



HOW-TO GUIDE FOR IABC AWARDS

The Midas Touch

How to prepare an IABC Gold Quill Award entry for:

Division 1: Communication Management



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IABC AWARDS

IABC's awards programs are symbols of excellence in strategic communication recognizing smart thinking, flawless execution and proven results. Whether policy-based or marketing-driven, award winners deliver meaningful work that contributes to business results and aligns to [IABC's Global Standard](#) to ensure consistency and credibility resulting in building the reputation of the communication profession.

The **Global Standard** is defined by communication professionals around the world embracing a shared career purpose and six core principles as the building blocks of their work. Informed by a passion for engaging audiences with strategic communication, the purpose and Principles focus our work and form a global standard. Applying that standard enables us to cross all borders, align with diverse cultures and effectively serve organizations of all types and sizes.

Reaching across the globe, IABC Gold Quill Awards seek the best of the best.

This How-To Guide shares what evaluators look for in an award-winning entry and how to complete an award-winning entry. With this guide, you'll be able to match your work against the criteria used by our trained evaluators.

The Basics

You can enter your work in one of four divisions and 28 categories. The Quill Award divisions include:

- Communication Research Management
- Communication Management
- Communication Education and Training
- Communication Skills

You may enter work in multiple divisions and categories; however, each work plan must be customized to the category description. Please read these descriptions carefully to determine which category or categories best fit your project.

The work plan reviews six sections of IABC's strategic communication planning model against IABC'S Global Seven-point Scale of Excellence:

- Business need/opportunity
- Stakeholder analysis
- Goals and objectives
- Solution overview
- Implementation and challenges
- Measurement and evaluation

Each entry consists of two components: The work plan and the work samples.

- **Work Plan**
 - A work plan is like an executive summary of your communication strategy. This is your opportunity to tell your story and point out the strengths of your work



- The work plan must be presented using the major headings found in the score sheet. You are allowed up to four (4) pages for the work plans.
 - Margins must be at least half an inch (1.27 cm) on all sides, and fonts may be no smaller than 10 points. Work plans exceeding the maximum length will be disqualified.
 - Make sure to follow the directions and answer all questions clearly and concisely.
 - Complete the required information including your name and organization, the division and category that you're entering, and the title and time period of the entry. A short description of the project must also appear. These elements are not scored, but evaluators keep them in mind when considering the context of the project.
 - See the work plan template on gq.iabc.com to see formatting requirements. It is a good idea to use this template as your starting point.
- **Work Sample**
 - For all divisions, the entry must include at least one and up to 5 (five) work samples that are a representative copy of the materials that support your project.
 - If no work samples were included, the entry will be disqualified.
 - Make sure to organize/label your work samples to help evaluators know what project elements they are reviewing.
- **Scoring**
 - A score of 4 is professionally sound and appropriate work for a communicator.
 - To achieve a score of 5, the work must truly stand above average.
 - To achieve a score of 6 the work must be innovative and achieve significant business results.
 - To achieve a score of 7, the work must be extraordinary, something that resets the bar for the highest level of communication.
 - Within this Guide **you'll find rubrics for each section**. The performance dimensions on the rubrics represent the IABC Seven-point Scale of Excellence and are by which the evaluators base their scoring. The rubrics explain what criteria is needed to achieve each of the Seven-points.



Eligibility

Any work done for IABC at the international level is not eligible.

All entries must align with IABC's [Code of Ethics](#).

You must have direct involvement in the work that you're submitting.

Why Enter the Awards Program?

Whether you win an award or not, the program offers an array of benefits to all entrants:

- Gain international peer recognition for excellence in communications.
- Profile industry innovation and best practice.
- Open up speaking and publishing opportunities.
- Build your personal reputation as a thought leader.
- Enhance the reputation of your team and organization, both internally and externally.
- Build a business case to fund a key initiative.
- Inspire your team. Bring them together to produce show-stopping work and share the glory when it's complete.
- Challenge yourself to new heights of innovation, creativity and strategic thinking.
- Build a portfolio of work that opens doors to new opportunities.
- Get feedback from highly qualified communicators from around the world.

Questions? Please email recognition@iabc.com for answers.



MEET THE SEVEN-POINT SCALE OF EXCELLENCE

IABC sets the award scoring criteria based on the IABC standards of excellence. Performance dimensions within each criterion represented by a question are assigned to a point on the IABC Seven-Point Scale of Excellence. The criteria and performance dimensions align to the domains, tasks and knowledge used in the Global Communication Council's [certification program](#).

7	Outstanding: An extraordinary or insightful approach or result.
6	Significantly better than average: Demonstrates an innovative, strategic approach, takes all elements into account and delivers significant results.
5	Better than average: Demonstrates a strategic approach and aligns the communication solution with the business need to deliver meaningful results.
4	Average: Competent approach or results, professionally sound and appropriate.
3	Somewhat less than satisfactory: Several key elements that are critical to the strategy or execution are missing, incorrect or underrepresented.
2	An inadequate approach or result: A significant number of critical elements are missing.
1	Poor: Work that is wrong or inappropriate.

The awards score sheet provides information about how scores are weighted for each section. Go to gg.iabc.com to check it out.



DIVISION 1 COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

The Communication Management division covers projects, programs and campaigns that are guided by a communication strategy. Entries to this division can be submitted by any type of organization, from governments to retail companies to services such as utilities and health care. Entrants must demonstrate how their project applied a full range of planning and management skills, including research, analysis, strategy, tactical implementation and evaluation. Entries may include a wide range of communication materials.

HOW TO PREPARE A WORK PLAN

SECTION 1: The Business Need or Opportunity

Evaluators need context to assess whether the communication solution supports the business goals. Without the relevant background information, it's difficult to determine whether the strategy addresses the right issues and audiences. A good description of the business need linked to the communication opportunity sets the stage for the rest of the work plan.

