

empart

Summer 2011

IABC/Atlanta's Emphasis on Communication

**U Technology
Trailblazers**



Printer AD



Let us know what you think of *empart* as well as anything you'd like to see us cover in future issues. Contact Anne Wainscott-Sargent at communications@iabcatl.com. *empart* is published four times a year for the members, sponsors and friends of IABC/Atlanta.

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It's hard to believe that we're halfway through 2011! The second half of the year has many great things in store for IABC/Atlanta.

In July, be on the lookout for our annual call for entries for the Golden Flame Awards. It's your chance to show off your best work and see how it stands up against similar projects and campaigns in the industry. As usual, winners will be announced at the October gala.

Past events have been the talk of the town, and this year promises to continue that tradition of excellence.

Also in July is the registration contest for IABC's Southern Region Conference, which will be held in New Orleans October 12-14. The chapter with most registrants by July 15 will receive complimentary admission to the pre-conference luncheon and panel for their early-registered members. So if you're considering attending, sign up soon. Let's see if Atlanta can top the other chapters.

Both IABC international and IABC/Atlanta will emphasize membership recruitment this summer.

In July, current members get a perk with IABC's "Member Get A Member" promotion. Members who recruit new professional members will get three free months of membership for each new member they bring in during July, up to a full year of membership at no charge. See the IABC web site for more information.

IABC/Atlanta will hold its Membership Month in August. The normal application fee (\$40 for faxed, mailed or phoned enrollments; \$30 for Internet enrollments) will be waived for any new or lapsed members who join or re-join during the month. And IABC International's Membership Month will follow in September, offering the same cost-saving opportunity. Full details about these Membership Month deals will be available online. In these price-sensitive times, everyone can benefit from a bargain. So spread the word this summer to your colleagues and friends!

All the best,

Lawson Cox

Communications On My Mind

By Anne Wainscott-Sargent

Welcome to the summer/fall issue of *empart*. You will notice that we have a new, more in-depth editorial approach to our stories this issue. In each issue, you will find a case study and articles that cover the latest in communications trends and best practices, as well as a new in-depth industry spotlight feature. This issue we tackle some of the fastest-growing technology firms in Atlanta and the role of communications in supporting that growth. We also talk in depth with one of our newest accredited members – Sue Otten – on her journey to accreditation. And Jo Ann McCracken delves into where business strategy and creative communications intersect with an interview with Gregg Heard, AT&T's VP of brand identity and design.

In March, we launched IABC/Atlanta E-News – our new monthly online publication, where we provide the latest info on upcoming monthly meetings and a member spotlight, among other content. E-News has prompted the change in editorial focus for *empart* – to make it more of a thought leadership publication.

We hope that you find the mix of communications – including our chapter presence on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter – helpful to keeping abreast of happenings in the chapter. If you haven't done so, please connect with us online, write on the Facebook wall, share a link and tell us what's on your mind. We'd like your ideas for how we can make our communications better to engage your thinking and help foster a vibrant IABC/Atlanta community.

new members

- Maureen McCarthy
- Andy Norton, Employee Communications Manager, UPS
- Caryn Anderson, Internal Communication Leader, GE Energy
- Janet LoBue, Communications Specialist, Geosyntec Consultants
- Leneithra Lowery Sr., Partner, GBL Communications
- Robyn Coward, Marketing & Communications
- Deike Hachmeister, Global HR Communication Specialist, AGCO
- Debbie Dudek, Director of Human Resources, CanAm Care
- Robin Shaw Director, TS&O Initiatives, Turner Broadcasting
- Teresa Santana, Program Manager, AMPT, Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.
- Jan Lindeman Sr., Director, PR, Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- Joanna Frieske, Marketing Communications Manager, Siemens Industry, Inc.
- Susan Solomon, Director of Communication Service, Goodwill Industries of the South
- Brenda Dixon Morrow, Mgmt Consultant, Chick-fil-A, Inc.

