

April 2019

**May 8:
Come out
and be
social**



**Spring is here,
and it's time to
socialize!**

Join us at 7 p.m. at the [Duke of York](#) on Wednesday, May 8 for the PIC spring social.

Network and catch up with PIC members and friends at this casual get-together. Have a drink and a bite to eat while you make new connections and check in with the colleagues you already know. As usual, drinks and food are on your own tab. See you there?

Wednesday, May 8
Duke of York,
39 Prince Arthur Ave.,
Toronto

[REGISTER NOW](#)

April 11: Partner with others to win business

By Sue Horner

As a “solopreneur,” you may think you have to clone yourself to take on more business.

You can't, but that's the wrong approach anyway, as we learned at the PIC panel discussion on April 11. Instead, partner with others to create a diverse team with varied skills and experience, which allows you to take on more business and is actually better for your clients:

Cyrus Mavalwala, ABC, MC, founder of Advantis Communications, has a virtual team, governed by an associate contract and non-disclosure agreement. Identifying and owning his niche of digital communication (including social media audits) led to business growth.

Jodi Echakowitz, CEO of Boulevard PR, has a virtual team focused on B2B technology. All have at least 10 years' experience, must be able to work independently and work directly with clients. "I'm not here to coach and I don't have time for hand-holding," she said.

Carolyn Camilleri is a writer and editor who teams up with other members of a loose collective of writers, editors, photographers and other



Thanks again to our panel (from left), Jodi Echakowitz, Cyrus Mavalwala and Carolyn Camilleri.

creatives. The collective has a common face but isn't an agency; each member deals directly with clients.

“Take a strategic view of your business, and if you have any weak areas, look for complementary skills.”

—Cyrus Mavalwala

To guide your own approach, Cyrus recommended asking if you want to be the “employer,” leading a team, or if you're just looking for the ability to take on more work.

“Take a strategic view of your business, and if you have any weak areas, look for complementary skills,” he advised.

While Carolyn confessed to being “a total generalist,” the others agreed on the value of a niche. It makes winning the business easier, you do what you love for a variety of clients, and you can charge a premium. As Jodi pointed out, “When you focus in one area, people learn to trust you as ‘the’ boutique agency for that specialty.”

The panelists have similar ways to find people to work with. “Networking is huge,” Carolyn says. Jodi stays in touch with people she sees as a potential fit and tries to find opportunities to work together. Cyrus also suggested the power of just saying “yes.” Agreeing to do a presentation with someone he didn't know led to new business.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

The panelists look for people they like and can trust to do their jobs, and skills are the table stakes. Other requirements:

- Flexible
- Good team players
- Low maintenance
- Focused on goals and deadlines
- Able to deliver high customer service
- Able to respond in a timely way.

Above all, Cyrus said, "Focus on adding value. In good times, anyone can earn a living. But if you relentlessly focus on delivering value, even in tough times your clients will never let you go."

Later, [Nkiru Asika](#) said she was struck by Jodi's virtual agency model. "Many people are scared of the idea of scaling into an agency because they dread the headache of managing staff," she explained. "She has freed herself of that."

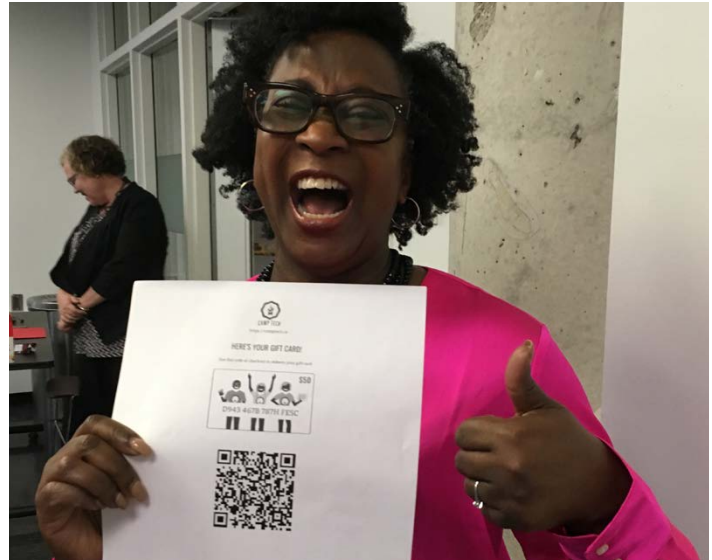
[Cathy Ledden](#), RGD, commented, "I've been working with experienced team members as a collective since 2008. Sometimes, I fret over hiring regular full-time or part-time staff, but that brings on another level of headache I'm not sure is worth the effort. Hearing from all three panelists encouraged me to continue along this path."