Evaluator questions

How well does the entrant explain the context for the entry by clearly establishing the business need and the related communication opportunity? To what extent does the entrant:

- Explain the business and communication environment including specific challenges that have occurred?
- Align the communication/research/training opportunity and the business need by explaining how the project helped the organization?
- Use research to substantiate the need and inform the direction of the communication strategy?

How this section is scored

- It must be evident that the communicator has a clear understanding of the business needs and organizational mandate.
- It should be clear why the project was carried out.
- It should solve a problem, fill a need, or help to leverage an opportunity.
- Ideally, the need was identified by formal or informal research, and communication work positively influences business performance, now or in the future.



Avoid:

- Inclusion of generalizations and vague needs such as, “Management thought it would be a good idea.”
- Assumed needs such as producing a newsletter because the audience needs information.
- Providing needs that don’t support the business of the organization.

A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- Clearly define and demonstrate an understanding of the business need.
- Speak to how the opportunity was identified and why it matters to the business.
- Explain how the communication/research/training project addresses the need.
- Provide enough context about the organization and its environment so that it’s clear how the program contributed to business success.

Entries are scored up for:

- Formal or informal research that demonstrates the need.
- A clear explanation of specific changes or challenges that may have occurred.
- A multi-faceted explanation of the strategic alignment and why it matters to the business or how it will make a difference.

Entries are scored down if:

- There isn’t an explanation of how the project will help the organization.
- The need is assumed.
- There isn’t enough information about the organization and its business goals to allow evaluators to fairly evaluate the solution.



Section 1: Business Need and Communication Opportunity

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
<p>Multi-faceted explanation of how the need is strategically aligned to the business, stakeholders, industry/profession, <u>and</u> community</p> <p>The data supporting the need comes from more than one source</p> <p>Thorough research of business need includes history, current situation, size and scope show significant understanding of situation and how to proceed with solution(s)</p>	<p>Superior explanation of the current business state including challenges and urgency driving the communication opportunity</p> <p>Superior explanation of how the opportunity addresses the need</p> <p>A thorough explanation of research, benchmarking <u>and</u> analysis of the business communication environment against the needs and opportunity</p>	<p>Business needs are clear and strategically defined based on mission, values, goals, and brand</p> <p>Opportunity aligns to the organization's strategic direction, key performance indicators and business need</p> <p>Clear explanation of how opportunity positively impacts business performance now or in the future</p> <p>Challenges facing the business are explained</p> <p>The need is identified through formal or informal research.</p> <p>Research methodology is appropriate</p>	<p>The business needs are clearly defined and demonstrate an understanding of what they mean to the business</p> <p>Speaks to how the business need was defined</p> <p>Speaks to why the opportunity matters to the business</p> <p>Speaks to how the opportunity helps the business</p> <p>Speaks to how the business need and communication opportunity were identified</p>	<p>The business need is not well defined</p> <p>It is not clear why the project was undertaken</p> <p>Not clear how need and opportunity were defined</p> <p>Communication opportunity is not aligned with the business need</p> <p>Opportunity is generalized or vague such as management thought it would be a good idea</p>	<p>There is no background on the organization and its business goals to set the context</p> <p>The business need is assumed</p>	<p>No explanation of the business need</p> <p>No explanation of the communication opportunity</p> <p>No explanation of how need <u>or</u> opportunity identified</p>



SECTION 2: Stakeholder Analysis

Effective communication doesn't occur until the audience receives and understands the message. The work plan must demonstrate an understanding of the audiences. If the entrant doesn't explore the audience preferences, attitudes, demographics, psychographics or other characteristics, it's difficult to determine whether objectives, messages, approach, media or channels are on target.

Evaluator questions

How well does the entrant define, segment, and analyze the critical characteristics of the audience in relation to the business need? To what extent does the entrant:

- Share relevant audience characteristics such as prior knowledge, education, geography, demographics, psychographics, preferences, attitudes, opinions, motivations or issues?
- Include research that identifies the characteristics, mindset, preferences and needs of the audience?
- Use this research to provide insight to the strategy?
- Discuss how relevant factors will influence the communication strategy and tactics?

How this section is scored

Audience analysis should be based on formal or informal research. Look for information about demographics, psychographics, mindset, what the audience thinks and why. Entrants must show that they've taken the audience's needs, wants, preferences, opinions and behaviors into account, and that they've used the information to design their program. The better the entrant describes the audience, the higher their score will be.

Avoid:

- Making vague assumptions such as "We thought they might like . . ."
- Stating an audience collectively with no identifying characteristics such as the general public.
- Stating characteristics or behaviors that seem irrelevant to the project or audience.

A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- List audiences (primary, secondary and tertiary if appropriate), and describe their characteristics, preferences, and needs in enough detail to show how your understanding led to choices of strategy, tactics, media and channels.



Entries are scored up for:

- Research that defines the audience characteristics and needs (formal research is best, but informal analysis can be cited).
- A discussion that shows how the audience is linked to strategy and tactics.
- Comments about relevant factors, such as prior knowledge, education, geography, psychographics, motivations, opinions, understanding, and other issues.
- Thorough explanation of how audience research influences the solution.

Entries are scored down if:

- The audience isn't defined.
- Broad audiences such as employees or the general public are listed without defining needs or characteristics.
- Audiences are listed but no analysis is provided.
- An opportunity to segment and target specific audience groups is missed.
- An obvious audience in relation to the defined need is missed.
- The wrong audience is identified based on the defined need.
- There are vague, unsupported assumptions about audience needs.



