

March 2019

## AI is a game changer – are you ready?

By Maryjane Martin, APR

Last year, Dennie Theodore and I surveyed more than 100 corporate communicators to assess the use of digital tools in Canadian companies. We found more than 60 per cent of communicators are left out of the internal communication technologies selection process. About 30 per cent lacked knowledge or awareness of the latest tools.

The 2019 meeting of the World Economic Forum sent a strong message that new technologies will be game changers, particularly artificial intelligence (AI).

“Communicators should be aware of the innovations in artificial intelligence that affect not only their industry but also how it is disrupting and advancing communications in our society,” says Gayemarie

Brown, CEO and founder of Wintam Place Consulting.

Deirdre Breakenridge, author of *Social Media and Public Relations: Eight New Practices for the PR Profession*, thinks communicators must be knowledgeable about technology tools and should test the latest technology for better interactions with stakeholders. She says the effective use of this technology is “a new core competency.”



For independent practitioners, [powerful AI tools](#) can complement and expand our skills and make us more productive.

[Futurenda](#) splits tasks into sessions and creates a dynamic agenda to help manage multiple clients and deadlines.

[Voicea](#) is a voice collaboration platform powered by an Enterprise Voice Assistant, which takes

commands, performs actions and captures meeting highlights to confirm with clients.

Many AI-assisted tools have free trials so you can experiment with their applications, or a free

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## Your March OAT

By Sharon Aschaiek

Did you know oats are a superfood that boost brainpower? As I mentioned in my last column, I'd like to serve up my own version to help you be a better communicator: **Opportunity, Article, Tip.**

**Opportunity:** If your independent communication work includes writing for media outlets, you'll want to check out [MAGNET 2019: Canada's Magazine Conference](#). Happening April 24 and 25, the conference is North America's largest gathering of magazine industry stakeholders and will feature 24 sessions, keynotes, panel discussions, awards and networking receptions.

**Article:** Are you up to date on the social media trends taking shape in 2019, and what they may mean for your communications business? The Forbes Communications Council recently shared its take on [where things are headed with social this year](#), weighing

in on 15 topics such as personalized storytelling to engage audiences, hyper-targeted content, increased social media regulations, interactive quizzes, and the blending of organic and paid social efforts.

**Tip:** April 7-13 is National Volunteer Week 2019 in Canada, which celebrates the importance of volunteering. Personally, I've gotten a lot of professional and personal value out of my volunteering for IABC/Toronto and organizations outside the profession. Of course, as communicators, we can especially make a difference by donating our expertise to charities.

Try searching for volunteer communications opportunities at [www.volunteertoronto.ca](http://www.volunteertoronto.ca), [www.sparkontario.ca](http://www.sparkontario.ca) or [www.toronto-charities.ca](http://www.toronto-charities.ca).

Continued success,  
[Sharon Aschaiek](#)  
Chair, PIC  
VP, Special Interest Groups



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demonstration to help you learn more. Some in use are:

- 1. Content creation**
  - [Wordsmith](#) “transforms your data into an insightful, human-sounding narrative.”
  - [Articoolo](#) uses an algorithm to create unique content from your chosen topic and length.
  - [Grammarly](#)’s AI-powered writing assistant corrects as you write.
  - Use [Lumen5](#) or [Rocketium](#) to create an automated video.
- 2. Chatbots**
  - [Amy Ingram](#) uses machine learning and natural language processing to read your email, scan your calendar and book meetings.
  - [Answer Bot](#) enhances customer relationships through chat.
  - [TD hired TV screenwriters](#) to make its chatbot, Clari, more conversational.
- 3. Social media listening and analysis**
  - [Talkwalker](#) listens to social media conversations to find patterns and trends.
  - [Brandwatch](#) provides



JODI ECHAKOWITZ      CYRUS MAVALWALA      CAROLYN CAMILLERI

## April 11: How to Outsource & Expand Your Communication Business

Would you like to take on larger or more financially lucrative work, but worry that your solo communications practice is too small to manage these projects?

At this panel discussion, you’ll learn how to subcontract work to get the skills or support you need for larger projects, allowing you to grow your business at a pace you can manage. Our speakers are **Carolyn Camilleri**, editor, writer, and copywriter; **Jodi Echakowitz**, CEO of Boulevard PR; and **Cyrus Mavalwala**, ABC, MC, founder of Advantis Communications.

insights from the billions of conversations happening online every.

- [Quid](#) users can query, map and explore massive amounts of information at once.

**Challenges with AI**  
 “Artificial Intelligence brings great benefits, but people are now facing new challenges, such as ethical issues with AI, personal data protection, and

replacement of human jobs.” says Lee Kai-Fu, Sinovation Ventures CEO. Kai-Fu is co-chair of a new AI council designed to help people solve these problems.  
 As communicators, we may be charged with promoting the adoption of AI within our clients’ organization. As PR technology testers, we should confidently advise on the appropriate use of these tools.