U Technology Trailblazers:

Three Tech Communicators Share How They're Positioning their Firms for Growth

By Anne Wainscott-Sargent and Drake Osterhage

Atlanta recently was named the #2 most connected city in the United States, while the state of Georgia tops the nation in entrepreneurial activity. And with Georgia's tech company growth outpacing the nation, the technology sector remains a critical economic engine for Georgians. As of May, there were 5,000 new job openings in the sciences and technology statewide – some 2,000 more than last year.

According to the Technology Association of Georgia (TAG), tech players – particularly in telecommunications, fin-tech, security and healthcare IT – provide more than 180,000 jobs in Georgia. State-wide, technology plays a role in more than one million jobs.

As part of a new industry spotlight series, *empart* magazine sat down with three communicators serving Georgia's technology landscape to find out how they are positioning their companies for growth in 2011.

Atlanta's Health IT Leader: McKesson



Margie Driscoll

Within the health IT cluster, Atlanta leads the nation in the number of firms in this field, with many of the city's 50 firms being entrepreneurial ventures. Foremost among these companies is McKesson Technology Solutions, dedicated to delivering the vital medicines, supplies and information technologies that enable the health care industry to provide patients better, safer care. McKesson is the nation's leading health IT company, with software and hardware installed in more than 70 percent of U.S. hospitals. It also is the largest pharmaceutical distributor, delivering one-third of all the medicines used in North America daily, according to **Margie Driscoll**, communications specialist.

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“As a corporation, McKesson touches virtually aspect of healthcare,” says the IABC/Atlanta member. Driscoll joined the company four years ago to edit McKesson's internal monthly newsletter and then worked in community relations. She recently transitioned from community relations to media relations.

Driscoll notes that her company's PR objectives link directly to the business's key objectives. “Our three priorities are generating market awareness, building thought leadership and promoting the success of our customers,” she says.

McKesson also is leveraging the immediacy of social media particularly at industry tradeshows to “generate positive buzz and drive to our booth and events, and to increase customer readership of two monthly newsletters – one to the C-suite and one to front-line employees.” Driscoll says at the largest HIT trade show, McKesson ranked 10th among 537 other Twitter users in attendance in terms of contribution to overall impressions.

McKesson has responded to the growing demand from its customer base of hospitals

and health systems for tools that promote the use of McKesson technology. A key tool is online customer success kits. Driscoll says hospital marketing staff access a password-protected website to download these kits, which include internal and external communications templates for press releases as well as posters and advertisements.

NCR's New Home Base

In addition to McKesson, self-service leader NCR Corporation recently moved its headquarters from Dayton, Ohio, to Duluth, Ga. The 127-year-old company serves a diverse range of industries – from financial and retail to travel, hospitality, healthcare, telecom technology and entertainment. The \$4.8 billion company is focused on leading how the world connects, interacts, and transacts with business, and averages a staggering 251 million transactions daily.

“A lot of people don't realize that they use NCR solutions every day when they interact with their favorite brands – whether it's an ATM or a mobile banking solution; self checkout at the grocery store; reading marketing messages on digital signage; registering using a Medikiosk tablet at the doctor's

Growing our emerging industries



Feature story:

It's "game on" for the emerging industries as NCR begins reporting financial results by line of business.

Hear John Bruno, EVP, talk about the significance of this change and heightened visibility to our full portfolio.

Healthcare



On target with a growing self-service market
The retail giant launched a pilot featuring NCR MediKiosk™ and is currently reporting approximately 99 percent usage rates with an eye on 100 percent... [read more >>](#)

Travel and Gaming



A partnership that's the first of its kind
This is a significant moment for NCR Travel, deploying the first bus ticketing solution with Greyhound Lines. [read more >>](#)

office; or doing self-check-in at the airport. We are everywhere,” says **Janet Brewer**, VP of communications at NCR.

“NCR is at the intersection of technology and the consumer experience – always has been and continues to be there with new innovations that help meet the needs of today’s consumers,” says Brewer. She notes that innovation has been a major driver of the company’s success – not only for product development, but also when it comes to business transformation. NCR holds nearly 2,400 patents globally and has another 1,500 patents pending.

Brewer, a 30-year communicator and former president of IABC’s Dayton, Ohio, chapter, leads a global team of about 20 internal and

external communications staff based around the world. Her major communications priorities this year are in two areas – employee engagement and sales enablement.