Section 2: Stakeholder Analysis

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
Truly unique approach to audience analysis that raises the bar of the professional standards	<p>Audience segmentation clearly separates groups and identifies appropriate characteristics</p> <p>Clear explanation of how the audience characteristics influence the solution</p> <p>Thorough explanation of how audience research leads to decisions within project</p> <p>Formal research conducted to define audience characteristics</p>	<p>Superior explanation of characteristics allow appropriate decisions on strategy and tactics</p> <p>A description demonstrates how the audience is linked to strategy and tactics</p> <p>Informal or secondary research defines audience characteristics and needs</p> <p>Speaks to how audience research leads to strategy and tactics</p> <p>Audiences segmented in way that influences solution</p>	<p>Audience characteristics and mindset analyzed in relation to the communication opportunity</p> <p>Audiences are listed with characteristics and needs that lead to choices of strategy, tactics, media, and channels</p> <p>Speaks to how audience(s) and characteristics identified</p> <p>Appropriate research methodology</p>	<p>Audiences are listed with vague, unsupported assumptions about characteristics</p> <p>Characteristics included are irrelevant to the project or audience</p> <p>Misses an obvious audience in relation to identified need</p> <p>Inappropriate research methodology</p>	<p>Broad publics or stakeholder groups listed without defining needs or characteristics</p> <p>Wrong audience identified based on need</p> <p>No mention of audience research</p>	Audiences not listed



SECTION 3: Goals and Objectives

The ability to set meaningful, measurable objectives that are relevant to the business need is critical to measure the success of the program. Effective work that delivers results helps to create value and build credibility for the value of communication as a primary business driver. **The answer to this question is critical, because poor objectives will lower the score in other parts of the evaluation.**

Evaluator questions

How well does the entrant set measurable objectives that are relevant to the business need and will measure the effect of strategic communication on the business? To what extent does the entrant:

- Distinguish between objectives, tactics, and an approach to the issue?
- Align the communication goal and objectives with the business need?
- Establish measurable, relevant objectives that are stated as communication outcomes?
- Align objectives with the stakeholder analysis and the business need?
- Ensure that objectives will produce an effect on the stated business needs?

How this section is scored

Goals and objectives must be aligned with the business needs identified, and **stated in measurable terms as outputs and outcomes**. If you only state objectives that are output-based the highest score you will earn is 3.5, providing that the objectives set are in direct relationship to the business need.

Goals generally describe what you want to accomplish in a broad sense. Objectives are measurable and set targets. Progress must be reported in the Measurement section. Objectives clearly define the desired outcome, or what success will look like. They are:

- Measurable in quantity, time, cost, percentages, quality or some other criteria.
- Realistic, meaningful and believable.
- Aligned with the needs of the business.
- Stated from a communication perspective.
- Can be a combination of output-based statements (volume, increases), and outcome-based measures (attitudes, opinions, behaviors and business results).

Avoid stating objectives that:

- Don't seem to flow naturally or logically from the goal or need.
- Seem to be a long shot.
- Seem worthy and measurable, but don't address the need.
- Are vague, irrelevant or not measurable such as, "Our objective was to win the hearts . . ."
- Are task-based tactics or process-based (stage a special event) rather than results-based.
- Are too numerous.
- Aren't aligned with audience or business needs.
- Are numerical but not substantiated with research.



A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- State an overall big picture goal (one or two) that doesn't need to be stated in measurable terms.
- State specific measurable, meaningful objectives demonstrating the effect of communication on the business.

Entries are scored up for:

- Clearly stated goals linked to the business objectives and the identified need.
- Objectives that are stated in terms of impact on the business and the target audiences.
- Objectives that are outcome-based and likely to deliver meaningful results to the business.
- Insightful approaches to setting strategic goals and objectives

Entries are scored down if:

- Objectives are production or deadline-focused, or based on process (tactics) such as "produce a newsletter."
- Objectives are not related to the problem identified.
- There are no measurable objectives.
- There are too many (unfocused) or soft objectives that are not supported by research. For example, the objective states "Increase readership by 1 percent" but the increase is not measured and mentioned in the work plan.

A special note on Communication Management objectives

Output and outcome objectives

Output-based objectives measure volume or increases against media vehicles and communication channels like website visits, articles distributed, ads produced, meetings held, content analysis, blog posts, tweets, downloads of publications and so forth.

Examples:

- News media will carry 100 stories.
- The publication will be downloaded 10,000 times per year.
- The number of visits to the website will increase by 15,000.

Outcome-based objectives measure what the audience will gain by way of awareness, understanding, recall, different perceptions, and quantifiable change in attitudes, opinions and behaviors. Was the message heard? Was the audience engaged? Did they read the information? How many phone calls or requests for information were received? Did the communication strategy influence the audience to buy something—either a product or an idea? Outcome-based objectives have a greater impact on the business need.

Examples:

- Audience awareness of the product will increase from 10 percent to 50 percent.
- Employee understanding of the business goals will increase from 25 percent to 65 percent.
- Positive perception of the organization will improve from 30 percent to 50 percent.
- Sixty-five percent of employees will actively practice the customer experience standards daily.



- Product sales will increase by 10 percent and market share by 2 percent.

Tactics, approaches, and supporting strategies are often confused with objectives. These elements describe the vehicles, channels and activities used to achieve results, and are reported in the Solution Overview or Implementation and Challenges sections.

Examples:

- Redesign the employee newsletter.
- Stage a town hall meeting.
- Create a new social media campaign.
- Stage a special event.
- Distribute the brochure to 15,000 customers.
- Conduct training session

SMART Objectives

The **SMART formula** can help you determine whether the objectives are sound, and while this process is not the only way to evaluate the strength of objectives, it is a good guideline.

