

# How to Create an IABC Awards Entry in 24 Hours

Never Before Published Tips and Insights



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## Quick tips:

Use two columns to state your tombstone data. It takes less space.

Put your objectives, action plan and results in a table format. It saves space and makes it easy for evaluators to review.

After you have edited as tightly as possible, if you find yourself crammed for space in four pages, use the space between paragraphs to create more room. Click on Format, then Paragraph, and select exactly .6 from the line spacing function.

Delete all adjectives that don't add anything to the content.

Delete all verbal padding such as "in order to or as a result", and replace with a shorter words such as "to or because."

Preparing an IABC awards entry seems like a daunting task.

First there's all the company information and file after file of the communication work you did to deliver the project. Then there's the IABC material to sort through; guidelines, tools, rules, a score sheet and a seven-point scale.

On top of that, there's the work you do everyday filled with deadlines, approvals, revisions, and more approvals and revisions.

Most communication professionals embrace the reality that work we do isn't a 9 to 5 job. We need to carve out family time, chief cook and bottle washer time, relationship building time, walk the dog time, and then wedge "me" time. No wonder you're exhausted!

When would you ever find time to prepare an award entry?

Good news. Help is on the way. These shortcuts will help you get your entry together in 12 hours or less. Here goes:

### 1. Copy all project material into one file on your desktop so you don't have to hunt for it.

Download and print the [Midas Touch Guide](#) and the [score sheet](#) from the [Gold Quill website](#).

### 2. Start with your work plan.

Complete the tombstone data, and then create an outline of all the major headings for the work plan using the Midas Touch Guide.

Your tombstone data should look like this:

<b>Entrant:</b>	<b>Division and Category:</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	<b>Entry Title:</b>
<b>Time period:</b>	<b>Entrant's Role:</b>

### Brief Description:

Keep the project description to one or two sentences. You really don't need two paragraphs because you're going to tell your story in the body of the work plan. With only four pages to work in, chances are you'll be fighting for space so make it easy on yourself.

### 3. Your major headings should be:

- Business Need/Opportunity
- Stakeholder Analysis
- Goals and Objectives
- Solution Overview
- Implementation and Challenges
- Measurement and Evaluation

Now you have a template for your work plan!

### 4. Where to quickly find information

Find the overview of your company either in a document or on the company website and copy and paste it into the Business Need or Opportunity Section.

5. **If your research highlights are in a different document, copy and paste them into the Business Need or Opportunity or Audience Analysis section, wherever they seem to fit best.**
6. **Copy and paste the relevant sections from your communication plan under the appropriate headings.** If your communication plan is already based on the IABC strategic planning model, this may be all the information you need.
7. **Copy and paste your action plan into the Implementation and Challenges section.** I don't know one communication professional who automatically records challenges. They're in your head and you'll have to write them from scratch, but leave it for now.
8. **Copy and paste your measurement highlights into the Measurement and Evaluation section.**

If you have followed these instructions, your document is probably about 12 to 15 pages long. No sweat. Now you're ready to start editing.

Editing your work plan down to four pages while meeting all the criteria is the toughest job in putting an entry together. However, if you started with a great communication plan, this task will be much easier.

The best way to edit a work plan is section by section, using the Midas Touch to guide your thinking. So let's get down to brass tacks and edit down to four pages, shall we?

## **Business Need or Opportunity**

***Rule number 1: Never take anything for granted.***

Set the context for your entry by describing how your communication project supported the needs of the business. Pretend that the evaluator reviewing your entry knows nothing about your organization or the business environment in which it operates. In fact, the person evaluating your entry could be from a different country or continent, come from a different culture or work in a different industry.

Be a storyteller and set the scene. Make sure that the business need is clear, and link the communication solution to the need. Sub-headings – **Business Need** and **Communication Opportunity** – will keep you focused. If you have research or key business indicators like market share, employee engagement or media favourability scores, or other information that measures business success, this is a good place to include them.

## **Stakeholder Analysis**

***Rule number 2: There's no such thing as the general public***

List your audiences and tell the evaluator something about them that influenced the decisions you made as you developed your communication plan.