RECOMMENDED:

- ▶ [2Bobs podcast](#) for creative firms
- ▶ Jodi's quoted in [this piece on hiring independents](#)
- ▶ View the [session in tweets](#)



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



Congratulations to guest Wendy Vincent for winning the gift certificate generously donated by Camp Tech.

Changes to the PIC member list due June 31

As a member of PIC, 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 April 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: One of the best ways to network with other local communicators and stay current on best practices is by attending IABC/Toronto's [OVATION Awards Gala](#). This swish affair celebrates communication excellence by Toronto-area practitioners—both chapter and non-chapter members—and showcases their achievements. This year's gala is taking place on May 29 at the Arcadian Court, and the deadline to register is May 17.

Article: This isn't an article but a report, but it's useful to your communications career, especially if your job involves media relations. Cision recently released its [2019 Global State of the Media Report](#), which features insights from a survey of 1,999

journalists. This 10th annual report has some interesting insights, including this: 75% of the journalists surveyed feel that less than 25% of the pitches they receive are relevant.

Tip: When determining what to charge for a potential project, consider using a project fee versus an hourly rate. I have long been an advocate of the project fee, because it spares clients the anxiety of the running-meter of an hourly rate. It also prevents you from having to disclose your hourly rate, which is typically higher than a salaried hourly wage because it covers your business expenses. Clients may not consider these expenses, and so balk at an hourly rate that's much higher than what they earn. A [recent article](#) by *Creative Bloom*, an online magazine for the creative community, explains the value of this approach and other aspects of setting freelance rates.

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



How to keep editors happy and get repeat business

By Sheila Gregory

If you're a pro writer, you won't need the advice generously provided by the speakers at PWAC Toronto's March event, "*Polish Your Work: From Expert Tips to Editorial Workflows.*"

But what does it take to be a pro? According to Liann Bobeckko, deputy editor at Cottage Life, just follow three rules: Be on time. Be good. Be easy to work with.

Sounds easy, right? Then why do so many writers miss deadlines, turn in mediocre work, complain about edits, and sometimes even completely ghost editors? This according to Kat Tancock, of content marketing agency Tavanberg. It seems many writers lack the basic business skills needed to keep clients happy.

Are you guilty of any of these fatal flaws?

- Not thoroughly reading and understanding your assignment instructions.
- Writing far more or fewer words than the length requested.
- Not communicating with your editor about how much leeway there might be on a deadline when you have an emergency.
- Not proofreading or not catching errors that could easily be Googled (like the proper spelling of a name).

Hancock has even had writers request additional fees when she had to ask for missing

elements of the assignment—ones she had requested in the first place. In the audience, we were all shaking our heads at this point. We thought, "We're professionals—we'd never make any of these mistakes."

Or would we?

Believe it or not, these errors and many others epitomize the regular, real-life experiences of editors.

Tips included shortening sentences, omitting needless words, and red-circling low-energy verbs for editing, like 'is,' 'be' and 'been.'

Obviously some writers are messing up big time.

Sometimes an editor will give you a second chance if you communicate effectively and explain that you had an emergency. Hancock reassured us that editors certainly do want to work with us. The lesson? If you want repeat business, be sure to make life easy for them.