“We’ve gone through a lot of change in the company and are growing – over the last five years under the leadership of chairman and CEO **Bill Nuti**, we’ve transformed our organization from a business unit model to a centralized corporate structure with lines of business and shared services. Our manufacturing footprint has transformed to include four plants in the emerging markets and a new one in Columbus, Ga. that has attracted a lot of attention to the company for adding 850+ manufacturing jobs in the U.S. And we’ve relocated our headquarters to Duluth creating 1,000 new jobs on top of

those already located here and in Peachtree City. We believe employees are at the heart of our success, and the Communications team plays a key role in assisting with change management as we evolve the company to better support our customers and be more competitive. That includes ensuring employees have the information they need and can access it when and where they need it,” says Brewer.

Communications also serves a vital role in supporting the sales effort – securing NCR executives to speak at industry events, developing thought leadership presentations and by-lined articles, obtaining media interviews, preparing briefing packets, and producing a quarterly cross-company online newsletter featuring relevant sales content.

Brewer says **Bill Nuti**, NCR chairman and CEO, makes her team’s job easier – “He’s one of the best communicators I’ve ever worked with – he’s great with the media, employees, any audience; he believes in the power of communication.”

Brewer says that advances in mobile phones and the whole “digital data movement” present new opportunities for NCR to redefine the consumer experience. For example, by 2013, more than 2 billion mobile subscribers worldwide will have used their mobile phones for contactless mobile payments, mobile banking or over-the-air person-to-person payments.

“It’s an exciting time to be at NCR,” she

concludes, noting that the company is in a growth mode. Brewer says she is looking for strong communications people in Atlanta and in New York.

“There’s a lot happening at NCR – and our employees are collaborating more than ever across the company and around the world to make sure that NCR is out there and positioned as a leader.”

Telecom Trailblazer: Verizon Wireless

Wireless service is a part of modern life, according to **Sheryl Sellaway** of Verizon Wireless, and Georgia is at the front of the industry. According to a recent TAG report, the state’s telecommunication industry is ranked fifth in the nation with 61,200 employees. Verizon leads the mobile wireless industry with more than 100 million cellular subscriptions. Communication is vital to Verizon’s continued growth and success.



Sheryl Sellaway

“Network reliability is what [Verizon] is most known for,” says Sellaway, Verizon’s executive director for Public Relations, South Area. “We spend over \$6 billion a year on network investments – and have since our company’s inception in 2000. We invest

in our network so that people don't have to worry about their wireless service, especially during times of distress and emergency." She says that Verizon loves to hear stories about their network working even when other networks are not, but never rests on its laurels.

Sellaway first began working in the wireless industry with GTE Corporation, one of Verizon Wireless' legacy companies.

Sellaway held numerous positions of increasing responsibility with GTE, including technical writer, employee communications manager and director-Diversity Marketing and Management, to name a few. She joined Verizon in 2000 and became executive director – Public Relations over 11 states. She says she finds the dynamic nature of wireless communications very exciting. "We were embarking upon something that would evolve over time and grow," she says. Nobody "knew that some people could feel like they can't live without [texting]" 10 years ago.

In addition to the wide range of conventional media outlets Verizon uses, the company has put social media to work. Verizon headlines new products, services and promotions on their social media pages. They even give updates on network servicing underway. In some markets, they hosted scavenger hunts

on Twitter, rewarding the winner with a new smart phone. There are challenges to social media, however. "Because of the competitive nature of our business, some of the things we do we don't proactively talk about them," Sellaway warns.

One important aspect of Verizon's strategy is applying common sense to how their products can be used. "We didn't just decide instantaneously to work, for example, on location-based services (LBS). A few years back, we knew that over the course of time that technology would make life easier," says Sellaway. Using navigation services such as VZ Navigator® or tracking tools like Field Force Manager illustrate the mobile power of wireless phones.

The business is moving rapidly towards Machine-to-Machine (M2M) and that will open new, exciting doors for the wireless business and the people who rely on wireless – which is most of the public.

Sellaway says Verizon Wireless continues to make wireless service more relevant at home and on the go. Wherever mobile users end up, Sellaway and her experienced PR team will be there to tell people about the new ways they will communicate with each other.



