. Received additional in-kind support for discounted facility use from one sponsor.
1c: Obtain in-kind AV support from monthly event venue, saving \$90 per event, or \$900 total for the year (10 monthly events).	Achieved. Our venue vendor became an in-kind sponsor, charging us \$10 rather than \$100 for AV rental at each of our 10 monthly professional development events.
2: Secure a 90% recommitment from sponsors year over year.	Achieved. As of Nov. 15, all sponsors have verbally recommitted for 2020.

Work Samples Attached in Support of Entry:

- Work Sample 1: Sponsor package benefits
- Work Sample 2: Sponsor contracts – HNTB, LandaJob and JBS Communications
- Work Sample 3: Recognition Examples