Franklin Carter, a self-employed editor and certified proofreader, closed the panel presentation with a rundown on polishing our work.

Tips included shortening sentences, omitting needless words, and red-circling low-energy verbs for editing, like 'is,' 'be' and 'been.'

He cautioned, though, that no amount of editing or proofreading will fix a piece in which the correct tasks were not planned and executed in the correct sequence. For example, it's important to:

- Select a topic relevant to the publication's readers.
- Tell a story about a person doing things.
- Tell why the person is doing these things.
- Conduct research and interviews.
- Pull your research together and focus the story idea.
- Create an outline and write a first draft.

If you miss or perform these tasks out of sequence, no amount of polishing later will save your writing and you'll either be rejected or have to rewrite. His analogy gave us all a giggle: "Even if you arrange and rearrange all the deck chairs on the Titanic several times, the ship will still go down."



Sheila Gregory is a professional business writer, content marketer and social media strategist. See work samples and learn more about her at promotionnotions.wordpress.com.

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](https://twitter.com/pictoronto); LinkedIn, [IABC Toronto Professional Independent Communicators](https://www.linkedin.com/company/iabc-toronto); Facebook, [Facebook group](https://www.facebook.com/iabc-toronto); and [Professional Independent Communicators \(PIC\), part of IABC/Toronto](https://www.linkedin.com/company/iabc-toronto).

Recent posts include a link to 20 inspiring writing podcasts, three things freelancers should do instead of cold pitching, how to negotiate like a pro, and moves to recession-proof your business.

Writers, your contributions are welcome

Want to recap a meeting or do other writing for *The Buzz*? Contact [Sue Horner](https://www.linkedin.com/in/suehorner).

Another event of interest

ACE Your Response to Crises: A Webinar with Jacqui d'Eon

May 9, 2019,
1 p.m.–2 p.m.



It doesn't take much for things to go off the rails—and with social media, it takes only seconds for the world to know about

it. This webinar will focus on the principles of responding to a crisis: what to say, how to say it and who to have say it. Participants will learn the ACE (accept, commit, express emotion) protocol to effectively respond to a crisis.

Cost:
Free for Canadian Society of Association Executives members; \$50 for non-members.

[Learn more and register](#)

Member news

Sharon Aschaiek has been working with the University of Toronto Mississauga for years, writing for their website, magazine and news articles. Her good relationship with the UTM communications person led to an invitation to respond to an RFP, and now she's editing the spring 2019 edition of UTM's *M Magazine*, which will publish in early June.

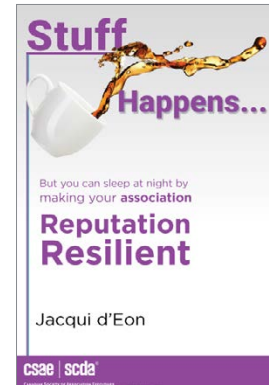
Sharon McMillan wrote "[Downtown Condo Living is Changing the Way We Live](#)" for the March issue of *Distillery District Magazine*, after being referred to the publisher by a friend. She knows what she's talking about; after 20 years in a house in Markham, she sold it in 2014 and moved to a downtown condo. She also created a City Living Guide, which you can learn more about on Instagram, at [citylivingguide](#).

Jacqui d'Eon, P.Eng., ABC, MC., is the "C-suite whisperer"—and a new author. Her book, *Stuff Happens... But you can sleep at night by making your association reputation resilient*, is out this month.

The [Canadian Society of Association Executives](#), of which Jacqui is a member, commissioned her to write the book after a presentation she gave in 2016. The book covers all stages of crisis preparation and is based on the wisdom Jacqui has accumulated over the years.

"Crisis management should be part of everyday operations, not a separate function," Jacqui says. "My book offers simple tools to make that happen."

[Buy the book](#) for \$29.99 plus shipping and HST.



[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](#)

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PIC executive

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

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Past Chair: [Donna Papacosta](#)

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Membership: [Nkiru Asika](#)

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