Time to Relax

By Sam Fry

Atlanta IABCers Share Their Favorite Summertime Reads & Destinations

Summer is finally here, and with temperatures already well into the nineties, it's hard to believe that only six months ago metro Atlanta was in the grip of an ice storm that shut the city down for almost an entire week. It's been a busy and productive period (thankfully!) for IABC members since then. Those frozen pipes and freeze warnings have faded into memory, and we've all earned some well-deserved time off. *empart* wondered what IABC members were planning on doing to kick back, relax and recharge this summer, so we asked! Our members confided they were looking forward to everything from hiking to barbeque to chillin' with the family. And for those of you interested in the cost-effective escape of a book, several folks recommended super summer reads. Here's what you told us.

Alison Umbarger, internal communications specialist, RaceTrac Petroleum, is recently married. Since there is so much work to be done on the home front, she and her new husband will be spending most of their summer here in Atlanta with a few road trips to visit nearby family. "We will probably frequent festivals, as there always seems to be at least one a weekend in the Atlanta area." Alison and her husband look forward to beer and bar-b-que festivals and plan on frequenting their favorite establishment which features free live music every Sunday night. Alison is also looking forward to reading the first in a trilogy, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* by Stieg Larsson. "I've heard lots of rave reviews!" she says.

Donald Reggio, marketing manager, South-



ern Company, plans on spending time with his wife. “We’ll take a few long-weekend get-a-ways...one to our favorite beach, one to the mountains and one to an interesting new place. During the week we will take short early- evening hikes in nearby parks.” They’ll also spend a few weekends this summer reworking their backyard landscape. As far as books go, Donald recommends *Cleopatra, A Life* by Stacy Schiff. “It examines the historical record and evaluates the prejudices of contemporary and post contemporary historians’ accounts to reveal a demystified portrait of a highly educated and politically adept woman.

This book provides a view of a significant historical figure in the context of history minus the gender and cultural bias.”

Michelle Fry, director of creative services, Hayslett Group, approaches her family’s Fourth of July trip to South Carolina’s Outer Banks with both joy and trepidation. While the idea of a solitary beach house inaccessible to society’s clamor (except by 40 miles of four wheel drive) is immensely appealing, it is balanced by the realization that the house will also hold seven adults and four children under the age of seven.

She notes, “While the schedule I assembled does allow for some official parental downtime, I look forward mostly to those delicious evening hours post toddler bedtime with a book, a gin and tonic and the sound of the ocean in my ears.” What book has provided her with a mini-vacation while at home? The hilarious nonfiction, *The Great Typo Hunt: Two Friends Changing the World, One Correction at a Time*, by Jeff Deck and Benjamin D. Herson.

While deeply in love with the English language, Michelle has always felt the constraints of grammar and dyslexic typing skills, and was pleasantly surprised to find herself chuckling her way across the United States with the two heroes as they encountered every typo known and some unheard of – often with mind-boggling public response to their discoveries. “It’s truly a gem for those of us on the side of the red pen.”

Tricia Mercado, communications director, Turner Broadcasting Systems, has been very busy since last fall coordinating a company move from a single location to six different

locations on three campuses. The details are daunting “...decisions, carpet colors, desk sizes, the list goes on. Not to mention, the thousands of questions as each employee is disrupted and has to relocate,” Tricia told us. Naturally, she was more than willing to take a breath and share her four different locations for a fun-filled summer. First on the list is a trip to Charlotte, N.C., and the Charlotte Motor Speedway, home of the NASCAR All-Star Race. Tricia will watch as her husband enjoys his birthday present – driving a car on the race track! Then there’s Nashville where they’ll be staying at the Opryland Hotel. “I love Nashville; I’m really looking forward to this one!” says Tricia. Next up is Brevard, NC for a week of riding motorcycles through the Pisgah Forest to the Blue Ridge Parkway. “We love to find small, quaint towns and hang out there for the day. It is great fun for us, and it makes me laugh to tell bike riding stories because it is difficult for people who work with me to imagine this part of my life.” Finally, they’ll wrap up their summer with a final excursion to CareFree, Ariz., for one of her husband’s conferences. And “Yes,” Tricia tells us, “it’s as great as it sounds.”

