



International Association of Business Communicators

Evaluating Excellence A Guide for IABC Award Evaluators

This guide applies to:

[Division 1: Communication Management](#)

[Division 2: Communication Training and Education](#)

[Division 3: Communication Research](#)

Introduction

As an evaluator in the IABC award programs, you have the opportunity to positively influence the professional development of entrants, contribute to the communication profession and enhance your own strategic communication skills.

Throughout this guide you will learn what IABC specifically looks for in award entries allowing for consistent application and interpretation of criteria across our large number of evaluators.

What you'll learn:

- How to evaluate award entries using the IABC Seven-point Scale of Excellence
- How to meet the global standard of excellence for strategic planning and execution
- Knowledge to help you plan and execute communication strategies

An entry in the Communication Management Division consists of a work plan and work samples. Work plans may be four pages. Margins must be at least half an inch on all sides and fonts may be no smaller than 10 point. Up to five work samples are allowed.

Disqualification

IABC prefers not to disqualify entries. The final decision to disqualify an entry belongs to the Awards Director for chapter and regional programs and to the Gold Quill Award Chair. Discuss entries that you believe should be disqualified with the appropriate individual.

Entries may be disqualified if

- the work plan exceeds four pages
- it violates the IABC Code of Ethics
- it is obvious the entrant did not play a role in the project

Entries entered in the wrong category may be reassigned to another category by the IABC staff evaluator coordinator for chapter and regional programs or by the Gold Quill Awards Chair. Discuss any entries you feel are in the wrong category with the appropriate individual.

Delivering Feedback

Your feedback to the entrant serves as a valuable professional development opportunity. Feedback is required for each section of the score sheet. Use the performance criteria areas on the scoring rubrics as reference points for providing feedback. Feedback specific to the entry project or program will help the entrant improve their communication skills. Use your experience and expertise to provide constructive advice.

Meet the IABC Seven-point Scale of Excellence

| | |
|---|--|
| 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 mission, 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 |

Scoring an Entry

IABC sets the award scoring criteria based on the IABC Standards of Excellence. Performance dimensions within the criteria 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 Certification program.

Score an entry by selecting the box on the rubric most closely representing the performance for each of the ten areas on the score sheet. If the entry meets the performance dimension in multiple boxes use the score that represents either the majority of the dimensions met or the mid-point. Half points may be given.

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. The performance dimensions on the rubrics represent this IABC Seven-point Scale of Excellence.

Scores to achieve awards are:

| | Award of Merit | Award of Excellence |
|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| International Gold Quill award | 5.25 | 5.75 |
| Regional award | 5.12 | 5.25 |
| Chapter award | 5.0 | 5.12 |

How to Evaluate Entries in Division 1 Communication Management

The Communication Management division covers project, 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 healthcare. 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.

It is not enough for entries in the Communication Management division to explain what and how the plan was developed and implemented. The entry must explain the links between the business need, stakeholder analysis, goals and objectives, and solution. They must explain the “why” of the planning and implementations to demonstrate their understanding of strategic communication planning and execution. As an evaluator do not make assumptions within an entry. Look for the entrant to provide the explanations.

How to Evaluate Entries in the Division 2 Communication Research

Entries in this division recognize the importance of research and measurement as a foundation for strategic communication work and a competency that’s integral to success throughout the career of a communication professional.

Following the same work plan format as Division 1 Communication Management, the entrant should explain the business need for the research, how it benefits the organization, stakeholder analysis and the research solution. The goals and objectives should support the business need for the research. As with Division 1, entrants must explain why they made the decisions during both the planning and implementation phases of the project.

How to Evaluate Entries in Division 3 Communication Training and Education

This division recognizes the mentorship and education role of consultants and senior communicators in developing and delivering workshops, classes, seminars or training that educates an audience about any aspect of the communication profession. This division includes all communication disciplines and professional competencies.

Following the same work plan format as Division 1 Communication Management, entrants should explain the business need for the training and education and how it helps the organization. The training and education should be aligned with the audience. Goals and objectives should reflect the business need and audience analysis.

How to Evaluate Student Entries in Divisions, 1, 2, and 3

A student or a group of students may submit entries. At the time the work was created, the student must have been attending school full time or part time, working toward a degree at a college, university or other educational institution. Entrants who were enrolled as a student but have professional communication experience or are employed in the communication profession must submit their entry as a professional member or non-member.

