

THE BUZZ

YOUR SOURCE FOR EVERYTHING INDIE.



Hello <<First Name>>,

Hope you enjoy the latest edition of *The Buzz*!

A message from PIC chair Sharon Aschaiek

Doctors have MDs, lawyers have LLBs, engineers have P.Engs and accountants have CPAs. What about the letters that follow the name of a professional communicator?

Thanks to IABC, we have two designations through which we can demonstrate our communications expertise and experience.

The **Communication Management Professional (CMP)** is for generalists or specialists who are established communication managers, while the **Strategic Communication Management Professional (SCMP)** is for those who provide strategic advice to an organization's leaders. Both designations can be applied for and then attained by writing an exam through IABC's [Global Communication Certification Council](#).



How much value do these designations really have? Given how competitive the profession can be, and the growing expectations of organizations recruiting these services, I think they can count for a lot. For independents, it's a way to differentiate yourself from other practitioners by demonstrating you have invested in yourself and take your work as a communicator seriously. Plus, having the credential reflects your ongoing commitment to professional development, since continuous study is required to maintain it.

I learned more about the value of these designations at IABC's recent [Leadership Institute](#), a conference focused on helping chapters operate more effectively. There, I met several communicators, including independents, who talked about how being able to include the CMP or SCMP designation on their business card and LinkedIn profile helped them gain the recognition and respect they deserve as accomplished professional communicators and, consequently, advance in their careers.

But don't take it from me – this testimonial by IABC/Toronto member Priya Bates, principal of [Inner Strength Communication](#), says it all:

"Certification says that there are skills associated with professional communication expertise. I took the exam to drive credibility in the profession and prove that I had what it takes to achieve certification that is a third-party global standard. It simply puts me on a different playing field when selling my services."

Continued success,



Sharon Aschaiek
Chair, Professional Independent Communicators (PIC)
Vice President, Special Interest Groups, IABC/Toronto
toronto-sig@iabc.to

In This Issue

- A message from Sharon
- March 15: Spelling 'bee(r)'
- March 28: IABC/Toronto presents networking in the north
- Gini Dietrich has a challenge for you
- PIC Personality: Melika Ramkissoon
- Writing a book? Patricia has some advice
- Have your say in the new *Communicator*
- See you on social media
- Get a copy of *The Indie Life*

Quick Links

- [PIC on the web](#)
- [PIC on LinkedIn](#)
- [@PICToronto](#) on Twitter
- Get a copy of [The Independent Life](#)
- [IABC/Toronto](#)
- PIC email: toronto-pic@iabc.to

Newsletter archives

- Find back issues of *The Buzz* from Jan. 2010 to Aug. 2016 [here](#).
- [Join Our Mailing List!](#)

We want your talents!

Interested in writing, editing or contributing ideas for PIC's *The Buzz* or IABC/Toronto's *Communicator*? We'd love your help. [Let us know!](#)

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: [Melika](#)

[Ramkissoon](#)

Programming: [John Bromley](#),

[ABC](#)

Social Media: [Bill Smith](#)

March 15: PIC's inaugural "spelling bee(r)" social

Thursday, March 15, 6:30 to 9 p.m.

Duke of York pub, [39 Prince Arthur Ave., Toronto](#)

As winter melts away (we hope!), renewal becomes top of mind. To help with our intellectual rejuvenation, PIC is presenting our first "spelling bee(r)" as part of our spring social. The spelling bee is free to enter, and the winner gets a small prize and, more importantly, bragging rights. Don't miss out on your chance to be a spellebrity!

Bring your competitive nature and enjoy a pint within the comforting confines of our social headquarters — the [Duke of York](#) in the Annex. The pub is located east of Bedford Road, north of Bloor Street, steps from the St. George subway station.

Remember, PIC socials are free to attend, but drinks and food are pay-your-own-way.

We look forward to seeing you there.

[Register now](#)

March 28: IABC/Toronto presents: networking in the north (Unionville)

If you're a communicator who works or lives just north of Toronto, this is your chance to get to know your local peers in the profession. We're hosting a free networking event at Jakes on Main in Unionville. Join us for a casual evening of networking with other communicators and learn about IABC/Toronto.

Date: Wednesday, March 28, 2018

Time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Location: [Jakes on Main](#) (second floor), 202 Main St., Unionville

Cost: Free to attend, food and drinks are pay your own way

Who can attend: All communicators!

This event is open to all professional communicators — whether on staff at organizations, or self-employed — who work or live north of Toronto, or want to attend an event in this area. All members of IABC/Toronto chapter are welcome, but you don't need to be a member to attend.

[Register now](#)

Feb. 15 recap: Gini Dietrich has a challenge for you, indie communicators

By Sue Horner

Gini Dietrich knows about the highs and lows of small business, and persisting through them.

During a webinar on Feb. 15, the founder and CEO of PR firm [Arment Dietrich](#) walked us through the story of her business, which went from winning awards and achieving 63% growth in 2007, to successive years of shrinking business. By 2011, the firm was bringing in less than it had during its first year of operation.