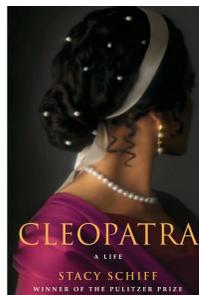
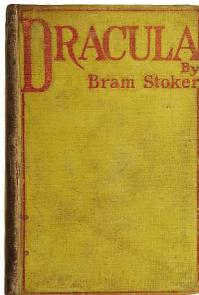
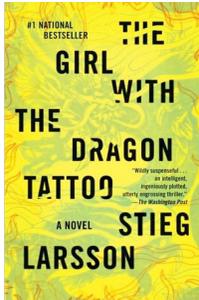
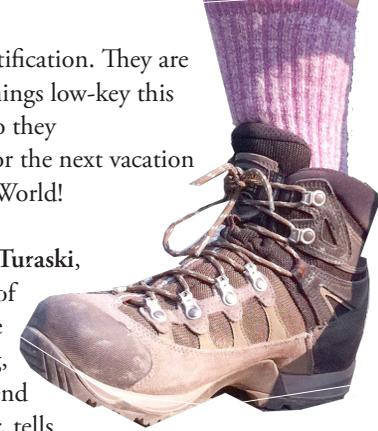
Michael Hagearty, internal communications director, Georgia Tech, says his family will be will be spending a week on the Georgia coast enjoying what he calls “a pretty run of the mill beach trip” with his young children. Even though he won’t be doing anything too exciting this year, he and his family are actually in pursuit of the ultimate in delayed

family gratification. They are keeping things low-key this summer so they can save for the next vacation – Disney World!

Kathleen Turaski, president of Resonance Marketing, and weekend trail blazer, tells

empart, “Getting away from the desk and into the natural outdoors offers me the deepest recharge possible.” Her summer plans include spending ten days outdoors getting up-close and personal with nature in Oregon and Washington. After attending her brother’s wedding, set amongst the wildflowers overlooking Mount Hood, she and her husband will tackle whitewater rafting on the Hood River, hiking and climbing to the top of Mount St. Helens (a grueling 14-mile trip!), then hiking for several days in Mount Rainier National Park. What would she recommend reading to offset the natural beauty of her surrounding? *Information is Beautiful* by David McCandless.

“Info graphics give us the means to quickly offer information to audiences that aren’t always interested in long narrative. More and more, I’m finding ways to incorporate these visuals into corporate communication. David McCandless’ latest book offers beautiful, compelling inspiration.”



Follow the Customer Heartbeat to the Center of your BRAND Strategy

By Jo Ann McCracken

Advice from AT&T Brand Identity and Design VP Gregg Heard on leading the branding process in your organization

Do you ever feel relegated to the role of window dresser – the communicator called in to make something that somebody else has already done or decided look good? Would you prefer to be more involved in the strategic end of the business cycle? If you answered “yes,” try leading your team in customer experience roadmapping – a process championed by AT&T’s Vice President of Brand Identity and Design, Gregg Heard, based on years of experience helping AT&T, Philips, Logitech, Sony, IBM, UPS and others advance their brands.

For the April 14th program of the IABC/ AIGA-sponsored Bridging Business and Design series, Heard was asked to speak about the place where business strategy and creative communications intersect. He nailed it by giving a presentation that tied branding, which is at the strategic center of all communications (external, internal or personal) to innovation, which has become the buzzword for America’s do-or-die business strategy in today’s struggling economy.

How to expand your brand

Given the current correlation between branding and innovation, if you’re a business communicator, it behooves you to be a brand agent who thinks that tomorrow’s income stream for you and others may depend on today’s ability to innovate.

No matter what the nature and scope of your enterprise, acquaint yourself with the fundamentals of branding exemplified by legendary shifts in strategy. For example, what took Nike from being all about shoes to being all about, “bringing inspiration and innovation to athletes”? This journey transformed them from being a U.S. footwear distributor to being a global marketer of footwear, apparel, and equipment – a company that directly or indirectly employs nearly a million people, according to *Nike.com*.