Work produced for educational courses, a club or volunteer association, an internship, or commercial and non-commercial activities, including work for an IABC chapter or region, is eligible for submission.

If the assignment was not fully implemented, the student should make note of this for the evaluators. The student should provide an explanation of how the program would have been evaluated, had it been implemented in practice. Base your evaluation of implementation on that explanation.

Score sheet Sections for Divisions 1, 2, and 3

Work Plan: represents strategic planning

- Section 1: Business Need and Communication Opportunity
- Section 2: Stakeholder Analysis
- Section 3: Goals and Objectives
- Section 4: Solution Overview
- Section 5: Implementation and Challenges
- Section 6: Measurement and Evaluation

Work Sample: represents implementing the plan

- Section 7: Stakeholder Alignment and Influence
- Section 8: Alignment with Objectives and Strategy
- Section 9: Professional Execution
- Section 10: Overall Quality

Evaluating the Work Plan

The work plan is an executive summary of the communication strategy. It can be no more than four pages with one-half inch margins and a 10-point minimum font size.

The format for the work plan is provided to entrants. If you come across work plans not following the IABC format, score the entry. Quite often these entries miss providing essential information. Make note in Section 10: Overall Quality that the format is not suitable and give it the score of “3” for that section following the performance criteria in the rubric.

The same program or elements of a program can be entered in multiple categories. Work plans should be tailored to the category. Check that objectives are appropriate for the category.

A work sample that contains an extension of the work plan should not be taken into account when scoring the work plan. There is a four-page maximum length to the work plan. An entrant should not provide more explanation in the guise of a work sample. If you come across this, provide feedback in Section 10: Overall Quality.

Evaluating the Work Sample

Entrants are allowed to submit up to five files in the work sample. The work sample counts for 50 percent of the score. It’s hard for a sample to score high if the plan didn’t score well. Look for how well the product matches the plan and the strength of the product.

Work sample elements should demonstrate skill in strategic planning and execution. Material should be organized and presented in the same order as the questions were answered for the work plan. Look for a summary of the research, strategic plan, tactical implementation plan, budget, measurements or evaluation, and creative samples.

Look for a representative sample of actual, real examples of the work completed. Based on the performance criteria in the rubric, a well-organized work sample that demonstrates the very best efforts scores higher than an overwhelming number of items that evaluators can't sort through.

A work sample that is an extension of the work plan should not be taken into account when scoring the work plan. There is a four-page maximum length to the work plan. An entrant should not provide more explanation in the guise of a work sample. If you come across this, provide feedback in Section 10: Overall Quality.

Approach the evaluation of the work sample objectively taking the overall strategy into account. See the work through the eyes of the intended audience. Given the entrant's description, is the work likely to connect with them in a meaningful way? Avoid evaluating the material based on your personal preferences. If the entry is in a category that doesn't lend itself to visuals or audio, it may not have the same creative impact as a very visual campaign. Creativity can be found in unusual approaches or innovative thinking.

Section 1: Business Need and Communication Opportunity

Why it's important: 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 communication strategy addresses the right issues and audiences. A good description of the business need sets the stage for the rest of the work plan.

How to Score: The opportunity should be aligned with the business need(s) and mandate. It should be clear why the project was carried out. The opportunity should solve a problem, fill a need, or help to leverage an opportunity. Ideally, the need is identified by formal or informal research and communication work positively influences business performance, now or in the future.

