

January 2019

PIC Winter Social

Thursday
Feb. 7



Come shake off the winter blues

Ready to shake off those winter blues? Join us at the PIC Winter Social and warm up with your indie peers. Network and catch up with members and friends of IABC/Toronto's Professional Independent Communicators (PIC) at this casual get-together in a cozy (and central) location.

Have a drink and a bite to eat while you make new friends and get to know others better. Get advice from your fellow indies, or compare notes about how small communications businesses can succeed and thrive.

We'll be meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 7 at the [Duke of York](#) pub, located at 39 Prince Arthur Ave. (east of Bedford Road, north of Bloor Street and just steps from the St. George subway station). Drinks and food will be on your own tab, but there's no charge for the fun and camaraderie!

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Five steps to picking a writing niche

By *Nkiru Asika*

I believe that specialization is key to standing out from the writer-saturated landscape; jack of all trades and all that. But picking a writing niche is difficult, and we tend to second-guess ourselves to a standstill.

I interviewed three very different writers who have all found their sweet spot, either by accident or design. They shared these five tips for anyone searching for a niche to call home:



1. You don't have to be an expert

The depth of your experience is less important than your ability to get up to speed as fast as possible.

"I do not have a science background, but I have a burning curiosity for health and science topics," says [Jane Langille](#), health and medical writer. Medical centres like Weill Cornell Medicine in New York hire this business major and former consumer marketer to be "the translator between the scientist and the reader."

2. Do what you love, and make sure it pays

The right niche for you is where personal interest and profitability collide. As Jane says, "If what you are passionate about doesn't have a market, then you will just be

writing for yourself, because you won't find clients who are willing to pay you."



3. Carpe diem

[Randi Druzin](#), cannabis writer and content marketer, turned one

well-timed article into a whole new business. After her 2016 medical marijuana piece for *US News & World Report* generated huge buzz, Randi struck while the iron was hot.

"I realized there was space here for me, rather than choosing an industry that is already mature and trying to make a name for myself."

She dove deep into research, studied the industry and attended conferences. Today, she writes on cannabis for multiple media outlets, and is launching a cannabis-focused content marketing company.



4. Leverage your unfair advantages

Your unfair advantage could be your

personal situation. **Heather Greenwood Davis's** family travel specialism took off when she documented her family's round-the-world trip during her husband's sabbatical. Twenty-nine countries and six continents later, with Heather tweeting updates and sharing content

on her new [Globetrotting Mama blog](#) along the way, she arrived back in Canada as an unrivalled family travel expert.

5. Bring something new to the table

"Voice is everything," says Heather. "If you are not adding anything new to the conversation, you won't stand out."

The family travel genre was "very traditional, white mother, father, two children." Heather has stood out by writing about trips with just her and her mother; with just one child; with her adult brother, and travelling with friends, because friends are family, too.

These three writers have used creativity, tenacity and drive to create own their space. The take-away: settle on a specialty, then work it hard. Dig deep, read voraciously, network furiously.



[Nkiru Asika](#) helps B2B service businesses generate leads with thought-leadership content and audience-focused web copy, and is director of membership for PIC. A longer version of this article first appeared on [CMG \(Canadian Media Guild\) Freelance](#).

PIC PERSONALITY:

Meet Karine Delage

By Sue Horner



KARINE DELAGE is a publicist, project manager and event organizer who runs Karyzma Agency, a full-service multilingual public relations firm. Learn more on her [website](#) and [LinkedIn](#), follow [@karyzmaagency](#) and [@KarineDelage](#) on Twitter, call 416-876-3329 or send an [email](#).

What's your background?

I was an aspiring journalist at eight years old, and by 13, I was writing for *7 Jours* magazine, covering events such as the Grammys, MTV Music Awards and Billboard Music Awards. From eight to 18, I did more than 200 interviews with musicians, athletes and other “talent.” I was interested in how publicists worked with people on the red carpet and started helping with fashion shows in Montreal. I learned a lot on my own.

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

I moved to Toronto around 2009 and worked for one small PR firm and then a larger one. When I left in 2011 due

to a restructuring, I launched Karyzma—connecting my name and the word “charisma.” Right now, Karyzma is me and three interns, but we are growing.

These days, I do PR for brands and talent in the Canadian entertainment industry as well as fashion, sports and lifestyle. I arrange for coverage of them across Canada and the U.S., and increasingly in the UK and European markets.

What do you enjoy most about being an indie?

I love the challenge. Doing PR for a brand is different than for a person. Brands don't have a bad day or a bad game. The product never changes. With people, you never know what's going to happen.

I love that my days are never the same, and that I can do work wherever I am. Last week, I was in New York on a televised panel talking about entertainment news. This week, I'm in Los Angeles with one of my clients on a photo shoot for *Outside Magazine*.

What don't you like about being an indie?

Nothing about being on my own, but one thing I don't like about the industry is how people say they understand PR, but they don't. People think all you do is party and hang out with celebrities, but we're always working. Even with brands, if something happens at 3 a.m., you need to be on it. Good PR people put heart and soul into our clients and work 24/7 for them.

What advice would you give someone new to independent life?

