

November 2020

A BYTE OF FORESIGHT:

The future is faster than you think

By Nancy Miller and Judy Irwin

As a communications specialist, staying on top of culture and language is part of your job. Every time you develop a digital communications plan, you make decisions based on what is culturally relevant. You process information and translate its complexity, so your audience can understand and apply it. "A byte of foresight," a new section in The Buzz, is dedicated to sharing insights into the patterns shaping the culture of communications. Here, we'll showcase curated links, graphics, listicles and recommended reads, so you can thrive and survive now and in the future.

“ Although it has been almost totally ignored by psychology, the rising rate of change in the world around us disturbs our inner equilibrium, altering the very way in which we experience life.
—Alvin Toffler ”

Alvin Toffler died in 2016. But if he had lived today, he might have seen 2020 as the year that we fell—not into the grips of a viral pandemic—but to an affliction that to him was far more debilitating. [Future Shock](#) is the title of his 1970 bestseller. But it's also the name Toffler gives to a widespread malaise: "the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time."

For all Toffler got wrong about the future—disposable paper clothing never quite caught on—he got a heck of a lot right. We might not be dressing ourselves in cardstock, but we are speeding towards [environmental disaster](#) with our fondness

for fast fashion. We might not be living in underwater cities, but we are working in an economy that values knowledge and networks over labour and raw materials.

Toffler predicts the rise of the home office, the Internet and the gig economy. He forecasts the death of permanence and the ascent of transience. You can see those predictions manifesting in tweens' love of SnapChat and in commuters' love of Uber.

A thought leader in a fast-growing area of expertise—futurology—Toffler holds rank with writers of speculative fiction like [William](#)

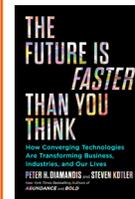
[Gibson](#) and foresight consultants like [Amy Zalman](#), who uses "strategic narrative" to help executives face uncertainty.

But you don't have to be a futurist to intelligently and imaginatively consider what patterns are shaping the future.

This month, **Judy Irwin** contributes a **byte of foresight** with her recommended read: [The Future Is Faster Than You Think: How Converging Technologies Are Transforming Business, Industries and Our Lives](#) by [Peter H. Diamandis](#) and [Steven Kotler](#).



"Looking ahead" by Nancy Miller



Ready to book a flight on Uber Elevate to travel across your city? Thanks to a host of technological advancements—AI, 3D printing, machine learning and more—Uber is aiming to launch its air service in

2023. In *The Future Is Faster Than You Think*, authors Diamandis and Kotler explore how the convergence of new technologies is having an exponential impact that's going to shake everything up, from medicine to new home construction. And the blue-chip companies that dominate the business landscape today—built to be stable and secure—might not be adaptable enough to compete against innovative new companies that do business differently.

Whether you want to ride the wave or just be ready for it, this book offers an interesting look at some really big changes that are coming our way, and what the impact will be on our work and personal lives.



Judy is a B2B writer/editor, focusing on technology and healthcare. She is co-director of professional development for PIC. Nancy's bio on page 4.

PIC PERSONALITY:

Meet Vanessa Holding

By Kathy Lim

Vanessa Holding is co-owner and executive producer at Arc + Crown Media, a video production agency that helps clients amplify their message with the power of video. From animated explainer videos to scripted scenes for scenario-based training, Vanessa manages a team of talented professionals who help organizations communicate their important information in a way that gets attention and compels action. Learn more about Vanessa on her [website](#) and on [LinkedIn](#). She can also be reached by [email](#) or by phone at 416-451-9573.



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

I launched Arc + Crown Media in October 2015. I've always been a fairly independent person, and I was lucky enough to work at a small, independent video production company right out of school. I was able to see how a small company operates. I then took a hiatus from that company and worked for a tech startup doing their marketing. But I missed working with different clients on a regular basis. So I went back into production. When I met my business partner, a video editor by trade, we recognized that we could run a small shop, just the two of us. But I don't come from a sales background.

I come from a producing background. So, I had to learn how to be a salesperson, how to sell myself. I think that was the greatest lesson for me when starting my business.

"I think what's most exciting to me is the autonomy and the diversity of what I do."