A. Explain the business and communications environment including specific challenges that have occurred.

B. Align the communication opportunity and the business need by explaining how the project helped the organization?

C. Use research to substantiate the business need and inform the direction of the communication opportunity?

| 7 Insightful, outstanding results | 6 Innovative, significant results | 5 Aligned, meaningful results | 4 Professionally competent execution and results | 3 Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing | 2 Inadequate, significant elements missing | 1 Poor, wrong |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-faceted explanation of how the need is strategically aligned to the business, stakeholders, industry/profession, and community The data supporting the need comes from more than one source Thorough research of business need includes history, current situation, size and scope show significant understanding of situation and how to proceed with solution(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superior explanation of the current business state including challenges and urgency driving the communication opportunity Superior explanation of how the opportunity addresses the need A thorough explanation of research, benchmarking and analysis of the business communication environment against the needs and opportunity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business needs are clear and strategically defined based on mission, values, goals, and brand Opportunity aligns to the organization's strategic direction, key performance indicators and business need Clear explanation of how opportunity positively impacts business performance now or in the future Challenges facing the business are explained The need is identified through formal or informal research. Research methodology is appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business needs are clearly defined and demonstrate an understanding of what they mean to the business Speaks to how the business need was defined Speaks to why the opportunity matters Speaks to how the opportunity helps the business Speaks to how the business need and communication opportunity were identified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business need is not well defined It is not clear why the project was undertaken Not clear how need and opportunity were defined Communication opportunity is not aligned with the business need Opportunity is generalized or vague such as management thought it would be a good idea | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no background on the organization and its business goals to set the context The business need is assumed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No explanation of the business need No explanation of the communication opportunity No explanation of how need or opportunity identified |

Section 2: Stakeholder Analysis

Why it's important: Effective communication doesn't occur until the audience receives and understands the message. Understanding the audience leads to effective communication strategy. 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 the objectives, messages, the approach, media or channels are on target.

How to score: 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 take the audience's needs, wants, preferences, opinions and behaviors into account and that they use the information to design their program.

A. Share relevant audience characteristics such as prior knowledge, education, geography, demographics, psychographics, preferences, attitudes, opinion, motivations, etc.

B. Include audience research that provides insight to the project?

C. Discuss how relevant research will influence the production of the communication vehicle?

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|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough explanation of how audience research drives decisions and what they mean to each audience segment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience segmentation clearly separates groups and identifies appropriate characteristics • Clear explanation of how the audience characteristics influence the solution • Thorough explanation of how audience research leads to decisions within project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superior explanation of characteristics allow appropriate decisions on strategy and tactics • A description demonstrates how the audience is linked to strategy and tactics • Informal or secondary research defines audience characteristics and needs • Speaks to how audience research leads to strategy and tactics • Audiences segmented in way that influences solution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience characteristics and mindset analyzed in relation to the communication opportunity • Audiences are listed with characteristics and needs that lead to choices of strategy, tactics, media, and channels • Speaks to how audience(s) and characteristics identified • Appropriate research methodology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audiences are listed with vague, unsupported assumptions about characteristics • Characteristics included are irrelevant to the project or audience • Misses an obvious audience in relation to identified need • Inappropriate research methodology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad publics or stakeholder groups listed without defining needs or characteristics • Wrong audience identified based on need • No mention of audience research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audiences not listed |

Section 3: Goals and Objectives

Why it's important: 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. Poor communication goals and objectives will lower the score in other parts of the evaluation.

How to score: Goals generally describe what the entrant wants to accomplish in a broad sense and do not need to be measurable. Strategies state how the goal will be achieved. Objectives are measurable preset targets for success. Look for outcome-based objectives measuring what the audience will gain by the way of awareness, understanding, recall, different perceptions, etc. Tactics describe the tools and channels used to achieve objectives. The work plan should clearly show the entrant understands the difference between goals, objectives and tactics. Appropriate preset objectives should define the project success. See additional information on Goals and Objectives in *Evaluating Excellence Guide*.

- A. Distinguish between objectives, tactics and an approach to the issue?**
- B. Establish measurable, relevant objectives that are stated as communication outcomes or outputs?**
- C. Align objectives with the stakeholder analysis and the business need?**
- D. Ensure that objectives will produce an effect on the stated business need?**

| 7 Insightful, outstanding results | 6 Innovative, significant results | 5 Aligned, meaningful results | 4 Professionally competent execution and results | 3 Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing | 2 Inadequate, significant elements missing | 1 Poor, wrong |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thoroughly explained and insightful approach to setting strategic goals and objectives leading to outstanding business results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate objectives are segmented by audience • “Stretch” goals and objectives set that are attainable, yet challenging • Explains how all stated, measurable objectives are aligned to business need • Targets stated for objectives are based upon research or benchmarks with a clear explanation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives stated using the SMART formula • Objectives are outcome-based and likely to deliver meaningful business results • Goals are clearly linked to the organizations mission, values, goals, strategic direction and brand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States overall big picture goal(s) • Specific outcome-based, measurable, meaningful objectives appropriate for the business need and category entered • Objectives demonstrate the impact of communication on the business • Objective targets are realistic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of goals, objectives and tactics not demonstrated • Objectives production, deadline-focused, or based on tactics such as produce a newsletter • Objectives all output-based • No preset targets for objectives • Objectives not realistic or achievable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives not measurable • Business need and communication opportunity doesn't provide any detail to evaluate if goals and objectives are appropriate • Objectives do not focus on the identified goal(s) or business need | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No goals or objectives |

