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...to the people too frightened to open their doors when I worked a door-to-door sales job in London;

...to the men in Germany who aggressively solicited me in the streets for sex, presuming I was a prostitute, when I was only 17;

...to my shame and anger as the only Black student in class, sitting through lessons on slavery taught by White teachers from history books written by White authors;

...to a lifetime seething at the media's portrayal of my continent as the cesspit of the world and the charity sector's depiction of my fellow Africans as people who always need saving, who you can sponsor for \$2 a day.

I remember things that I don't want to remember and that I choose not to share.

**Every Black person living in a majority White country has felt the weight of a knee on the neck of their dignity, their identity, their self-respect.**

Sometimes the knee is from the blatant racists like Derek Chauvin. But it

is even more frightening when it comes from the liberals like Amy Cooper – the ones we thought were our allies, if not our friends.

The ones who say they aren't racists, but who call the cops on you for drinking coffee in a Starbucks while Black, sleeping in a university library while Black, sitting on a park bench while Black.

Every time you clutch your purse when we enter the elevator, we can't breathe.

Every time you ignore the glaring inequalities in education, economics and health, we can't breathe.

Every time you cross the road to avoid our sons, we can't breathe.

Every time we hear that we "fit the description," we can't breathe.

Every time we're stared at for moving into a nice neighbourhood, we can't breathe.

Every time you esteem the life of an animal above the life of a Black person, we can't breathe.

Every time we're followed around a shop like a suspected thief, we can't breathe.

Every time we can't hail a cab at night, we can't breathe.

Every time you tell our kids to downsize their dreams, we can't breathe.

Every time we are passed over for people less qualified, we can't breathe.

Every time we look around a room of leaders and see nobody that looks like us, we can't breathe.

Every time you tell us that you are not racist because you don't see colour, we can't breathe.

Because that means that you don't even see us.

In the Igbo language of my people, the word for love – *Ifunanya* – literally means "I see you."

Please. Open your eyes and see us.

The rage being played out on today's streets stems from a lifetime of us gasping for breath. You cannot only acknowledge it when we die.

#BlackLivesMatter



Nkiru Asika is PIC's chair and VP, Special Interest Groups for IABC/Toronto. Her usual column, *The Independent View*, returns next issue. This article first appeared on [Medium](#).

## PIC needs YOU!

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 or learn new ones while getting to know other members.

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

- **Design:** Produce our monthly newsletter and create other design projects, such as event promos. **Deana De Ciccio** has been doing this since October 2018, and leaves the executive with our heartfelt thanks.
- **Social media:** Post to PIC's accounts on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.
- **Sponsorship (new):** Find and contact potential sponsors who'd like to reach small business owners and freelancers.

These current members are staying on:

- Chair: **Nkiru Asika**
- Communications: **Sue Horner** and **Nancy Miller**
- Membership: **Kathy Lim**
- Programming: **Judy Irwin** and **Sharon McMillan**

**Want to join us? Talk to [Nkiru](#) or any of the current members to find out more.**

## The buzz about *The Buzz*

About [May 2020](#):

*"What an inspiring and information packed issue...kudos to Nkiru for that excellent piece on perspective during the age of COVID!"*

– **Sharon McMillan**

*"I'm struck by the beauty of the wisdom, distilled into just a few pages, on how to cultivate curiosity and spiritual fortitude."*

– **Kathy Lim**

About [April 2020](#):

*"Fantastic content for these challenging times...it helps to know even though we are alone, we're not alone."*

– **Judy Irwin**

*"Inspiring to read how other PICers are adjusting to the new reality."*

– **Ellen Gardner**

JUNE 10:

# A branding case study

By Sue Horner

**A** PIC seminar in November 2016 ignited a spark that led to Sharon Aschaiek's rebranding. Today, feedback from clients confirms that [Higher Ed Communications](#) clearly reflects her specialty, which has led to more inquiries, referrals and opportunities.

At the PIC webinar on June 10, Sharon talked about the branding journey guided by strategy and brand coach [Nathalie Noël](#).

## What makes a strong brand?

Your brand isn't just random adjectives. Nathalie said a strong brand is:

- **Authentic.** Your brand represents you and your unique personality.
- **Intentional.** You've done the work to know who you are and where you're going so your actions are deliberate and consistent.
- **Emotive.** You're not afraid of your feelings. What do you take pride in? Being open leads to relationships, not just transactions.

A strong brand makes you more **credible**, so clients feel more comfortable with you and colleagues are more likely to refer you. You find it **easier** to get in the door and it takes less time to explain your value. And this leads to more opportunities and more money.