- Get ready not to sleep!
- Be prepared to not be prepared.
- Don't be discouraged. You'll have crazy ups and downs, but be passionate about what you do and keep going.
- Always try to do better. You can never reach a level where you can say, “I've reached this level, I'm good.”
- Always be on your best behaviour. With social media, someone can easily take a picture that you don't want out there.

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

I've been a member of PIC about two years. One of the things I really appreciate is reading about other PIC members in the newsletter. None of us think the same way, so learning from others makes us better at what we do.



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. Sue is a writer, principal of [Get It Write](#) and co-director of communications for PIC.

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:

- Follow us on Twitter at [@pictoronto](#).
- Take part in our LinkedIn group, [IABC Toronto Professional Independent Communicators](#) (login required).
- Take part in our [Facebook group](#), Professional Independent Communicators (PIC), part of IABC/Toronto (chapter members only).

Recent posts include setting SMART resolutions for your business, how to survive the feast or famine of freelancing, what to do now to survive a January slump and more. Feel free to share interesting or helpful articles or post questions that will help PIC members grow and manage our businesses.

Welcome (and welcome back) to PIC



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I help organizations strengthen their brands and achieve business objectives through positive public relations, effective communication strategies and tactical delivery—including social/earned media management, event planning, writing/editing and communication audits (surveys/focus groups/full report/recommendations)—in a professional and collaborative manner.



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Lynne is a former business reporter with corporate experience, the Canadian Securities Course and level 1 of the Chartered Financial Analyst program. Services include annual reporting, corporate communications (internal and external), financial and investment communications, issues and risk management, strategic planning, writing and editing.



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At AlphaJuliet, we're more than communication experts. We draw on our global business experience to help organizations achieve their goals. You have mountains to climb. We have the communication strategies to help you get there.

Your monthly OAT

By Sharon Aschaiek

Did you know oats are a superfood that boost brainpower? I'd like to serve up my own version to help you be a better communicator: **Opportunity, Article, Tip.** (Now you know what a nerd I am.)

Opportunity: We work hard for our clients—we deserve to celebrate our successes! [IABC's Gold Quill Awards](#) recognize excellence in strategic communication, and the deadline to submit an entry for the 2019 awards is Jan. 29. If you've played a key role in an outstanding client communication project, now is your time to shine.

Article: LinkedIn is a powerful tool for personal branding, which is important for independent communicators, but how do

we know we're using it correctly? This [Forbes article](#) explains the top content creation mistakes many people make on the platform, and how to create useful content that can increase our brand awareness and business opportunities.

Tip: We all know blogging can help position ourselves as thought leaders, boost our search rankings and stay top of mind with current and prospective clients. For those who aren't yet blogging but want to, help is here with [International Start a Blog Day](#) on Feb. 7. The event offers a free blogging course, and connects you with a community of 16,000 bloggers to get tips and ideas.

Continued success,
Sharon Aschaiek
Chair, PIC
VP, Special Interest Groups



Other events of interest

Staying Happy & Healthy: Wellness Tips for Creative Freelancers

Monday, January 28, 7:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.
Miles Nadal JCC (Bloor Street and Spadina Avenue), Room 218

Start 2019 with tips for improving your well-being from the Professional Writers Association of Canada—Toronto Chapter. Freelancers face many emotional and physical challenges, from anxiety and burnout to repetitive strain injuries and more. Come and explore techniques and resources for staying happy, healthy and productive. Free for students and PWAC members, \$10-15 in advance, \$20 at the door. [Register now.](#)

Webinars for writers

Editors Canada's 2019 webinars include Copyediting Live! with Elizabeth d'Anjou (Feb. 7, 14, 21) and Usage Traps and Myths with Frances Peck (April 10). To see the full lineup, visit: <http://training.editors.ca>

Watch for the rescheduled panel discussion

The planned January discussion about outsourcing and expanding your business by partnering with others has been postponed. Watch for the new date in the spring, and be sure to sign up early!

Changes to the PIC member list due March 29

As a member of PIC, you can promote yourself at no charge on the PIC [online directory](#) on the IABC/Toronto website. You can also use the list to find someone you can partner with to get new business or look for people you might like to meet.

We keep a running list of changes and update it with the chapter every quarter. Send your updates to PIC's director of membership, [Nkiru Asika](#), by **March 29**. 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).

Writers, your contributions are welcome

If you're an IABC/Toronto member and interested in communication technology and trends, consider writing for the upcoming issue of *Communicator*. The writing submission deadline is Jan. 28. For more info, contact toronto-communications@iabc.to.

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

Get your copy of *The Independent Life*

PIC has a wonderful resource in our e-book, *The Independent Life*. It shares wisdom and resources to help you start and manage your business, set fees, market and more. Our thanks to graphic designer [Cathy Ledden](#), RGD, for turning the content provided by many PIC members into this handy guide.

[Grab your copy as a PDF download or as an e-publication for Kobo or iReader.](#)



[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](#) helps people and organizations achieve excellence in corporate communication, PR, employee communication, marketing communication, public affairs and other forms of communication.

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](#) | Design: [Deana De Ciccio](#)

Quick links

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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](#), [Pat de Valence](#)

Membership: [Nkiru Asika](#)

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

Social Media: [Bill Smith](#)