Section 4: Solution Overview

Why it's important: The solution overview offers insight into how the entrant approached the opportunity. Looking at the communication environment, business and audience needs and relevant research, you should be able to evaluate whether and how the information informed the strategy.

How to score: Look for a summary of the solution, the logic that supports it, and details about how the plan was to be implemented. Assess how well the entrant demonstrates strategic thinking and problem-solving skills.

- A. Explain how the business needs, audiences and objectives are aligned with the strategic and/or creative approach, tactics, vehicles, media or communication channels?**
- B. Demonstrate that the audience analysis was taken into account in developing the key messages for each group identified?**
- C. Provide an executive summary of the action plan or tactical execution plan?**
- D. How well is the tactical execution plan aligned to deliver results against the stated objectives?**

| 7 Insightful, outstanding results | 6 Innovative, significant results | 5 Aligned, meaningful results | 4 Professionally competent execution and results | 3 Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing | 2 Inadequate, significant elements missing | 1 Poor, wrong |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solution increases the highest level of professional standards of creativity, innovation or resource utilization • Thorough explanation of potential for outstanding results • An effective communication solution not heard of before | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique and effective approach to meet business need • Key messages well thought out, creatively stated, and linked to audience segment • Explanation of potential for significant results • Explanation of how scarce resources to produce significant results • Explanation of how the solution is likely to deliver results for multiple business needs • Demonstrates innovative approach to collaboration or facilitation • Addresses solutions for potential ethical issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough explanation of how solution links to business need, audiences, and objectives • Key messages aligned to audience and organization's business priorities • Stakeholder input included • Solution is highly likely to achieve stated objectives • Summary of tactical plan lists audience, key messages, tactics • Explains appropriate rationale and strategic thinking • Research results inform the solution • Potential ethical issues identified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes how plan developed and implemented • Entrants role explained • Includes key messages that reinforce objectives • Demonstrates collaboration with key stakeholders • Solution aligned with business need and audience analysis • Includes tactical implementation plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No key messages • Solution doesn't address business need • Tactical plan sparse • Solution not likely to meet stated objectives • Rationale clearly inappropriate for business need or audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't explain what was done • Tactical plan missing • Entrant did not play a key role in the project • Does not address obvious ethical issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No explanation of solution |

Section 5: Implementation and Challenges

Why it's important: Communication professionals often navigate through a variety of challenges such as tight deadlines, changes in direction, small budgets, stubborn decision makers and staff turnover. How well challenges are met speaks to project management skills.

How to score: Evaluate the entrant's discussion of the program implementation and any challenges faced. Look for how budget, time and other resources were used. While budget doesn't have to be detailed, there must be a discussion of resources. Resources should be appropriate for the scope of the projects and size and type of organization. Take into account successfully managing challenges.

A. Provide a budget that seems reasonable.

B. Demonstrate that time and other resources were used effectively?

C. Outline any challenges faced and demonstrate that they were effectively managed?

D. Demonstrate consultation or collaboration with audience members or subject matter experts?

| 7 Insightful, outstanding results | 6 Innovative, significant results | 5 Aligned, meaningful results | 4 Professionally competent execution and results | 3 Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing | 2 Inadequate, significant elements missing | 1 Poor, wrong |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thorough explanation of how effective use of limited resource(s) resulting in project that meets implementation plan using a unique and creative approach while delivering outstanding results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An innovative solution to challenges result 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 • Clever approach to selling the project to achieve approval or support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives aligned to business need and stakeholders exceeded within budget • Demonstrates collaboration with stakeholders • Plan implemented under difficult deadlines • Effectively manages challenges enabling meeting objectives • Explains the effective use of budget – got a lot done with few resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project budget and resources included • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No budget or resource discussion • Excessive use of resources without proper justification • Work is clearly not worth the time, effort or money | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No budget or implementation plan |

Section 6: Measurement and Evaluation

Why it's important: We want our 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. Communicators must show management the value of their work in measurable terms.