What do you enjoy most about being an indie?

I think what's most exciting to me is the autonomy and the diversity of what I do. I like having the ability to choose what we do, and work with clients we enjoy working with. I get to meet so many different business owners and business professionals and learn what they do.

What don't you like about being an indie?

There's the weight of feeling like everything is on your shoulders. When leading a business, if you win, it feels great. If you lose—when an independent contractor lets you down or someone shows up late—you're ultimately responsible for everything that happens.

What advice would you give someone new to independent life?

One thing I did not do enough before I became an independent communicator was build my network. Just put yourself out there. For me, IABC is part of that. Keep in touch with people. With LinkedIn, you might not have talked to someone you know in a few years, but you can track their journey, stay in touch and update them on what you're up to. And reach out for help. Don't try to do everything yourself. People are so willing to help you when you reach out in an authentic way.

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

I joined in the summer of 2019. I dove in with both feet. I started going to as many events as I could, connecting with others and volunteering my time. You get out of it

what you put into it. In the year ahead, I look forward to continuing with my role as VP of Membership at IABC/Toronto and seeing how I can contribute. I've made great connections and some good friends and have found work colleagues here.

Within the larger IABC community, there is something special about PIC because everyone here is in a similar place. We understand what each of us is struggling with. I think some of PIC's events, especially the professional development (PD) events, are such a valuable resource for independent communicators. I like how they're targeted to us. We might not have access to as many resources as our peers do at a large company. So, we need to get scrappy and innovative in how we promote ourselves and run our businesses.



PIC Personality randomly profiles our members, who offer a range of talent from coaching and media relations to video production and writing. Kathy is an editor with experience in trade publishing and financial editing. She is the director of membership for PIC.

PIC and IABC/Toronto stand firmly against racism. In our online and in-person activities, we aim to provide an inclusive space that is welcoming to all and fully representative of the diversity in Toronto. We see you, we hear you, and we are with you. We also welcome your comments and suggestions on how we can do better. Please email our chair, **Nkiru Asika**, at toronto-sig@iabc.to.

Only connect: Three tips for social networking

By Nancy Miller

Perhaps like a lot of you, I have a love-hate relationship with social media. Instagram opens a window into the antics of my friend's labradoodle—too cute! Then it pushes me down a rabbit hole with [Maru, the Shiba](#) and his tens of thousands of followers, who can't get enough of watching a dog somewhere in Japan tossing his bowl on a tatami.

I love that on TikTok, my niece dances like nobody's business. I hate that a company in China may one day own the rights to her moves.

Like it or loathe it, if you're a communications professional, there's no escaping social media. Twitter shapes the way we communicate. Facebook influences how we stay connected. LinkedIn reinvents the way we network. Where advertisers once forked out millions for prime time commercials, now they're padding the pockets of influencers, including those with paws.

If you're an indie—and hiring a social media manager didn't make this year's budget—choosing how and on what platforms to engage may keep you up at night. So, here are a few tips, gleaned from some of the Internet's savviest social media experts.



1. Tell stories

To convey wisdom, preserve history and educate the young, stories appear in every tradition, in every culture. Storytelling predates language. A "story" on social media may not look like a Hawaiian mo'olelo, a Greek myth or a Gaelic legend. But as part of a wider strategic initiative, those fleeting collages of images, text and video—both choreographed and spontaneous—might strike a chord and pull your audience in.

In [The End of Marketing: Humanizing Your Brand in the Age of Social Media and AI](#), Carlos Gil argues that the question steering any successful social strategy is not "How do I engage people?" but "How do I stay relevant?" The most engaging stories online are those that stay closely connected to our most pressing human concerns.

So, when it comes to your social strategy, ask: *What story am I inviting my audience into? What part does each post play in that plot? At what stage am I engaging my followers in their journey? And how does this post apply to their current circumstances?*



2. Your audience is your leading lady

Casting yourself behind the scenes—and your audience in the leading role—is not a new approach in marketing. In one of the best-selling books of all time—[How to Win Friends and Influence People](#)—Dale Carnegie argues in 1936 that winning people over is not about selling yourself but about showing genuine interest in other people's lives.

What inspires their curiosity? What lifts them out of confusion? What makes their day?