## What does the branding journey involve?

You need to start a branding journey when you keep taking on work you don't really want, find potential clients misunderstand what you offer, find it hard to describe what you do, or feel your brand doesn't reflect you. Sharon knew it was time to change after going through two brands – Summit Media Group with her now ex-husband in 2004, and Cocoa Media in 2008 – that were no longer right.

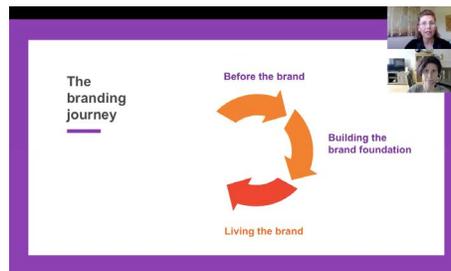
Nathalie coaches clients through steps to build your brand foundation, including:

### 1. Know your purpose

Clients fill out a questionnaire that asks questions such as What drives you,

beyond money? What difference do you want to make in the world? What experiences made you feel comfortable or jazzed? "Write it down and come back to it later," Nathalie said. "If it feels true, move on. If not, dig deeper until it does."

"It's like therapy," Sharon said. "The questions make you think and feel and you don't really want to do it!" But the process reminded her that she enjoys helping schools, and writing stories that are clear, compelling and have heart.



### 2. Know your ideal client

"When a client feels you're reading their mind, you're gold," Nathalie said.

Time for more therapy. Who do you like to work with? What values do they have, and what's their working style? Do you target a particular sector like healthcare or finance, or maybe an audience, like B2B or internal communication? Think about clients' day-to-day challenges and how you can help.

"I had been reluctant to fully dedicate myself to one sector, but Nathalie got me thinking about my work with higher ed and why I enjoy it," Sharon said.

### 3. Know your unique value

"Your combination of skills and experiences makes you special," Nathalie told listeners. "Know why you're awesome."

What are your strengths? What do clients and colleagues say? Ask. The top three to six responses that keep coming up will be your differentiators. Write a short summary for each and build this into your bio, RFP responses and profiles.

"Working with Nathalie was the first

time I deeply thought about this," Sharon said. "It helped me better understand what I can bring to clients and I spell this out in quotes as good reasons for them to consider me."

Nathalie combined the results of the questionnaire with multiple conversations with Sharon and information gathered from searches of Sharon's online presence and her competitors into a brand platform document. This included a suggested vision, mission, personality, brand promise and differentiators. She also created a simple communications plan to guide Sharon's next steps.

## Living the brand

Sharon found one of most useful aspects of working with Nathalie was landing on a brand name. Nathalie suggested shortening Sharon's original thought, the somewhat clunky "Higher Education Communications," to "Higher Ed Communications." That simple change made the brand more relaxed but also fit the industry terminology.

"That got me excited about putting the rest of the brand pieces in place," Sharon said.

For help, Sharon turned to connections made through PIC. Graphic designer [Deana De Ciccio](#) of ImageStudio Creative Communications created a colour palette, logo and tagline, along with templates for a business card, letterhead and PowerPoint slides. Design studio [12Thirteen](#) created the website. And photographer Suzanne Merrett of [Amara Studios](#) took Sharon's first professional headshots.

Sharon launched Higher Ed Communications in April 2018, using Nathalie's plan to strategically market herself. She hasn't looked back.

"I have confidence and a clear path to steer my business going forward," she said. "Having clarity in how I position and market myself makes it easy for organizations to say yes to working with me."



Sue Horner is a writer, principal of [Get It Write](#) and Co-Director of Communications for PIC.

## PIC PERSONALITY:

# Meet Sabita Singh, ABC

By Nancy Miller



**SABITA SINGH, ABC** is President of Trivetta Consulting Inc. She is a [LinkedIn profile writer and executive coach who helps professionals build a powerful digital presence that will attract new business and career opportunities](#). Sabita also develops corporate LinkedIn training programs to help companies activate their employees as social media brand ambassadors; according to *Forbes*, this can extend a company's brand reach by over 500%. Sabita can be found on [LinkedIn](#) and at [Trivetta.com](#).

## When did you launch your independent business and how did it come about?

I launched Trivetta Consulting Inc. in 2018. Trivetta stands for my three areas of expertise – social media, digital marketing and corporate communications (tri = three and vetta = knowledge). In my last corporate role, I was the head of digital marketing for KPMG in Canada for six years. I lost my job following leadership changes and a corporate restructuring. At that pivotal time, I realized that if I didn't take the

opportunity to start my own business, I never would. I am so glad I took the plunge into consulting. I have never looked back!