In 2011 and 2012, Gini decided to turn to digital and social media to fill the firm's pipeline of business leads.

She began building relationships through Twitter, following and connecting with people who had similar interests to her existing clients. She revamped her presence on Facebook and starting testing things on her blog. She launched a newsletter. She began speaking to local and national groups, led webinars and wrote articles for trade and business publications. She also co-authored *Marketing in the Round* with Geoff Livingston.

The book gave her more credibility and led to 63 speaking engagements. Relationships built through Twitter started to drive revenue. Website visitors increased. Analytics showed that one article alone led directly to 40 webinar sales. The business experienced 150% growth, and most important, started to save money.

"Sixty percent of our new business came from new activities like speaking and writing the book," Gini said.

"The point is that the old way of doing things no longer works," she added. "Everything has been thrown on its head in the last 10 years, and we have to evolve and introduce new strategies and tactics for ourselves and our clients."

Time to diversify

Experts recommend diversifying your business with seven different revenue streams. Gini's firm took seven years to get six:

1. Client service (now about 61% of the business)
2. Books — *Marketing in the Round*, *Spin Sucks*, *The Communicators Playbook* (7%)
3. Online courses (21%)
4. Speaking (11%)
5. Mastermind group
6. PR Dream Team community

She plans to add two more streams this year: a podcast and a paid online community. (An earlier one called SpinSucks Pro no longer exists. "It was ahead of its time," Gini said.)

Although PIC members may be guilty of relying on referrals for new business, we too have a "gigantic opportunity" in front of us to do more.

"I challenge you to go beyond client service," Gini said. "What is one extra revenue stream you can add? If you've always wanted to write a book, it's never been easier. You can teach something in an online course. You can do a podcast — women represent less than 1% of podcasters. Get out there, you have no competition."

Once you've added one new stream, add another the next year. By 2024, you'll have your seven streams.

"Don't be put off by thinking, 'I'm not an expert, what could I possibly teach?' or 'I don't have time,'" Gini added. "Each of us has something to offer that's different."

And don't forget the value of passive income. Gini related the story of a colleague who made money while they were skiing, simply because people had to pay to schedule an appointment with her.

"There's nothing better than doing what you love to do – ski or lie on the beach or drink wine or golf – and opening your email to see you made money."

Are you up for the challenge?

Gini's recommended reading:

- *What Would Google Do* – Jeff Jarvis
- *The Conversion Code* – Chris Smith
- *Built to Sell* – John Warrillow
- *Traction: Get a Grip on Your Business* – Gino Wickman
- *Content Chemistry* – Andy Crestodina

A version of this article first appeared on Sue's blog, the [Red Jacket Diaries](#).

PIC Personality: Meet Melika Ramkissoon

By Sue Horner

Melika Ramkissoon is a bilingual (English/French) public relations professional at Down 2 Earth PR. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#), visit her [website](#), [email her](#) or call 416-939-2396.



What's your background?

I took a winding path into communications, although what I've learned along the way has been valuable. I was originally thinking of going into the foreign service, and first completed a B.A. in international studies at York University. While pursuing a post-graduate certificate in Public Administration at Humber College, a professor asked if I had thought of a career in communications. I later realized he was right, and I enrolled in the Corporate Communications certificate program at Sheridan College. While attending York, I took French classes, which I later upgraded through certificate programs at the Alliance Francaise.

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

During my time at Sheridan, I realized that communications was my calling. I felt it was a good combination of my abilities and a nice way to tie together my writing, interpersonal skills and other attributes. I had been thinking of starting my own business around 2015 and spent a lot of time going to IABC events, talking to other communicators and reflecting on my unique, diplomacy-centered approach to communications. I formally registered my business in March 2017 and launched my website that fall.

What type of work are you doing now?

I'm actively prospecting, focusing on public relations work for non-profit organizations, small businesses and public-sector organizations. My ideal work involves **writing** (news releases, newsletter articles, social media content, briefing notes, website content); **research** (issues and analysis, environmental scans); and a component that allows me to use my **French** abilities.

I like to call myself a generalist in training. The communications landscape is changing so rapidly that we need to keep up our skills in different areas so we can respond to whatever professional challenge or opportunity comes up.

What do you enjoy most about being an indie?

The opportunity to work with clients from different sectors and different backgrounds. The variety of work. The flexibility. The relationships. The chance to learn and grow as a communicator.

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

I'm so new that everything is still positive! Or maybe it's just that I've spent so much time talking to knowledgeable IABC and PIC members. I guess the only thing is the piece that probably gets everyone, where you have to get the building blocks of your business in place, then get out there and promote it.

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

I joined IABC in November 2011 and started volunteering with the main chapter within a few months, including working on the Ovation awards for four years. Over the years, I also attended quite a few PIC events, although I didn't join PIC until my business was official. I also joined the PIC executive team as membership director in the fall of 2017 and it's been a wonderful learning experience. As a volunteer, I've gained so much knowledge and wisdom from fellow PIC members and other communicators I've met through the main chapter.

What advice would you give someone new to independent life?

Definitely join IABC and PIC! And remember that you get out of your membership what you put in. There is tremendous value in having connections with both the main chapter and PIC.