Specific:	Describes a desired outcome
Measurable:	Quantified as an output, outtake or outcome
Achievable:	Challenging but within the range of influence
Relevant:	Contributes to business goals in a meaningful way
Time-framed:	Includes a completion date, if appropriate



Section 3: Goals and Objectives

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
A thoroughly explained and insightful approach to setting strategic goals and objectives leading to outstanding business results	<p>Appropriate objectives are segmented by audience</p> <p>“Stretch” goals and objectives set that are attainable, yet challenging</p> <p>Explains how <u>all</u> stated, measurable objectives are aligned to business need</p> <p>Targets stated for objectives are based on research or benchmarks with a clear explanation</p>	<p>Objectives stated using the SMART formula</p> <p>Objectives are outcome-based <u>and</u> likely to deliver meaningful business results</p> <p>Goals are clearly linked to the organizations mission, values, goals, strategic direction and brand</p>	<p>States overall big picture goal(s) – do not need to be measurable.</p> <p>Specific outcome-based, measurable, meaningful objectives appropriate for the business need and category entered</p> <p>Objectives demonstrate the impact of communication on the business</p> <p>Objective targets are realistic</p>	<p>Understanding of goals, objectives and tactics not demonstrated</p> <p>Objectives production, deadline-focused, or based on tactics such as produce a newsletter</p> <p>Objectives all output-based</p> <p>Objectives do not include preset targets to indicate success</p> <p>Objectives not realistic or achievable</p>	<p>Objectives not measurable</p> <p>Section 1: Business need and communication opportunity doesn’t provide any detail to evaluate if goals and objectives are appropriate</p> <p>Objectives do not focus on the identified goal(s) or business need</p>	No goals or objectives



SECTION 4: The Solution Overview

The solution overview offers insight into how you approached the project. Looking at the communication environment, business and audience needs, and relevant research, the evaluator should be able to easily determine whether and how the information informed the strategy.

Evaluator questions

Given the business need and audience analysis, how effective is the communication approach? To what extent did the entrant:

- Demonstrate strategic thinking?
- Clearly explain how the business needs, audiences and objectives are aligned with the strategic and/or creative approach, tactics, vehicles, media and communication channels?
- Demonstrate that the audience analysis was taken into account when developing key messages for each group identified?
- Provide an executive summary of the tactical execution plan listing the audience, tactics and time line?
- Demonstrate that the communication solution is aligned with the business needs?

How this section is scored

Evaluators look for a summary of the solution, the logic that supports it, and details about how the plan was implemented to assess how well you demonstrated strategic thinking and problem-solving skills.

Ask yourself:

- Did I discuss the approach and the process, and is it well thought out and implemented?
- Are key messages defined? Are they appropriate?
- Did I define what is relevant to the audience and likely to trigger a response?
- Did I discuss why I chose particular tactics, media and distribution channels?
- Is the strategy aligned with the business needs?

A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- Describe how the plan was developed and implemented.
- Explain the entrant's rationale and strategic thinking.
- Include key messages and a high-level tactical implementation plan.
- Be aligned with the business need.



Entries are scored up for:

- Well-explained rationale linking audiences and objectives to tactics and vehicles.
- Sound explanation supporting choices, which may include evaluating other options.
- Discussion of the links to business needs.
- Inclusion of stakeholder input.
- A plan that is clearly appropriate.
- Highly creative or innovative approach.
- A summary of the tactical implementation plan listing the audience, key messages, tactics or communication vehicle and timeline.

Entries are scored down if:

- The plan fails to explain what was done or why.
- The plan doesn't seem likely to achieve the objectives.
- Presents a dated approach to a standard communication problem.
- Key messages are missing.
- The plan doesn't address the business need.
- The tactical implementation plan is sparse or missing.



Section 4: Solution Overview

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
<p>Solution increases the highest level of professional standards of creativity, innovation or resource utilization</p> <p>Thorough explanation of potential for outstanding results</p> <p>An effective communication solution not heard of before</p>	<p>Unique and effective approach to meet business need</p> <p>Key messages well thought out, creatively stated, and linked to audience segment</p> <p>Explanation of potential for significant results</p> <p>Explanation of how scarce resources to produce significant results</p> <p>Explanation of how the solution is likely to deliver results for multiple business needs</p> <p>Demonstrates innovative approach to collaboration or facilitation</p> <p>Addresses solutions for potential ethical issues</p>	<p>Thorough explanation of how solution links to business need, audiences, and objectives</p> <p>Key messages aligned to audience <u>and</u> organization's business priorities</p> <p>Stakeholder input included</p> <p>Solution is highly likely to achieve stated objectives</p> <p>Summary of tactical plan lists audience, key messages, tactics</p> <p>Explains appropriate rationale and strategic thinking</p> <p>Research results inform the solution</p> <p>Potential ethical issues identified</p>	<p>Describes how plan developed and was implemented</p> <p>Entrants role explained</p> <p>Includes key messages that reinforce objectives</p> <p>Demonstrates collaboration with key stakeholders</p> <p>Solution aligned with business need and audience analysis</p> <p>Includes tactical implementation plan</p>	<p>No key messages</p> <p>Solution doesn't address business need</p> <p>Tactical plan sparse</p> <p>Solution not likely to meet stated objectives</p> <p>Rationale clearly inappropriate for business need or audience</p>	<p>Doesn't explain what was done</p> <p>Tactical plan missing</p> <p>Entrant did not play a key role in the project</p> <p>Does not address obvious ethical issues</p>	<p>No explanation of solution</p>



SECTION 5: Implementation and Challenges

Communication professionals often navigate through a variety of challenges such as tight deadlines, changes in direction, small budgets, stubborn decision makers and staff turnover. Challenges add complexity to project management. Efforts to successfully manage these issues are taken into account when scoring the entry. How well challenges are met speaks to the project management skill.

Evaluator questions

How well did the entrant manage issues related to budget and other resources, timing, direction, selling the solution to decision makers or other challenging issues? To what extent does the entrant:

- Provide a budget that seems reasonable given the organization and the scope of communication activities?
- Demonstrate that time and other resources were effectively used?
- Outline any challenges faced, and demonstrate that they were effectively managed?
- Demonstrate consultation with stakeholders including presentation of the plan to management?
- Provide evidence of direct involvement in the project?