## What do you enjoy most about being an indie?

I love being in control of my own destiny, especially in a time where unemployment is at a record high and job security is a distant memory. Don't get me wrong, being self-employed can be stressful. When COVID-19 first hit in March, my business dried up for a couple of months, and I was very concerned about my finances. However, I had a record month in May, and June is turning out to be a strong month as well.

Professionals are recognizing how important it is to build a powerful presence on LinkedIn, especially now that it is so challenging to connect face to face. I write their career stories and show them how to build an active and visible presence, so they are top of mind for new opportunities.

## What don't you like about being an indie?

I miss being part of a team. I worked for several high profile companies over the course of my career and have been part of some amazing teams. Many of my former colleagues have become friends and even clients of my new business.

Fortunately, I have become a preferred LinkedIn partner for several organizations where I am treated like a

valued contributor, so I still feel a great sense of belonging.

## What advice would you give someone new to independent life?

I'll share advice I received from my IABC colleague and friend, **Priya Bates**: Give your business two years to take off. Too many people rush back into a corporate job too soon. Coincidentally, my business is coming up to its two-year anniversary in September, and my efforts to promote Trivetta are paying off. People have come to know me as the "go to" person for LinkedIn and I am receiving multiple referrals per week.

Another piece of advice is to make your business scalable – never turn away work. Don't just think about how much work you can handle at a personal level, but look at how you can engage others to grow your business.

As a new indie, it is important to be crystal clear on your unique value proposition and showcase your expertise on social media. A lot of my business comes through LinkedIn. People see my activity, read my profile and reach out. I practise what I preach, and it is working!

## How long have you been an IABC member and what value do you get from your membership?

I have been an IABC member since I was a student and earned my accreditation early in my career. I have also

judged countless awards programs (won a few myself!) and have served on both local and international IABC boards. Several of my job opportunities have come through my IABC connections and friends. I have learned through experience that the best way to get value out of your membership is to actively volunteer.

## Since you are new to PIC, what value do you hope to get from it?

I recently joined PIC and I am excited to become part of a new network where indies support each other. Hopefully, through PIC, I can identify contract writers who enjoy writing career stories. I often get asked to write multiple employee profiles in a short period of time so it would be fabulous to have some talented writers to support me on these corporate engagements.



*PIC Personality randomly profiles our members, who have a range of talent, from coaching and media relations to video production and writing. Nancy is a consultant and marketing professional for education businesses at [Red Thread](#) as well as a certified mindfulness coach. She is the Co-Director of Communications for PIC.*

## Member news



Congrats to new member **Sabreena Delhon**, who was appointed as the first [Open Democracy Fellow](#) in May. This Fellowship is jointly created by Simon Fraser University's Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue and the Open Democracy Project in partnership with Massey College. The post will focus on supporting Canada's emerging democracy sector through responsive community building activities that convene, connect and share knowledge among local changemakers, non-profits and public sector institutions.

"I'm thrilled to be the inaugural Open Democracy Fellow, and am ready to serve the democracy sector as we seize this pivotal moment in history," Sabreena says.

*"Enhancing democratic engagement is the key to addressing the multitude of issues affecting the quality of life for people across the country, from access to justice to climate change."*

This means going beyond identifying a problem or encouraging someone to vote – it's about going upstream to ensure that representative participants are not only present but actively driving conversations that shape their communities."



PIC's first-ever online networking and social session, held on May 21, drew a Zoom crowd of about 20 virtual attendees. We covered topics like working in quarantine, maintaining clients or even finding new business, and whether it's wise to cut your own hair. While it wasn't quite like our usual pub setting, it was great to catch up with indie pals and share our experiences.

## Make sure you're on the PIC member list by June 26

We're reminding IABC/Toronto members they can turn to PIC members for help during the pandemic with this ad, which we're running in the bi-weekly chapter e-Lert and posting online. Since we're directing people to the [PIC member list](#), make sure your name is on it. Send your updates to PIC's director of membership, [Kathy Lim](#). The next update is due **June 26**.

Your source  
for outsourcing



[toronto.iabc.com/about/pic/](http://toronto.iabc.com/about/pic/)

[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 this issue: [Sue Horner](#) | Graphic design: [Deana De Ciccio](#).

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

### 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: [Nkiru Asika](#)

Past Chair: [Sharon Aschaiek](#)

Communications: [Sue Horner](#), [Nancy Miller](#)

Membership: [Kathy Lim](#)

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

Social Media: (*vacant; let us know if you can help!*)

Design: [Deana De Ciccio](#)