We count more than 100 members in PIC, offering a range of talent from coaching and media relations to video production and writing. Do you know everyone? Our PIC Personalities feature introduces new members and randomly profiles existing members. Let [Sue Horner](#) know if you'd like to be profiled and she'll be in touch to set it up.

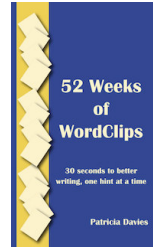
Writing a book? Patricia has some advice

By Sue Horner

Award-winning writer and editor (and PIC's own) **Patricia Davies** has launched a book. Called *52 Weeks of WordClips: 30 seconds to better writing, one hint at a time*, the book compiles the best of her popular newsletter, *WordClips*, into an entertaining digest of tips and cautions.

After sending out *WordClips* each month for seven years, Patricia had lots of choice for the tips. "I had my favourites, so it actually wasn't too difficult to pick the 52 tips," she says.

The book was her editor's suggestion, but Patricia had no time for it while working full time. Now that she's "seven-eighths retired," she was able to spend the six months required to pull the book together.



Patricia's advice for others thinking about writing a book:

1. **Get an editor.** "Writers are too close to the material and may not recognize when they haven't kept the reader's needs in mind."
2. **Make sure you have a consistent theme** so readers know what's in it for them.
3. **Make sure the book is organized** so your readers don't have to fight to get something useful out of it.
4. **Allow more time than you think you need.** "Mine was essentially written, except I had to watch that I wasn't repeating themes."
5. **Work with a graphic designer** who can set up your material so it looks its best.
6. If self-publishing, **work with an established site.** Patricia chose [Blurb.ca](#).
7. **Proofread.** "Writing a book about writing is tricky and I probably proofread it seven times."
8. **Choose getting it right over getting it done.** Patricia had hoped to have the book published before Christmas, but delayed to get it right.

Patricia joined IABC and PIC around 1998 and was PIC's Director of Programming and Professional Development from 2010 to 2013. She established Patricia Davies Communications after a career in journalism, which included being an editor at *The Globe and Mail* and a senior features writer for *Report on Business Magazine*, *Chatelaine* and *Canadian Living*.

Patricia's book is available for \$15 plus shipping or for \$10 as a PDF download at [Blurb.ca](#).

Have your say in the new *Communicator*

An e-newsletter version of IABC/Toronto's *Communicator* is coming our way in March. Whether you are an experienced professional or a recent graduate, get yourself heard by contributing to these upcoming issues:

- **May (writing deadline April 9): Gearing to Communicate in the 2020s**
As the world continues to evolve politically, socially, economically and technologically, it also affects the world of communications. What are these effects, and how should we equip ourselves now for the changes ahead? This issue will invite contributors to do some crystal-gazing.
- **July (writing deadline June 8): The Communications 'Newcomer to Canada' Special**
Toronto is home to a multitude of skilled newcomers from all over the world. Often, their path to integration into the local job market is not easy. This issue will take a frank look at the challenges that communications newcomers face, and offers practical advice on what they can do to ease their transition into the local industry.

Email your contributions to editor [Jess Baria](#).

See you on social media

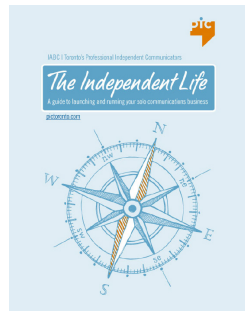
Build and strengthen your connections with other PIC members, advance your communications business, discuss business issues and network with PIC on social media:

- Our LinkedIn group, [IABC Toronto Professional Independent Communicators](#) (login required)
- Our Facebook group (chapter members only), [Professional Independent Communicators \(PIC\)](#), part of IABC/Toronto.

Recent posts have discussed how to ask for and get referrals, what makes a good writer website, ways to generate revenue and how to set up a successful business. You are welcome to post articles or ask questions that will help you and other members grow and manage your businesses.

Remember, you can also follow us on Twitter at [@picoronto](#) to stay current on PIC activities.

Get your copy of *The Independent Life*



PIC has a wonderful resource in our e-book, *The Independent Life*. It shares the wisdom of PIC members with online resources to guide you through the steps in starting your own business, setting up your office, managing your finances, setting fees, marketing and more.

Our thanks to graphic designer **Cathy Ledden, RGD**, for turning the content provided by many PIC members into a handy guide. [Grab your copy](#) as a PDF download or as an e-publication for Kobo or iReader.



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. *The Buzz* is PIC's e-newsletter, intended to inform independent communicators about our activities, share professional development tips from past meetings and keep us aware of what's going on. Connect with us on the web at [pictoronto.com](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

As the largest chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators, IABC/Toronto provides access to products, services, activities and networking opportunities in Toronto and around the world. IABC helps people and organizations achieve excellence in corporate communication, public relations, employee communication, marketing communication, public affairs and other forms of communication. For more information, visit the [IABC website](#).

[Sue Horner](#)

Editor and Director, Communications — PIC



Copyright © 2018 IABC/Toronto, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)