How do you go about making this kind of paradigm shift in expanding your brand? Do you rush down the MBA pathways of demographic, statistical, market trend analysis? Or do you dive deep into an exploration of the exquisite inner workings and features of your product or service?

Find out what matters

Heard suggests you take a right-brain tack that doesn’t just go down the established left-brain channels. Generate your own roadmap by following the path of the customer heartbeat. Imagine what it’s like to be the person who uses your product or service. Imagine their situation, motivation, confusion, joys, and fears. Take your entire team with you on this journey, because as he suggests, it’s the job of senior management and everyone else to know the customer experience.

As a business communicator, your leadership opportunity is to guide everyone in this process of imagining and creating customer stories. Suggest that they use the techniques of master storytellers who tap into all the sensory faculties to bring an experience to life. Then lead the process of capturing the stories and incorporating them into a roadmap that opens up insights into how what you offer now or could offer in the future matters in the lives of the people you serve.



Greg Heard says, "Creating customer experience roadmaps can drive the innovation pipeline."

Try building a roadmap with images

In his presentation, Heard showed slides of a team he led creating a giant storyboard that spanned a long wall with photos depicting the phases of customer experience.

For a Philips lighting product, individual images on the storyboard might include a

group of people laughing at a shared joke in a room with a casual ambiance. To them lighting set the tone for friendship. Another scene might be a couple sharing dinner in the soft glow of their favorite restaurant. To them, lighting opened up intimacy. In an image of a little boy tucked in bed, his head

is barely visible beneath the comforter and illuminated by a nightlight. To him, lighting means security. The images reveal that the brand is not about the about the light bulb but about creating these comfortable human connections.

Another example Heard suggested was used by a team working on a CT scanner product. They built a story for every step in the patient care cycle, before and after contact with the equipment. And this opened up ideas for new products.

Creating a true life story allows you to know about your brand in a way that facts and numbers can never fully impart. Another benefit of the process is that, as Heard

says, "these experience platforms attract an ecosystem of partners." This further expands your impact and business potential.

If you like to think in diagrams, visualize putting your *brand* at the top of a pyramid. Directly underpinning the brand is the *experience platform* generated from your roadmap. And beneath that you have the supporting *technology platform* – the systems that deliver the products and services that fulfill the customer experience.

Statistics and research are vital for developing strategy. If you use them in the context of the story of human experience, you are working from a strategic center that gives you a greater chance of delivering products and services that people need and embrace.

Nuesoft's Creative Integrated Marketing Program a Hit at Key Healthcare Tradeshow

By Rookmin Maharaj

The Situation

Georgia-based Nuesoft Technologies Inc. is a provider of cloud-based technology solutions for the health care industry.

In 2010, Nuesoft developed a winning integrated marketing program targeting college health professionals. The campaign was designed around the need to build brand recognition of Nuesoft's college health products, engage at least 50 percent of its clients with exposure to new

products and services, increase the number of sales leads generated at the American College Health Association (ACHA) trade show by 50 percent over the prior year, and generate \$50,000 in new sales – and achieve all of this on a \$15,000 budget.

The Challenge

The marketing team chose the ACHA conference as the backdrop for its campaign because new product selection/shopping is

almost exclusively conducted there, rather than online or via other means. For this reason, it was critical to have a compelling booth presence to capitalize on foot traffic and engage attendees with our messaging.

The Answer

The team came up with a theme for the booth and client events based on the Monopoly™ board game, which was originally invented in Philadelphia, the conference location. All direct marketing, advertising and events surrounding the trade show stemmed from the Monopoly theme. For example, Nuesoft hosted a Boardwalk reception for customers the night before the show opened. Staff also threw Park Place party at the company booth, with highlights that included a cake and coffee bar (with a cake mimicking the Monopoly game board) and an interactive game where visitors could draw "Chance" and "Community Chest" cards for prizes.

The Result

- Nuesoft's creative approach helped its sales staff secure more than 100 new sales leads – an increase of 285 percent over the 2009 total, which dwarfed the initial goal.
- The conference was held in June 2010, and by the end of the year, Nuesoft was able to meet its \$50,000 sales goal thanks to qualified leads garnered at ACHA.