**Thursday, April 11,  
 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.**  
 Central YMCA  
 20 Grosvenor St.  
 M4Y 2V5

**Registration fees:**  
 \$20 plus HST  
 IABC/Toronto  
 member rate  
  
 \$30 plus HST  
 Non-member rate



*Maryjane Martin, APR, is a communication management consultant specializing in digital, corporate and internal communication, and a past chair of PIC. [IABC members can read the unedited version](#) in IABC/Toronto’s Communicator.*

### Feb. 7: PIC winter social

Some of about 30 communicators who braved the cold for the PIC winter social on Feb. 7 are shown here at the Duke of York. The event attracted a mix of comms pros, including independents and folks from agencies and corporate. The talk was lively, the drinks cold and the setting warm and inviting. Watch for details on our next PIC social soon.



## PIC PERSONALITY:

# Meet Sandra Pakosh, ABC

By Sue Horner



**SANDRA PAKOSH, ABC,** is principal of Outsource Communications. She helps B2B and non-profit clients be more strategic, results-driven and measurable to improve their performance and revenue. Learn more on her [website](#) and [LinkedIn](#), follow her on [Twitter](#), or reach her by [email](#) or phone at 416-573-5933.

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

I originally launched Outsource Communications in 1997. I had left the financial services sector, was pondering what to do next, and saw a need for outsourced marketing and communication services. Eventually, work for one tech client grew so large they made a full-time employment offer I couldn't refuse!

Today, the in-house vs. outsource debate continues. So realizing the need again, and after some 'Act Two' soul-searching, I relaunched in 2015. Taking the helm again made the most sense.

Over the past few years, I've worked as a hands-on partner to small businesses, non-profits and entrepreneurs—marketers, consultants, lawyers, financial

services gurus, grassroots charities—to propel their persuasion, performance, engagement and revenue goals. Strategies included personality-infused copywriting, B2B writing for corporate fundraising, reputation management, board-executive communication, marketing technology structure and resources, and brand, website and social media audits.

## What do you enjoy most about being an indie?

It's particularly rewarding to tap into my knowledge and learned best practices to contribute to client success, and being rewarded with their success, and my own renewed contracts. I also did this for my employers, which is where I earned several IABC awards.

It's also personally fulfilling to collaborate with and learn from amazing clients in the strategic process and develop work that drives excellence. And the flexibility is helpful when dealing with the challenges life throws at you.

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

Ah... I'm not fond of juggling all the aspects of your own business—operating the business vs. generating revenue, doing the work vs. prospecting. I find it challenging when there is a lull in work, or I've put effort into a proposal, only to have the project cancelled.

## What advice would you give someone new to independent life?

- Be known for something. Understand your ideal client and how you can solve their problems.
- Develop a strategic mindset for your clients. Do your homework and understand what will drive their success. Ask the question at the front end: What does success look like, and how will we measure it?
- Remember you can say "no" to clients who are draining and stressing you!

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

I've been an IABC member for 25+ years. I joined PIC after the panel discussion in September 2018 about starting an independent communications practice. I came away seeing PIC's value in learning what works and what doesn't, and making connections with others like me. Or even the possibility of collaborating to tap into subject expertise I don't have, and helping each other succeed!



*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 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 daily habits of productive freelancers, how to find high-paying clients, alternatives to cold calling and more. Feel free to share interesting or helpful articles or post questions that will help PIC members grow and manage our businesses.

## Feedback

We love to hear from *Buzz* readers! Here's what several readers had to say after the February issue:

*"Just read the latest Buzz cover to cover, and thoroughly enjoyed it! It is a fantastic resource for indies."* —Judy Irwin

*"A readable, attractive, helpful newsletter. The OAT: clever idea!"* —Christine Smith

*"Looking forward to getting involved and inspired by such an incredible group of communicators!"* —Cathy Cowan

## Other events of interest

### Editors Canada: Webinars for Writers

Editors Canada's 2019 webinars include Starting a Freelance Editing or Writing Career (April 6) and Usage Traps and Myths (April 10). See the full lineup at <http://training.editors.ca>.

### PWAC: Polishing Your Work

Monday, March 25, 7:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m., Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre, 750 Spadina Ave., Toronto  
Editors from different areas of publishing will share their best tips for freelance writers on how to polish your work, keep clients happy and get repeat business. The editors will talk about preparing your work for submission, editing, proofreading, style guides and more. [Learn more and register.](#)

### PWAC: Deep Research: Practical Tips & Techniques

Tuesday, April 23, 7:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.  
Watch for more information soon.

## 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).

## Thanks, Pat!

Our thanks to [Pat de Valence](#), who served as PIC's co-director of communications from August 2018 to January 2019.

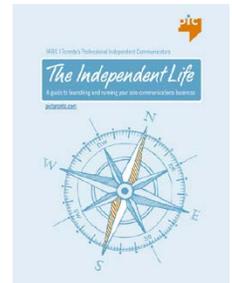


## Writers, your contributions are welcome

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

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

## Quick links

- [PIC on the web](#)
- [PIC on LinkedIn](#)
- [@PICToronto](#) on Twitter
- Email us: [toronto-sig@iabc.to](mailto:toronto-sig@iabc.to)
- [Join our mailing list!](#)
- Get a copy of [The Independent Life](#)
- [Find back issues of The Buzz](#)

## 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: [Nkiru Asika](#)

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

Social Media: [Bill Smith](#)