How this section is scored

Your discussion of the program implementation and any challenges that you faced must be documented. Evaluators look for how budget, time and other resources were used. While the budget doesn't have to be detailed, a range must be included. Provide evidence that resources were used wisely, regardless of how limited or generous. Review limitations or challenges you managed including selling or implementing the idea. Demonstrate collaboration with stakeholders. Resources should seem appropriate for the scope of the project and the size of the organization. If you don't budget, the most your entry can score is 3 points, providing that you have addressed the use of other resources.

Avoid:

- Apologies for insufficient budget or excuses about limited resources.
- Use of media, vehicles or channels that don't suit the audience.
- Excessive use of resources without proper justification.

A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- Discuss how the project was managed, including stakeholder collaboration and involvement if appropriate.
- Provide a reasonable explanation of the resources available and used. Discuss budget, time, staff, consultants and other resources that may have been used.
- Note challenges encountered and how they were overcome.
- Explain how the plan was sold to management, the client or other stakeholders.
- Include a description of your role in the project

Entries are scored up for:

- A clever approach to selling the project.
- Good use of budget including effective use of a limited budget.



- Effective and appropriate use of internal and external resources.
- Innovative solutions to challenges leading to exceeding objectives.
- Work achieved under impossible deadlines or within tight budgets.

Entries are scored down if:

- Budget or resource information is not provided.
- Use of resources seems wasteful or inappropriate.
- There's no explanation about how the project was implemented.
- Deadlines are missed or the budget is exceeded, unless there is a reasonable explanation.
- Work clearly wasn't worth the time, effort and money



Section 5: Implementation and Challenges

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
A truly unique and creative approach to implementing the solution and delivering outstanding results that raises the professional standard	An innovative solution to challenges resulting in exceeding objectives that demonstrate the impact of communication on the business Thorough explanation of an innovative way to consult with audience members resulting in exceeding objectives significantly A thorough explanation of how effective use of limited resource(s) resulting in project that meets implementation plan Clever approach to selling the project to achieve approval or support	Explains the effective use of budget – got a lot done with few resources Demonstrates collaboration with stakeholders Plan implemented under difficult deadlines Effectively manages challenges enabling meeting objectives Work achieved under tight deadlines or budgets	Project budget and resources described Effective and appropriate use of internal and external resources Objectives met within budget Implementation plan met or reasonable explanation provided Content managed across multiple channels, if appropriate Explains how plan was sold to management, client or other stakeholders	Resource description not complete, some resources not included Media, vehicles or channels don't suit audience Inappropriate use of resources Missed deadlines or budget exceeded without reasonable explanation	No budget or resource discussion Excessive use of resources without proper justification Work is clearly not worth the time, effort or money	No budget or implementation plan



SECTION 6: Measurement and Evaluation

This is where the rubber meets the road! We want your work to demonstrate that strategic communication planning and execution is a vital business process. **That's why it's critical to set measurable objectives that are aligned with business needs, and then measure progress against them.**

When communicators can show management the value of their work in measurable terms, senior executives sit up and take notice, and the reputation of communication as an important business process increases.

Evaluator questions

How well were the communication objectives met? To what extent does the entrant:

- Align measurement with valid objectives?
- Demonstrate output-based results that measure increased volumes as an indicator of progress and/or outcome-based results that influence awareness, understanding, opinion, attitude, behaviors or business results?
- Provide a thorough evaluation that supports the results?
- In the case of student entries, provide a description of the ways program success would be measured.

How this section is scored

Did you track progress against the objectives set? Experienced entrants often report results against objectives in a table format by listing the original objectives, the targets, and the outcome or output as results.

Evaluators look for measurement of outputs (usually volume-based), and outcomes (measurements that influence audience awareness, opinions, behaviors or business goals). Measurements should be objective, clearly explained and appropriate for the project. The results should show the relationship between the objectives that were set and the results that were achieved. They should be thorough and convincing.

The program must deliver meaningful, measurable results. If you have set strong objectives and measured against them, scoring will be easy. If the original objectives were weak, your scores will not be high.

Your work plan will score lower if:

- There were no objectives or no meaningful objectives.
- You show clear evidence of success without an extensive evaluation process.
- The results were carefully measured but were below expectations. Be sure to provide rationale for objectives that were not met.

Avoid:

- Subjective results based on hearsay without documented evidence.
- Results that don't address the business need.
- Overly positive results that don't seem possible given the project description.



- Narrow, skimpy or vague results, or generalizations.
- Highlights that don't seem to paint the entire picture.
- Results reported only as outputs.

A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- Demonstrate alignment between the objectives and the measurement.
- Demonstrate appropriate measurement methodology, formal or informal – formal is best.
- Reference sample sizes if appropriate.
- Measure against the original benchmarks used to set objectives.
- Show credible results that support the business needs.
- Prove that the objectives were met through evaluation.
- Provide results that demonstrate that the strategy has influenced progress toward business goals.
- At minimum, state output-based results.

Entries are scored up for:

- Thorough evaluation and documentation of measures.
- Use of multiple measurement methods that clearly define results.
- Credible measurement of intangibles such as a media relations or reputation index, or brand or loyalty measurement.
- An executive summary is included among the work samples if a formal evaluation was done.
- Results that exceed targets.
- Results that demonstrate a positive impact on the business.
- Outcome-based results that positively influence awareness, understanding, opinion, attitude, behaviors or business results.

Entries are scored down if:

- The plan fails to report against the stated objectives.
- Results aren't statistically valid.
- The plan includes subjective measurement, or measurement without a source.
- There is a mismatch between objectives and qualitative or quantitative results.
- There is a misinterpretation of survey data.
- Results measure only whether a tactic has been completed.
- There is lack of measurement for each objective.
- The plan provides only anecdotal evaluation such as, "We heard that people were happy."
- Results don't relate to the audience or objectives such as, "My manager liked it."
- Results aren't meaningful to the business.