- Feedback from attendees revealed Nuesoft's booth was "the most fun" and that the cake, decorations and the staff costumes were "very creative."
- Staff served 510 pieces of cake to attendees. ACHA's official attendance number was 1,827, which means that 28 percent of all conference attendees were exposed to the Nuesoft brand, and messages about new products.
- A total of 45 current clients at ACHA expressed interest in buying additional services.

Nuesoft achieved all of these results by spending just \$14,101, which means the team came in \$899 under the original budget.

My Road to Accreditation

By Sue Otten, ABC



Sue Otten

To earn the IABC designation Accredited Business Communicator (ABC) means you meet the global standard of professional achievement that business

communicators aspire toward. This peer-reviewed program challenges candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of strategic communication planning, implementation, measurement and ethics. Accredited members practicing around the world apply the same strategic management process in all communication disciplines. The accreditation process involves both written and verbal tests, and a portfolio review.

Sue Otten, ABC, IABC/Atlanta's most recently accredited communicator, shares her journey to accreditation. She took the Executive Accreditation Seminar, a week-long accelerated course offered at Royal Roads University in Vancouver, B.C. Sue currently leads the marketing and communications efforts at AGCO, a \$6.9 billion global farm equipment manufacturer based in Duluth, Ga. As director, Corporate Marketing and Brand Communications Worldwide, Sue is

responsible for public relations, digital communications and social media, branding, employee communications, sustainability and marketing communications.

empart: What got you on the road to accreditation?

Sue: The biggest reason was general professional development – it's good to stay up to date on best practices. You get caught up with day-to-day responsibilities, but you need to take responsibility for your own professional development plan. The accelerated executive development program was a good fit for me.

empart: You did the accelerated program – can you take us through the process?

Sue: Before the weeklong course in Vancouver in September 2010, there was required background reading, plus I prepared a written portfolio and an oral presentation of my portfolio that was given at the course. At the actual course, you prepare a group presentation on an actual business problem, plus get ready for the four-hour written exam on the last day of the course.

empart: What were the big challenges?

Sue: For those of us who have been in a

career a while, it may have been a long time since we did something academic or really cognitive. You don't normally get to think that pure and that concentrated in such a short amount of time. It felt like boot camp for my brain.

It was also a tough process to write the portfolio and pass the written test – they have high standards they are working to make sure the profession adheres to. But IABC works with accreditation candidates to help them through the steps, even allowing you to rewrite portions of both if needed to pass and become accredited. It's really about the learning and helping candidates understand the principles of good communications.

empart: What was the best part of the accreditation experience?

Sue: Besides the opportunity for professional development, it was the people I met there. One of the things that's hard as you get a little bit further along in your career, the finding like-minded people at your level of within an organization. This was a classroom of 30 people who are doing the same type of work I am doing and that was really so beneficial to learn with those people for a week. We started a LinkedIn group and they're working to stay connected.

empart: Has accreditation benefited you in your daily work?

Sue: I have a fairly young staff and am able to share what I learned with them and to model for them that professional develop-

ment is important. I have a budget for professional development for my employees and I tell them that they have to take responsibility for their training. We are using it in ways to benefit the organization, so AGCO is getting their money's worth. We have a huge presence in Europe and South America and a developing presence in China and Africa, and as we have hired communication professionals I am surprised they don't participate in a lot of professional development. IABC is international and it's important to encourage not only my staff but also this extended marketing and communications team around the world to look at IABC as a professional development resource.

empart: What advice would you give to IABC members thinking about accreditation but who have not made the leap?

Sue: Figure out what your professional development plan is and determine how you are going to continue to develop yourself, whether it be through the resources your company offers or a program with a university. You owe it to yourself to invest in your own career. IABC's accreditation is a comprehensive program with a couple of different methods to achieve it.

Editor's Note: Think you're ready to take the leap? Take the accreditation readiness quiz at: <http://www.iabc.com/abc/prospective/eligibility> or for more information, including key dates for scheduled exams and, visit IABC's accreditation page, <http://www.iabc.com/abc/>.



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