Surely it's not you telling them how great you are.

When Martin Conroy wrote a subscription pitch for *The Washington Post* in 1975, it wasn't the paper that he prided as the hero of the story. He positioned its reader as the main character and the *Post* as a trusted advisor. The direct mailing campaign won the *Post* millions of dollars in subscriptions.

In [Social Media Success for Every Brand](#), Claire Diaz-Ortiz—Twitter's former social innovation manager, the Millennial who famously got the Pope on Twitter and live-streamed her own birth—advises brands (and the people behind them) to see themselves as “fairy godmothers” with a “plan.” You're not just cheering your followers on. You're giving them a map and the tools they need to rise up.



3. If you post, don't ghost

You've turned your followers into heroes and your brand into Obi-Wan Kenobi. The last thing you want to do is abandon them! They're your little Skywalkers, after all. And you're only beginning to earn their trust!

Show up. Day after day. Be there to answer their questions. Engage them in conversation. Diversify your posts to include both original and curated content. Use the Force. Get creative!



Nancy is the director of [InsightEd](#), a research, marketing and coaching service that bridges technology and innovation ventures to the education sector and helps people lead their business and lives more mindfully and creatively. She is the director of communications for PIC.

Wednesday, December 9
5 to 6 p.m. EDT, Zoom

PIC's Holly Jolly Holiday Social

PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATORS

IABC
International Association
of Business Communicators
Toronto

✓ REGISTER NOW

Make sure you're on the PIC member list by Nov. 27

We're reminding IABC/Toronto members they can turn to PIC members for help during the pandemic with an ad that 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 **Nov. 27**.

Your source
for outsourcing



toronto.iabc.com/about/pic/

See you on social media

Build and strengthen your connections, advance your communications business and network with PIC members on social media: on Twitter at [@pictoronto](#); LinkedIn, [IABC Toronto Professional Independent Communicators](#); and Facebook, [Professional Independent Communicators \(PIC\)](#), part of [IABC/Toronto](#). Recent posts include tips to improve your LinkedIn presence, create case studies, navigate change and more.

THE INDEPENDENT VIEW

The future needs you

By Nkiru Asika

We can't control the future, folks.

But we can control our response.

The choice is either to keep step with the heady pace of change or to stay resolutely in our comfort zones, wishing it would all go away. But, if you're running a business, the latter is like signing up for a class on "how to nosedive into the abyss."

For those of us old enough to remember when "high tech" meant the magic of listening to mixtapes on your Sony Walkman, the wonder of receiving your first fax or learning to use WordPerfect on the word processor, all this talk of AI and Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies might make you queasy.

But while technology will probably change faster than even the most farsighted futurist can imagine, I do believe that these technological shifts will

birth an even greater search for meaning, for connection and for community (a theme I wrote about in September's [Buzz](#)).

Consequently, there will be an even greater need for those who have the gift of interpretation, who think and see creatively, who understand the power of design, who can tell stories, who can explain an idea, who can sell a concept and market a message.

There will always be a place for communicators. Even when the bots have finally taken over, they'll still need us to bring that "human touch."

So, be open, stay current and keep learning. But rest assured that as a communications expert, you've got skills that never go out of style and will never become obsolete.

In the less distant future, if you have any ideas for professional development topics,

possible speakers (including yourself) or any questions, concerns or ideas about PIC, please don't hesitate to reach me at toronto-sig@iabc.toronto.

Onwards and upwards,

Nkiru Asika

Chair, PIC;
VP, Special Interest Groups,
IABC/Toronto



Nkiru is a [marketing strategist](#) with a background as a TV producer and award-winning journalist. She coaches, speaks, trains and delivers online marketing services to help entrepreneurs build their business and authority.

[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: [Nancy Miller](#) | Design: [Ilan Sivapathasundaram](#)

Want to recap a meeting or contribute to *The Buzz*? Contact [Nancy Miller](#).

Quick links

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PIC executive

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

Chair: [Nkiru Asika](#)

Communications: [Nancy Miller](#)

Membership: [Kathy Lim](#)

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

Social Media: [Sue Horner](#)

Design: [Ilan Sivapathasundaram](#)

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