You will get some credit if evaluation plans are thoroughly outlined but haven't been carried out for a valid reason. You will score zero if objectives are not measured and the missing information is not explained.



Section 6: Measurement and Evaluation

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
Thorough and insightful explanation of measurement and evaluation that explains the positive impact this communication project had on the organization	Measurement encompasses multiple appropriate methodologies to thoroughly explain success Credible measurement of intangibles such as a media relations, reputation index, or loyalty	Results exceed objectives that have meaningful impact on business need Explains formal research conducted for measurement Multiple outcomes measured Work samples include executive summary of formal evaluation supporting results Includes summary explanation of evaluation and how project helped the business Demonstrates results presented to stakeholders Provides recommendations for improvement	Demonstrates alignment between measurement and objective Outcomes measured Includes proof that objectives were met through measurement and evaluation Appropriate measurement methodology Rationale speaks to objectives that weren't met	Results reported on only outputs Results measure only if tactic completed Results don't address business need or relate to audience Results generalized, vague, or anecdotal Results not statistically valid Research methodology doesn't meet industry standards Misinterpretation of survey data No measure for every objective	Results not reported against stated objectives Subjective results based on hearsay without documented evidence Results not meaningful to business	No measurement or evaluation



HOW TO PREPARE WORK SAMPLES (at least one and a maximum of five)

For Division 1 Communication Management

What to include in the work sample(s)

Preparing a work sample is like preparing a portfolio. Work sample elements demonstrate skill in strategic planning and execution. Material should be organized and presented in the same order as the questions answered for the work plan. Referencing the samples in the work plan or providing an explanation of the work samples provides evaluators the context for your chosen samples.

Work samples counts for 50 percent of the score in Communication Research Management, Communication Management, and Communication Education and Training divisions.

The work sample scoring is split into four sections:

- Stakeholder alignment and impact
- Alignment with objectives and strategy
- Professional execution
- Overall quality

IMPORTANT: Work samples are scored separately from the work plan, but it's hard for samples to get a high score if the plan didn't score well. **Make sure that the material in your work samples match the material described in your work plan.**

In Management, Research and Education divisions the work sample should include a representative sample of all project elements so that evaluators can review the material and determine how well it's aligned with the work plan. This might include a summary of the research, the strategic plan, tactical implementation plan, budget, measurements or evaluation, and sample material such as brochures, print or electronic ads or media clips, screen captures of websites, or a link to the website, Power Point presentations, scripts, publications or specific material referenced in your work plan.

Even though the Gold Quill Awards program process has moved online for both entrants and evaluators, please be mindful of your file sizes. You may upload a maximum of five (5) work sample files. Your work sample files must be in PDF, PNG, JPG, GIF, MP4, WMV, M4V formats. If you have more than five (5) files, please combine them into fewer PDF files. Each file is limited to 2 GB (2,000 MB) in size.

When evaluators review the work sample material they will look at it as objectively as possible through the eyes of your intended audience and take the overall strategy into account.

For information about which file formats are accepted and how to convert large files please reference the IABC Gold Quill Awards website at gq.iabc.com.

Make sure to label and organize your work samples to assist evaluators in knowing what they are reviewing.



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SECTION 7: Stakeholder Alignment and Influence

Connecting with the audience in a meaningful and memorable way is an important competency in communication work. Strategic planning is only part of the equation. Messages, vehicles and channels must be aligned with audience needs and preferences because if the audience doesn't get the message in a clear, consistent and creative way, everything else is academic.

Evaluator questions

How well do the work samples reflect the audience characteristics, needs and preferences? To what extent does the entrant:

- Demonstrate good choices of messages, media and communication channels that align with the audience analysis?
- Include messages that engage the intellect and/or emotions of the audience, and influence thoughts or behaviors?
- Integrate key messages, communication vehicles and channels to achieve consistency?

How this section is scored

Evaluators look for a match between the way the audience was described and the way that the program was executed based on the following guidelines:

- Is the language level appropriate for the audience?
- For an older audience, are the font sizes adequate?
- For an audience that has little time, is the copy concise?
- Does the choice of vehicle match the audience's needs?
- What about the communication channels used to deliver the message?
- Are the messages clear, concise, credible, consistent and creative?
- Is the information relevant and meaningful to the business need?

If the needs of the audience were poorly identified, it will be tough to score well in this section. If you're entering a media relations strategy, communication training program, an audit or another program that doesn't lend itself to outstanding visuals or audio, it is not likely to have the same creative appeal as a marketing or community relations campaign. However, creativity can be found in unusual approaches or innovative thinking, and if this is the case, it still counts toward creativity points. The following basic benchmarks apply.

A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- Demonstrate choices appropriate to the audience.
- Use clear and consistent language.
- Be well written and well produced.
- Reflect a clear understanding of audience characteristics and needs.
- Communicate the key messages in a way that is likely to resonate with the audience.

Entries are scored up for:

- Particularly good choices matching audience characteristics.
- Messages that clearly impact the audience.
- Strong writing and execution that is likely to connect emotionally with the audience.



- Integrated vehicles and channels.
- Creative thinking, imagination or innovative approaches certain to engage audiences emotionally.

