

June 2019

# Spark business success with a coach

PART  
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By Sue Horner

Sports teams, Olympic athletes and entrepreneurs (as we looked at last month) prove that talent blossoms under a good coach. Here's how two more solo business owners turned to coaching to take their business to a new level.



**Priya Bates, ABC, MC, SCMP, IABC Fellow**  
[Inner Strength Communication](#)

"Whenever you're going through a transition, seek the expertise where you need it," **Priya Bates** advises.

When she launched her business five years ago, Priya realized she needed help to move from her former role, a prominent communication position inside large organizations.

"On the inside, you sell yourself once during the interview stage," she explains. "After that, your behaviour and the projects you work on reinforce that you should still be there. You aren't dependent on selling yourself multiple times."

Knowing she had to build confidence in selling herself, she turned to a long-time friend who now does life coaching. They held regular sessions, in person or over Skype, discussing what obstacles stood in her way and what fears held her back. After every session, he gave her assignments and next steps.

"We also worked on defining my purpose, which is to help organizations enable, engage and empower employees to deliver business results," Priya adds.

"My coach helped me understand and fine-tune my value so I could sell that externally."

As for her business now, "Things are on fire," she says. "I'm such a different person, comfortable in my skin in this new life as a consultant. I've come a long way and I'm grounded in what I do."



**Andrea Bassett**  
[Red Sail Writers](#)

Executive ghostwriter **Andrea Bassett** was still in a corporate job when she began dreaming of going out on her own.

She devoured books like [Steve Slaunwhite's](#) *The Wealthy Freelancer*. She subscribed to newsletters from copywriter [Bob Bly](#) and coach [Ed Gandia](#). "This looks simple," she thought.

When she quit her job, that impression continued. A former boss hired her for a three-month retainer and a colleague asked her to write for a website. She took an online course on writing case studies and landed work with a new client.

But Andrea struggled with marketing herself. She felt isolated. She was scared of prospecting. She thought an official business coach would be too much, but

knowing she needed help, she joined one of Ed's group coaching programs.

After 10 months, a group coaching call every two weeks, homework, a training plan, pricing tips, a Facebook community and direct feedback have all "made the difference between despair and giving up or moving forward," Andrea says.

She revamped her messaging and started a newsletter. She began [warm email prospecting](#) and landed a new client, and created a paper tickler file to follow up with prospective clients. She also increased her visibility on LinkedIn with frequent posts and comments.

"Being in a group of other copywriters eliminated my feeling of isolation overnight," Andrea says. "I've moved from being terrified of prospecting to thinking of it as a sport. If people don't need my services, I ask if they would keep me in mind and join my newsletter list. Business is heading in the right direction and that's such a relief."

**Could working with a coach help your own business, too? You don't have to be an athlete to benefit, as Priya and Andrea prove.**

*This article began life as a guest post on Heather West's blog, [Wholepreneur](#). Sue is a writer, principal of [Get It Write](#) and director of communications for PIC.*

# An independent's take on IABC WC19

By Lynne Olver

More than 1,300 communicators were at the IABC World Conference (WC) in Vancouver from June 9-12.



Many were newbies like me. With a ton of concurrent sessions, it was impossible to get to everything. I opted for sessions on topics I knew little about (communicating about cannabis; artificial intelligence and other technologies) or wanted to stay current on (crisis communications, developing effective partnerships).

Here are some takeaways.

## 1. "Don't apply for stuff; let people find you!"

A great mantra for independents. In a digital branding session, [Caroline Leach](#) gave pointers on developing a social media strategy so people, projects and offers come to you. She asks:

- Do you approach your social media activity with an innovative mindset? Do you try new features when they are introduced by a social network? Are you creating short videos?
- Do you consider documenting your professional day to share with your networks?
- Are you trying new approaches with content? Is there an experiment you could conduct and write about?

## 2. "There's a fine line between experience and baggage."

This came from the closing speaker, [Peter Sheahan](#), who underscored the rapid pace of change globally. It made me think about how often I rely on past experience, rather than experimenting with new approaches. Peter noted that we build our identities around our roles, and having to become an "amateur" again (by learning and changing) is hard. Are you embracing change or resisting it? Selling your services, or solving your client's problems?

## 3. Blockchain is "ridiculously disruptive,"

and communicators have to understand it. [Shel Holtz](#) gave an overview of blockchain, how it cuts out the go-between, and current/potential communication uses. He recommended *Blockchain Revolution* by Don Tapscott and Alex Tapscott as a good, albeit somewhat dated, introduction.

**4. Audio is hot**—not just podcasting, but audio communication, including "sonic branding" (a brand's signature sound). Given the adoption of voice assistants and smart speakers, this

is logical. Smart speakers will soon (or already do) outnumber tablets, according to Shel. Check out his [blog post on this topic](#).

## 5. Broaden awareness of emerging trends.

One of the co-leaders of an artificial intelligence and big data session recommended the Brookfield Institute report [Turn and Face the Strange](#), which covers changes and trends that may affect employment in Canada. This is on my to-read list.

## Is it worth going to IABC WC, given the price?

If you set out to recharge and learn, then IABC WC is great, although it's expensive. The obvious benefits are expanding your network, updating knowledge/skills and being inspired by the work and words of others. You may make links that lead to new business, but no guarantees on that front.

Most attendees are not independents—they don't do what you do. If you have specific business development objectives or want to connect with others in your particular field, then a smaller event tailored to your region or area of interest might offer more value.