If you have research that benchmarked opinions, attitudes, knowledge, preferences, demographics, psychographic information or anything at all that provides insight to the audience needs or expectations, this is the place to use it.





Edit the copy that you pasted into your template and make it short and sweet while capturing the key points.

If you didn't use any audience research (formal or informal), writing this section might be a challenge. All is not lost. Using your analytical brain, think backwards. You might instinctively know the characteristics of your audience. Gather the data and cite the source.

### **Goals and Objectives**

#### ***Rule number 3: Make it count***

There's a good discussion of goals objectives in the Midas Touch Guide. Have a look, and if you haven't already done so, write them so that they are strategic and measure the impact of communication on business results.

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

**Outcome-based objectives** measure what the audience will gain by way of awareness, understanding, recall, different perceptions, and quantifiable change in attitudes, opinions and behaviours. Was the message heard? Is the audience engaged? Did they read the information? How many phone calls were received or requests for information? 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.

## Worried about sharing competitive information?

All IABC evaluators are governed by IABC's Code of Ethics, and adhere to the following guidelines:

### Conflict of interest

Evaluators may not review or participate in discussions about their own entry or that of a colleague or friend, an employee, client or supplier for their home organization. You may not evaluate an entry from a competitor or any other entry that may compromise your ability to be impartial.

Don't check the box on the entry form that gives IABC permission to use the entry, and add © 2013 (name of company or individual). All Rights Reserved.



List your objectives in a table format, for example:

Audience	Objective	Benchmark	Meet	Type
Members	Increase positive opinion of reputation	65%	75%	Outcome
	Increase positive opinion of financial strength	70%	80%	Outcome
	Improve awareness of diversification	7%	15%	Outcome
Investors	Create awareness of share offering	3%	75%	Outcome
	Increase awareness of financial strength	40%	75%	Outcome

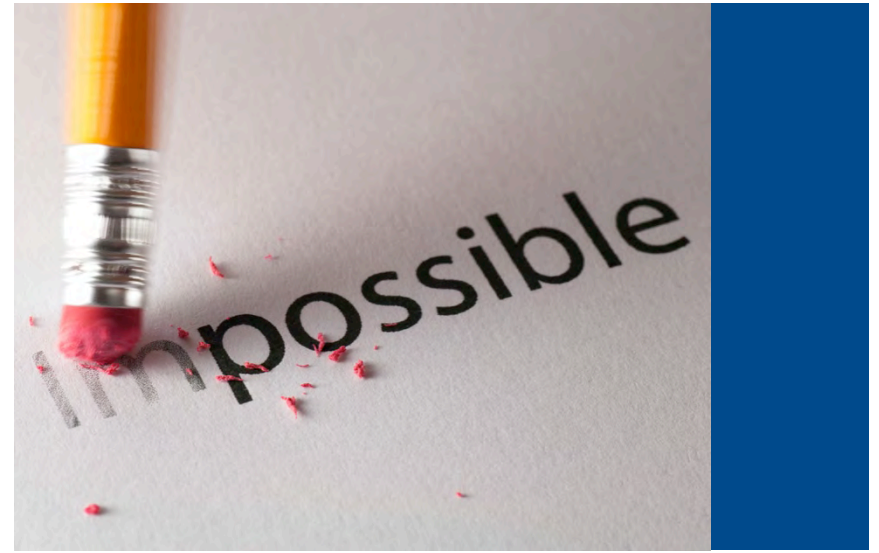
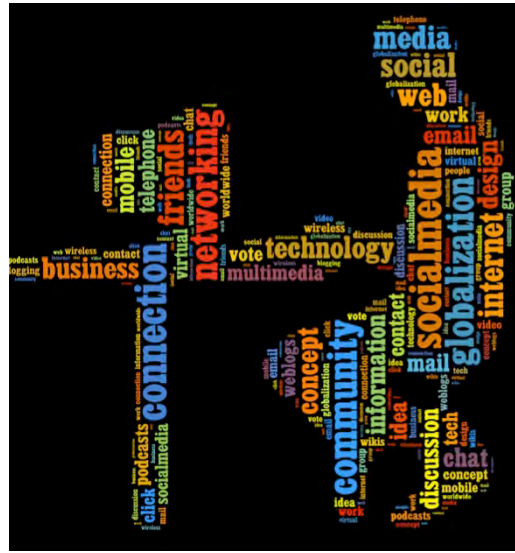
Be careful not to confuse what success looks like with how it was done. Launching and advertising campaign, holding a special event or meeting a budget is not an objective.

