

May 2019

Spark business success with a coach

By Sue Horner

Sports teams and Olympic athletes prove that talent blossoms under a good coach. It's no different for entrepreneurs. In this issue and next month, we'll look at how four solo business owners turned to coaching to name and launch a business, move in a new direction or take it to a new level.

Heather West [Fresh Communications](#)



"You can read a book or do an online course, but sometimes just working with

another person helps you move to another level," says communications professional **Heather West**. Heather has used two coaches since launching her business in 2012.

The first, branding coach [Rhonda Page](#), helped Heather in the early months when she was developing her brand. Rhonda led her through a series of questions and conversations to help determine what she wanted the business to be.

Meanwhile, Heather had been following [Ed Gandia](#), a business-building coach for writers and copywriters. He had produced a guide for starting a freelance business and started an online group coaching project he called the 2X Project, to "double your income."

A couple of years after launching, Heather joined the 2X Project, which included weekly sessions over a few months, homework and a Facebook community.

While Heather didn't double her income, she did see an improvement in revenue and continues to use many of Ed's tips and techniques today.

"The community and Ed were both a great source of knowledge, and I still draw on that all the time," Heather says. "I feel that's something in my toolbox that strengthens my business."

Sharon Aschaiek [Higher Ed Communications](#)



With 13 years in business, writer **Sharon Aschaiek** didn't need a business

coach, but wanted to rebrand to reflect that her target market had changed. Now developing content for universities, colleges and other higher education institutions, she knew her old business name, Cocoa Media, didn't reflect the niche.

Sharon turned to branding coach [Nathalie Noël](#) for help.

"Nathalie helped me come up with the name, Higher Ed Communications, and tagline to instantly communicate my specialty," Sharon says. "She also developed a mission, vision, values and differentiators as well as

a communications and marketing plan."

Sharon then hired graphic designer Deana De Ciccio of [ImageStudio Creative](#) to develop a logo, letterhead and presentation slide template. Deana also helped Sharon choose the colours (purple because it's a personal favourite, and orange as an energizing complement) and came up with a drawing of a lightbulb pen to represent writing that's inspirational.

Finally, web design firm [12thirteen](#) redesigned Sharon's website to reflect the new brand.

One year later, she says, "My brand reflects not only what my business is all about, but also what I'm all about."

There's no ambiguity about what I do."

Soon after launching her new brand, Sharon was invited to partner on a webinar with a company in the U.S. that does recruiting for higher education. Her newsletter subscription list has grown and people are engaging with her more on Twitter and LinkedIn.

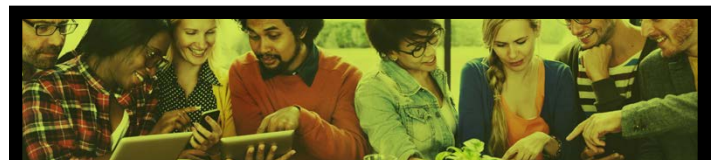
"My year so far has been gangbusters—one of the best four-month periods of my business," she says.

NEXT MONTH: Andrea Bassett and Priya Bates, ABC, MC, SCMP, IABC Fellow.

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.

RELATED READING:

- ▶ Marketing consultant Mike Kim on [when to take a course or hire a coach or contractor](#)
- ▶ RoundPeg talks with business and life coach Halle Simpson about [the seven steps of coaching](#)



Writers wanted for the next *Communicator*

Do you have a story about how communications professionals contribute to their communities? If so, you can share your insight in the July 2019 issue of IABC/Toronto's *Communicator*. The theme for the issue is "Communicators in the community."

[Read the March issue](#), and if you're interested in writing for the July issue, please contact editor-in-chief **Felicia Empey** at f.empey@gmail.com. The content submission deadline is **June 17, 2019**.

PIC PERSONALITY:

Meet Meline Beach

By Sue Horner



A creative thinker and collaborative team player, **MELINE BEACH** of **MLB Communications** helps organizations strengthen their brand and enhance their success. Services include communication strategies and public relations plans; research, writing and editing for internal and external audiences; and event management and communication audits. Learn more on her [website](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#), or reach her by [email](#).