*Lynne Olver is a senior communications consultant and a former business reporter who advises clients in the financial services and investment sectors on business communication.*

## RELATED READING:

- ▶ [Caroline's blog post on preparing for a TEDx talk.](#)

# July 4: PIC Summer Social

**Celebrate Canada's 152nd birthday and summer in style with members and friends at the PIC Summer Social.**

Grab a drink and a bite, and network and catch up at this casual get-together. Socialize and make new connections, and check in with the colleagues you already know. Hear about the experiences of fellow indies, compare notes about how small communications businesses can succeed and thrive, and make valuable contacts.

Join us at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 4 at the [Duke of York](#). The pub is located at 39 Prince Arthur Ave., just steps from the St. George subway station.



As usual, drinks and food are on your own tab. See you there!

[Register now.](#)

## Your monthly OAT

By Sharon Aschaiek

Did you know oats are a superfood that boost brainpower? As usual, I'd like to serve up my own version to help you be a better communicator: **Opportunity, Article, Tip.**

**Opportunity:** Sometimes, I like expanding my professional learning in new directions to gain a fresh perspective on my work and how it connects to other fields, and to make potential new business contacts. One option that looks interesting is the conference [Media Ethics: Human Ecology in a Connected World](#), which is the 20th annual convention of the Media Ecology Association. Taking place June 27-30 at the University of Toronto, the international event will focus on the ways contemporary communication approaches and emerging technologies give rise to certain political, societal and cultural issues, and how they can enact positive social change.

**Article:** Our field is constantly changing, particularly due to new platforms and measurement tools that can help us refine our messages and how we share them. Yet with all of the flux caused by digital technologies, it's easy to lose sight of the basic tenets

of effective communication. The recent *Forbes* article [12 Tips For Staying Ahead Of Your Competitors In The Communications Industry](#) highlights what you need to remember and learn about to stay current and relevant. It includes tips such as being an early adopter of new social networks, keeping certifications up to date, brushing up on marketing principles, and getting to know your field's influencers.

**Tip:** Testimonials from clients can help us promote our accomplishments and generate new business. And yet, after 15 years in business, I still feel a bit uncomfortable asking my clients to provide one, and I know I'm not alone. I stumbled on a new approach on making this kind of request. Instead of asking for a testimonial after a job is complete, follow up a little while later to inquire about how the communications material was received, and how well it's serving their organization. If the feedback is positive, summarize what they've said, and ask if you can use it as a testimonial. This more natural process makes it easier for the client to cooperate. What do you think?

Continued success,

**Sharon Aschaiek**  
Chair, PIC  
VP, IABC/Toronto's Special Interest Groups



## Show off your skills while helping steer PIC

We're looking for people with enthusiasm and ideas to join the PIC executive for the new board year starting in July. It's a great way to show off your existing skills, learn new ones and get to know other members.

Here's where you can help, as either director or co-director with a buddy:

**Membership:** Duties include answering inquiries, collecting profile data for new members and submitting quarterly member updates to the chapter.

**Programming:** Duties include booking event speakers and venues.

**Social media:** Duties include posting to PIC's accounts on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.

**Communications:** Duties include producing the monthly newsletter and providing content for the chapter's bi-weekly e-Lert.

Interested? Talk to incoming chair [Nkiru Asika](#) or any of the current members listed below to find out more. If you're a graphic designer able to help with *The Buzz*, contact [Deana De Ciccio](#).

## Changes to the PIC member list due June 31

As a PIC member, you can promote yourself at no charge on the [PIC member list](#), which is updated quarterly on the IABC/Toronto website. Send your updates to PIC's director of membership, [Nkiru Asika](#), by **June 31**. For new profiles, send your name, company name, city, email address, telephone number, website URL and a brief description of your business (about 40 words).

## See you on social media

Build and strengthen your connections with other PIC members, advance your communications business, discuss business issues and network with PIC on social media: on Twitter at [@pictoronto](#); LinkedIn, [IABC Toronto Professional Independent Communicators](#); Facebook, [Professional Independent Communicators \(PIC\), part of IABC/Toronto](#).

Recent posts include links to email newsletters for writers, trust as an important step in getting hired and ways to stay afloat during a slump.

## Read up on PIC's history

How did PIC start? What are some early stories and stats? What do members say about us? Read all this and more in *PIC Then and Now*. The booklet marked our 20th anniversary in 2018, and was created by [Cathy Ledden](#), RGD, and her associate, Susan Mosdell, RGD. Download a PDF of the booklet from the [PIC page](#) on the IABC/Toronto website (scroll down to Resources).



[Professional Independent Communicators](#) (PIC) is a special interest group of [IABC/Toronto](#). PIC's mission is to support independent IABC/Toronto communicators through professional development, networking and marketing. [IABC](#) connects communicators from around the world with the insights, resources and people they need to drive their careers and the profession forward.

## THE BUZZ

*The Buzz* informs members about upcoming events, shares professional development tips from past meetings and keeps us connected. Editor: [Sue Horner](#) | Graphic design: [Deana De Ciccio](#)

**Want to recap a meeting or do other writing for *The Buzz*?** Contact [Sue Horner](#).

## Quick links

- [PIC on the web](#)
- [PIC on LinkedIn](#)
- [@PICToronto](#) on Twitter
- Email us: [toronto-sig@iabc.to](mailto:toronto-sig@iabc.to)
- [Join our mailing list!](#)
- Get a copy of [The Independent Life](#)
- [Find back issues of The Buzz](#)

## PIC executive

Contact any of us with questions, comments and ideas for speakers or topics:

Chair: [Sharon Aschaiek](#)

Past Chair: [Donna Papacosta](#)

Communications: [Sue Horner](#)

Membership: [Nkiru Asika](#)

Programming: [Judy Irwin](#), [Sharon McMillan](#)

Social Media: [Bill Smith](#)