## Solution Overview

**Rule number 4: Give 'em the straight goods.**

This is the easy part! Tell evaluators what you did, why, and how you did it. Explain your strategic thinking and the approach that you took to solving the problem. You might have conducted or analyzed research, done focus groups, developed a clever creative approach, or held town hall meetings. Link your tactics to the audience analysis and the business need.

**For example:** Research showed that 80 per cent of employees believed that senior management wasn't accessible. Accessibility is a key driver of employee engagement. We created tools explaining the business strategy for use in small group meetings, and an online forum where employees could ask any question and the answers would be published.



Create another chart for your tactical implementation plan. It doesn't need to be detailed – just key milestones lined up with the audience, communication channel and vehicles, timing and key messages – something like this:

Audience	Key Messages	Channels	Vehicles	Timing (2012)
Members	XYZ company is committed to meeting your highest expectations.	Website Direct mail Broadcast media	Customer promise Brochures Television campaign	June 2012 June - August June – August

## Implementation and Challenges

### *Rule number 5: Share the inside story*

This is an easy section to write. Outline how you implemented your project because this section rates your project management skills. Did you use subject matter experts? Did you consult with management and take their direction into account? What was your budget? Don't forget to reference your in-house resources.

Tight deadlines, changes in direction, small budgets, stubborn decision makers, staff turn over, communicating in multiples languages and other issues may have changed the way you managed the project implementation. Summarize these issues. Reference the Midas Touch Guide so you can score maximum points. Remember, scores of 7 or 1 and 2 are extremely rare.

Worried about sharing budget?

Go with a high level overview. State the overall budget and break it down into the major buckets like consulting or agency fees, production, distribution costs, whatever makes sense to you. If you don't share budget at all the highest score you'll earn is 3, providing that you discuss the use of other resources.



## Measurement and Evaluation

### *Rule number 6: Share your results!*

We're almost there. Go get the chart you included in Goals and Objectives and copy and paste it into this section. Change the last column.

Audience	Objective	Benchmark	Meet	Result
Members	Increase positive opinion of reputation	65%	75%	85%
	Increase positive opinion of financial strength	70%	80%	85%
	Improve awareness of diversification advantages	7%	15%	25%
Investors	Create awareness of share offering	3%	75%	90%
	Increase awareness of financial strength	40%	75%	80%

Now add any other information that supports your success in bullet format. Give the work plan another read and edit it again until it's polished to perfection.

### **No budget for measurement?**

Sadly, some organizations don't value measuring the impact of communication and marketing activities on business results. If this affects your project, measure what you can report it in this section. Tell the evaluators how you would have measured against your objectives if money wasn't a barrier. You'll still earn points.

Congratulations! You're done with your work plan. **On to the work sample!**

# Work Samples Made Simple



Remember all that work you copied to a folder on your desktop? Great! It's time to assemble your work sample.

First, create title pages for each of your sections. What you name them depends on the category you're entering.

Your work sample might include:

- An executive summary of your benchmark research (if available).
- Your communication plan and action (implementation) plan.
- Communication samples, including any scripts, media buys, brochures or other print material, screen captures of online marketing or communication, photos of outdoor or indoor advertising, specialty items, a representative sample of media coverage, or events, internal communication elements or proof of anything you did to implement your strategic plan.
- An executive summary of your measurement and evaluation items.

So far, so good!

Now, zip those all up in a PDF. You will need a program to do that, and can download a trial version at

[http://www.adobe.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?product=acrobot\\_pro&loc=us](http://www.adobe.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?product=acrobot_pro&loc=us).

If you work on a Mac, the ability is built to the Preview application.

## It's your turn!

If you have questions please email [recognition@iabc.com](mailto:recognition@iabc.com). We'll look after you pronto!