How to score: The entrant should track progress against the stated objectives. Experienced entrants often report results against objectives in a table format by listing the original objectives, targets, and the outcome or output as results. Look for measurement of outputs (usually volume based) and outcomes (impacts audience awareness, opinion, behaviors or business goals). Measurement should be objective, clearly explained and appropriate for the project. The explanation of the relationship of the measurement to the preset objectives should be thorough and convincing. The program must deliver meaningful, measurable results. If the entrant set inappropriate objectives reflect that in your score and make a note in the feedback.

- A. Align measurement with valid objectives?**
- B. Demonstrate output or outcome-based results?**
- C. Provide a thorough evaluation that supports the results?**

| 7 Insightful, outstanding results | 6 Innovative, significant results | 5 Aligned, meaningful results | 4 Professionally competent execution and results | 3 Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing | 2 Inadequate, significant elements missing | 1 Poor, wrong |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough and insightful explanation of measurement and evaluation that explains the positive impact this communication project had on the organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurement encompasses multiple appropriate methodologies to thoroughly explain success • Credible measurement of intangibles such as a media relations, reputation index, or loyalty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results exceed objectives that have meaningful impact on business need • Explains formal research conducted • Credible results support business need • Multiple outcomes measured that influence progress toward business goals • Work sample includes executive summary of formal evaluation that supports the results • Includes summary explanation of evaluation and how project helped the business • Results impact business positively • Demonstrates results presented to stakeholders • Provides improvement recommendations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results not reported against stated objectives • Subjective results based on hearsay without documented evidence • Results not meaningful to business | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No measurement or evaluation |

Section 7: Stakeholder Alignment and Influence

Why it's important: 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 the audience must receive the message in a way that is clear, consistent and creative.

How to score: Look for a match between the way the audience was described and the way the program was executed. If the audience needs were poorly identified, it is tough to score this section high. Would the entry survive the competition given the kind of communication normally directed to the audiences described?

How well does the work sample reflect the audience characteristics, needs and preferences? To what extent did the entrant...

- A. Demonstrate good choices of messages, mediums, media and communications channels that align with the audience analysis?**
- B. Include messages that engage the intellect and/or emotions of the audience, and influence thoughts and behaviors?**
- C. Provide a thorough evaluation that supports the results?**

| 7 Insightful, outstanding results | 6 Innovative, significant results | 5 Aligned, meaningful results | 4 Professionally competent execution and results | 3 Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing | 2 Inadequate, significant elements missing | 1 Poor, wrong |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraordinary example of connecting to audience in meaningful and memorable way that impacts the business positively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart thinking that shows the audience perspective • Demonstrates creative thinking, imagination or an innovative approach certain to engage audience emotionally | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Communicates with sensitivity to cultural values and beliefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messages insult audience • Key messages not clear or not included • Material clearly insensitive to cultural values and beliefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All work sample elements clearly not appropriate for audience as describe |

Section 8: Alignment with Objectives and Strategy

Why it's important: The work sample must support the objectives stated in the work plan. Strategic execution supports the needs of the business, connects with the audience and makes an impact. This should be clear in everything presented from research, language choices, media, messages, images vehicles, and communication channels.

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

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

- A. Provide evidence that project is on strategy and consistent with business needs?**
- B. Provide clear, consistent work sample elements that are communicated in a powerful way**
- C. Reflect the objectives, strategic thinking, and key messages in the work sample?**
- D. Provide clear evidence that the work sample has the desired effect on the audience and business needs?**