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

I've worked in corporate communications for 15+ years across a variety of industries, including manufacturing, death care and consumer packaged goods.

I have two children, and at one point, it made sense to pursue an independent path that allowed greater flexibility. For about three years, I've been supporting a number of clients with marketing communications on a contract basis. I've been fortunate that former colleagues have used my

services and/or referred business to me.

What do you enjoy most about being an indie?

I like the flexibility. I'm familiar with working long days (10-12 hours weren't uncommon in the corporate world) and can juggle my time. I can squeeze in a gym class between client calls, or attend my children's extracurricular activities (guilt-free) and work after they go to bed. I also like the variety of work—from writing magazine articles and web content to developing brand guidelines and facilitating communication audits. And I've been able to volunteer with a not-for-profit organization.

What don't you like about being an indie?

Sometimes it can feel isolating—like you're missing out on the social aspect of working in an office. At those moments, it's important to reconnect with a friend, former colleague or business associate. And, as with any job, there is a degree of administrative work that is not much fun, like time tracking, invoicing and business taxes.

What advice would you give someone new to independent life?

Invest in learning and development. Seize as much free or affordable opportunities as possible, like webinars, workshops, books and PIC resources.

Stay connected to your network and supplier base. As an independent, there

may be times where you will have to outsource certain deliverables, like video production or photography, or just collaborate with other professionals. It's important you don't become stale in your service offering or lose contact with resources within your network.

There is also value in volunteering with a cause important to you. It can break up your work week and enable you to build new relationships and learn from different people.

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

I've been a member of IABC since the start of my career, and became acquainted with PIC when I branched off as an independent. I value the practical information and resources it shares, as well as the well-themed workshops and the opportunities to learn from other independents. Everyone I've met through PIC has been generous in sharing their experiences, tips and tools of our trade.



PIC members offer a range of talent, from coaching and media relations to video production and writing. Our PIC Personality 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.

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 16 places to find freelance clients, how to charge late fees when clients don't pay on time, best practices for getting clients on LinkedIn and how to deal with price objections.

Changes to the PIC member list due June 31

As a PIC member, you can promote yourself at no charge on the [PIC online directory](#), 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).

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: If you're an IABC/Toronto member, there's an upcoming opportunity for you to learn more about the organization and how it supports the communications profession and its practitioners: the [2019 annual general meeting](#). Happening on June 26 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., the AGM will feature a review of the chapter's 2018-19 activities and achievements, the election of the 2019-20 board, and an address by the incoming president. Participating in the AGM will help you better understand how the chapter works, keep the organization accountable to its members, and explore ways to maximize your membership and get involved.

Article: One of the trickiest aspects of running a communications business is pricing. It's easy, especially when you are a newer freelancer, to get twisted in knots about how much to charge, and about charging too much. In his recent article "[Price Might Not Be the Problem](#)," Ed Gandia, a business coach for freelance writers, offers step-by-step advice for strategically handling anxieties about overcharging. His advice includes not assuming the worst; considering your business positioning; asking clients the right questions before quoting; and detecting tire kickers and bargain hunters.

Tip: How many people are in your LinkedIn network? Now, how many of those people do you actually know? How many would you feel comfortable referring professionally, or asking about

contract/freelance opportunities at their organizations? One of my business goals is to forge stronger ties with my LinkedIn peers in order to generate more business. For one month starting in June—a relatively slower work period for me—my plan is to reach out to one contact per week, either by commenting on one of their posts, sharing a resource or opportunity, or inviting them to go for tea. If your schedule allows, and you're also feeling a bit disconnected from your LinkedIn network, I challenge you to do the same!

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



Seen at the May social

From left, Donna Papacosta, Judy Irwin, Jennifer Arnott, Sharon Aschaiek and Sue Horner catch up at the May PIC social at the Duke of York. Casual networking at events like this is a great way to make new connections, get to know others better and share common issues.

[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](#).

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PIC executive

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

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Membership: [Nkiru Asika](#)

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