Entries are scored down if:

- Language, graphics or design is too complex or inappropriate.
- Messages patronize or insult the audience.
- Messages are not clear, or the material is overwritten or too bureaucratic.
- Key messages aren't evident.
- Work sample elements are bland and may get lost in clutter



Section 7: Stakeholder Alignment and Influence

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
Extraordinary example of connecting to audience in meaningful and memorable way that impacts the business positively	Smart thinking that shows the audience perspective Demonstrates creative thinking, imagination or an innovative approach certain to engage audience emotionally	Particularly good choices matching audience characteristics (language, font size, vehicle choice, channels) The materials in the work sample are highly likely to capture audience attention and engage them Sample aligns to audience research	Demonstrates choices appropriate to audiences (language, font size, vehicle choice, channels) Uses clear, consistent language. Reflects an understanding of audience characteristics and needs Communicates key messages in way likely to resonate with audience	Choices inappropriate to audience (language, font size, vehicle choice, channels) Key messages not likely to connect with audience Work sample elements are bland and likely to get lost in clutter	Messages insult audience Key messages not clear or not included Material clearly insensitive to cultural values and beliefs	All work sample elements clearly not appropriate for audience as describe



SECTION 8: Alignment with Objectives and Strategy

The work sample(s) must support the objectives stated in the work plan. Strategic execution is not strategic unless it supports the needs of the business, connects with the audience, and makes an impact. This should be clear in everything presented from research to language choices, media, messages, images, vehicles and communication channels.

Evaluator questions

How well is the work sample aligned with the objectives stated in the work plan? To what extent does the entrant:

- Provide evidence that program design is on strategy, and is consistent with business needs?
- Demonstrate that work sample elements are clear, consistent, and communicated in a powerful, emotional way?
- Demonstrate that work sample elements reflect the objectives, strategic thinking, key messages and audience analysis as presented in the work plan?
- Provide clear evidence that the work sample has the desired effect on the audience and the business needs?

How this section is scored

It should be clear why certain design, style or visual elements were used. The communication material should be clear, consistent and address the communication need. For example, if an objective was to increase employee awareness of company benefits, the writing and design of each campaign element should be aligned with the need.

Evaluators will look for:

- Choices that support the objectives.
- Clear, consistent messages related to objectives.
- Effective communication.
- Use of key messages listed in the work plan.

A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- Reflect the objectives set out in the work plan.
- Contain clear key messages.
- Demonstrate choices that support the needs of the business.
- Be deliberately targeted to close any gaps defined by the research.
- Align with the business needs to support the achievement of goals and objectives.



Entries are scored up if:

- The work sample is designed and produced to achieve the project's objectives.
- Support material and design elements are appropriate for the audience, and aligned with the business need and brand identity.
- The work is clear, consistent and clever, and communicates the key messages in a powerful, emotional way.
- The sample fully reflects the objectives and strategic thinking presented in the plan.
- The work is an extraordinary example of meeting business needs in meaningful and memorable ways

Entries are scored down if:

- Key messages don't appear in the work sample(s).
- The work is out-of-sync with the organization's brand, unless there's an explanation.
- Messaging isn't consistent.
- Extra elements in the sample(s) distract from the objectives.
- The samples don't show what was done.
- The samples are incomplete, confusing or poorly presented or explained.
- There is an obvious mismatch, such as an emphasis on the wrong audience or too much focus on executive egos and not enough on audience needs.



Section 8: Alignment with Objectives and Strategy

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
Extraordinary example of meeting business needs and stated objectives in meaningful and memorable way that impacts the business positively	<p>Likely to significantly exceed stated objectives based on work samples</p> <p>Creative elements of work sample strategically aligned to business need</p> <p>The work demonstrates complete alignment from business need, objectives, stakeholder analysis, and solution</p> <p>Work sample contains explanation of how each element contributes to the work plan</p>	<p>Work sample likely to exceed stated objectives and drive business success</p> <p>Work is clear, consistent and clever, communicating key messages in powerful, emotional way</p> <p>Sample fully explains and reflects the objectives and strategic thinking presented in the work plan.</p>	<p>The work sample demonstrates the implementation of the plan</p> <p>Reflects the stated objectives in the work plan</p> <p>Contains identified key messages and linked to goals and objectives</p> <p>Demonstrates choices that support business needs</p> <p>Deliberately targeted to close any gaps defined by research</p> <p>Aligns with business needs to support achieving goals and objectives</p>	<p>Key messages not reflected in work sample elements</p> <p>Work is out of sync with the organization's brand or identity</p> <p>Messages aren't consistent</p> <p>Extra elements in the sample distract from the objectives</p>	<p>Sample doesn't show what was done</p> <p>Sample is incomplete, confusing, or poorly presented or explained</p>	Sample will clearly not accomplish stated objectives



SECTION 9: Professional Execution

Well-designed and implemented communication work helps to build professional reputation and credibility. Without carefully crafted vehicles, even the best strategy may fail to deliver messages that connect with the audience. Paying attention to industry standards and keeping up with leading edge thinking, processes and production demonstrates commitment to effective communication.

On average, people are tapped by more than 500 information sources a day, and they will shut down if a message doesn't grab their attention. Good creative work answers the questions "What's in it for me?" and "Why should I care?" in a way that connects emotionally with the audience. Whether the project is a multimedia advertising campaign or a government relations strategy, creative thinking, imagination and innovative approaches will cut through today's information overload and command audience attention.

Evaluator questions

Given the budget and resources, how well does the work sample measure up to professional standards? To what extent does the entrant:

- Provide well-designed work samples that are likely to build reputation while delivering meaningful results?
- Offer evidence of alignment with business and audience needs?
- Demonstrate high-quality writing and production within budget and resource considerations?
- Demonstrate consistency between what was presented in the work plan and what was delivered?

How this section is scored

Work must demonstrate alignment with business needs and audience preferences. Evaluators will take note of new or different approaches. Aside from a great print ad or television commercial, there are other ways to express creativity and imagination. It could be that you have presented a new way to use research findings, or demonstrate innovative thinking through audience segmentation or choice of communication channels.

Would this entry survive the competition given the kind of communication normally directed to the audiences described?

The work sample(s) should showcase quality material. If the budget was skimpy, present the best job possible within the budget constraints. If the budget was generous, the production quality should reflect an investment in higher quality products.