| 7 Insightful, outstanding results | 6 Innovative, significant results | 5 Aligned, meaningful results | 4 Professionally competent execution and results | 3 Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing | 2 Inadequate, significant elements missing | 1 Poor, wrong |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraordinary example of meeting business needs and stated objectives in meaningful and memorable way that impacts the business positively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to significantly exceed stated objectives based on work samples • Creative elements of work sample strategically aligned to business need • The work demonstrates complete alignment from business need, objectives, stakeholder analysis, and solution • Work sample contains explanation of how each element contributes to the work plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work sample likely to exceed stated objectives and drive business success • Work is clear, consistent and clever, communicating key messages in powerful, emotional way | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work sample demonstrates the implementation of the plan • Reflects the stated objectives in the work plan • Contains identified key messages and linked to goals and objectives • Demonstrates choices that support business needs • Deliberately targeted to close any gaps defined by research • Aligns with business needs to support achieving goals and objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key messages not reflected in work sample elements • Work is out of sync with the organization's brand or identity • Messages aren't consistent • Extra elements in the sample distract from the objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample doesn't show what was done • Sample is incomplete, confusing, or poorly presented or explained | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample will clearly not accomplish stated objectives |

Section 9: Professional Execution

Why it's important: Well-designed and executed 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. Creative thinking, imagination, and innovate approaches will cut through today's information overload and command audience attention.

How to score: Take note of new or different approaches. It could be that the entrant presents a new way to use research findings or demonstrates innovative thinking through their audience segmentation or choice of communication channels. The work sample should showcase good quality material. If the budget was small, look for the best job possible within that constraint. If the budget was generous, the production quality should reflect that. 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 proposal, look for clear writing and easy-to-follow structure, charts, graphs, illustrations and appropriate research methodology. Allow for cultural differences when evaluating work from different parts of the world.

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

- A. Provide well-designed work sample elements?**
- B. Demonstrate high-quality writing and production?**
- C. Demonstrate consistency between what is presented in the work plan and what is delivered?**
- D. Demonstrate creative or innovative work considering the category, geography or industry?**

| 7 Insightful, outstanding results | 6 Innovative, significant results | 5 Aligned, meaningful results | 4 Professionally competent execution and results | 3 Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing | 2 Inadequate, significant elements missing | 1 Poor, wrong |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example that increases professional standards of creativity, innovation or use of resources • An novel and effective approach aligned to the business, stakeholders, industry/profession, and community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough documentation that supports the description of the project in the work plan • Clever approach to communication that is appropriate for audience • Stands out among others • Likely to leave lasting impression | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality writing superior production values • Strong images that convey key messages • Work that clearly explains the emotional connection made with the audience • Professionally executed with scarce resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good production values appropriate to media and budget • Professional standards of ethics and good taste • Clear, consistent messages aligned with brand • Consistent use of language, visuals and other elements • A fairly standard approach that is well executed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amateur work • Dated approach for industry, geography, or media • Poor technical production • A few spelling, grammar or structure errors • Resources not defined | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images, writing tone or style that doesn't match business or audience need • An approach that clearly will not work • Work insults the audience • Several spelling, grammar or structure errors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An approach that clearly will not work |

Section 10: Overall Quality

Why it's important: The work plan and sample must be aligned. The entrant should apply research and analytical thinking to the execution of the strategy. The work plan describes the context, challenges and solution for the communication opportunity. The work sample should demonstrate strategic execution.

How to score: This is where IABC awards differ from advertising or graphic design competitions. There must be a strong connection between the work plan and sample. The sample must be strategic, not just look great. The work sample should represent all or most of the elements referred to in the work plan. It should be a logical, detailed presentation of the work plan. If the file includes a dramatically long work sample element that attempts to show the entire project, it may overwhelm you – mention this in the feedback.

To what extent did the entrant...

- A. Provide a well-written and produced entry that's easy to understand?
- B. Provide a representative sample of all the elements described in the work plan?
- C. Demonstrate strategic and creative thinking that reflects the audience and business needs?
- D. Demonstrate the ability of communication to influence valid business results?

| 7 Insightful, outstanding results | 6 Innovative, significant results | 5 Aligned, meaningful results | 4 Professionally competent execution and results | 3 Less than satisfactory, several key elements missing | 2 Inadequate, significant elements missing | 1 Poor, wrong |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an outstanding example of a unique, innovative and highly effective approach to communication with a thorough explanation of how it influences business results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough explanation of what was done • Demonstrates and explains significant business results • Highly innovative approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive and representative sample reflecting the work plan • Demonstrates and explains a meaningful business result | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work samples match description in work plan • Clearly shows what was done for the project • Reinforces the work plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work sample doesn't match the plan • Work sample doesn'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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work sample is significantly different from the work plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No work sample included. |