Evaluators watch for clear, consistent, error-free writing; high-quality photography; adherence to design principles; and well-produced video. If the entry is an audit or a proposal, evaluators will look for clear writing, an easy to follow structure, charts, graphs, illustrations and appropriate research methodology.

IABC allows for cultural differences when evaluating work from different parts of the world.

A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- Contain quality production values appropriate to the media and the budget.



- Reflect professional standards of ethics and good taste.
- Align with audience needs and preferences, as well as the business needs.
- Include methods, messages, visuals and channels that are aligned with audience characteristics and preferences.
- Include work samples that match the description in the work plan.
- Demonstrate clear, consistent use of language, visuals and other elements that support the brand, communicate the business need, and support the achievement of communication objectives.
- Demonstrate a fairly standard approach that is well executed.

Entries are scored up for:

- High-quality writing and superior production values.
- Strong images that convey key messages.
- Work that inspires an emotional connection.
- Thorough documentation that supports the description of the project in the work plan.
- Clever, strategic work that's appropriate for the audience and likely to leave a lasting impression.
- Work that increases the professional standards for the medium and channels selected

Entries are scored down for:

- Amateur work or dated approaches unless supported by strategy.
- Inconsistent use of images and language.
- Poor technical production.
- Excess spending not likely to achieve results.
- Images, writing tone or style that doesn't match business or audience needs.
- An overused approach or one that's likely to bore the audience.
- An approach that clearly would not work.
- Work that insults the audience or is inappropriate.



Section 9: Professional Execution

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
<p>An example that increases professional standards of creativity, innovation or use of resources</p> <p>A novel and effective approach aligned to the business, stakeholders, industry/profession, and community</p>	<p>Thorough documentation that supports the description of the project in work plan</p> <p>Clever approach to communication that is appropriate for audience</p> <p>Stands out among others</p> <p>Likely to leave lasting impression</p>	<p>High quality writing superior production values</p> <p>Strong images that convey key messages</p> <p>Work that clearly explains the emotional connection made with the audience</p> <p>Professionally executed with scarce resources</p>	<p>Production values appropriate to media and budget</p> <p>Professional standards of ethics and good taste</p> <p>Clear, consistent messages aligned with brand</p> <p>Consistent use of language, visuals and other elements</p> <p>A well-executed fairly standard approach</p>	<p>Amateur work</p> <p>Dated approach for industry, geography, or media</p> <p>Poor technical production</p> <p>A few spelling, grammar or structure errors</p> <p>Resources not defined</p>	<p>Images, writing tone or style that doesn't match business or audience need</p> <p>An approach that clearly will not work</p> <p>Work insults the audience</p> <p>Several spelling, grammar or structure errors</p>	<p>An approach that clearly will not work</p>



SECTION 10: Overall Quality

The work plan and the work samples must be aligned. You must demonstrate that you applied the research and analytical thinking to the execution of your strategy. If the work plan describes the context, challenges and solution for the communication opportunity, the work sample should demonstrate that the strategy was carried out. Strategic execution is essential to great communication work.

Evaluator questions

Given the interdependence among all sections, to what degree is the entry a strong blueprint for strategic planning and execution? To what extent does the entrant:

- Provide a well-written and produced entry that's easy to understand?
- Offer a representative sample of all the elements and support material described in the plan?
- Demonstrate strategic and creative thinking as well as approaches that take the audience and business needs into account?
- Demonstrate the ability of communication to influence valid business results?

How this section is scored

There must be a strong connection between the work plan and the work sample(s). The work samples must not only look organized, but they must be strategic. If the work samples are weak although the work plan is good, the entry's score will reflect that weakness.

Consider the following:

- Does the work sample contain all or most of the elements referred to in the work plan?
- Is it easy to assess that the work sample is a logical, detailed presentation of the work plan?

A professionally competent entry earns a score of 4. It should:

- Provide an overall quality product aligned with the objectives.
- Demonstrate a comprehensive but not overbearing presentation of the elements described in the work plan.
- Provide evidence that as much care and attention was devoted to delivering the tactical elements of the plan as went into developing the plan itself.
- Include a work samples that reinforce the work plan and contribute to the overall quality of the entry.
- Demonstrate consistency between the work plan (what you said you would deliver) and the work sample (what you actually delivered).



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Entries are scored up for:

- Representing most or all of the elements referenced in the work plan.
- Creative execution, processes, and approaches that take the audience and business needs into account.
- Demonstration of excellence in strategic planning and execution throughout the entry.
- A comprehensive sample or samples.

Entries are scored down if:

- A sample doesn't match the plan or reflect the business or audience needs.
- Inconsistency or lack of clarity occurs between the work plan and the execution.
- Within cultural considerations, spelling, grammatical or structural errors occur.
- There is a demonstration of poor work, including lack of proofreading, poor photography and poor technical production.
- Work plan doesn't follow IABC format



Section 10: Overall Quality

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Insightful, outstanding results	Innovative, significant results	Aligned, meaningful results	Professionally competent execution and results	Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing	Inadequate, significant elements missing	Poor, wrong
Demonstrates an outstanding example of a unique, innovative and highly effective approach to communication with a thorough explanation of how it influences business results	Thorough explanation of what was done Demonstrates excellence in execution Explains significant business results Highly innovative approach	Comprehensive and representative sample reflecting the work plan Demonstrates and explains a meaningful business result	Work samples match description in work plan Clearly shows what was done for the project Reinforces work plan Provides evidence of care and attention to delivering the tactical elements of the plan Contributes to overall quality of entry	Work samples don't match plan Work samples don't reflect the business or audience needs Work sample elements are extremely long showing entire project rather than representing the project Work plan doesn't follow IABC format	The work samples are significantly different from the work plan	No work sample included