

# Time to think outside the communications box

 By [Beverley Klein](#)

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Developing a strategic plan and reputation management were some of the key topics during the IABC Conference recently held at the Vineyard Hotel.

The three day conference is part of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) event and aims to pinpoint some of the issues facing the PR and communications industry, but also to inspire and educate communicators with knowledge and experience from around the world.

One of the speakers was Robin McCasland, director of employee communication at Tenet Healthcare in America, who spoke on the importance of a strategic plan. Her two-part talk covered the basics such as thinking about what your audience wants, settling on a budget (if there is one) and focusing on what needs to be provided to your client and to your market. She touched on some important points like how to distinguish yourself from your competitors and to include people you usually wouldn't, namely the cynics.

She states that cynics are some of the most important people to pitch an idea to, because they'll see it from a completely different perspective and point out the issues of a campaign which the team might not have realised. It's this state of mind that companies need to tap into as an outsider's view is sometimes the best view.



"You need to think about which existing communications channels produce the most impact, and one of the things I believe with all the technology we have, I think the best channel is the audience itself. We can use that and let all the employees or the clients or customers use that to help you spread the message," she continues, "Think about what you're doing now. You're telling stories. So one of the greatest channels are the people and if you do this planning well, you can use them as your army to deliver the message effectively."

McCasland also touched on social media and the blurred lines this has brought. The social aspect brings an external communications platform where customers and employees talk about a company, and this needs to be monitored carefully for a company to be on top of any issues outsiders may experience. Reputation management is the name of the game.

## The importance of measurement

One of the big talking points throughout the conference was measurement. In communications, evaluating ROI can be a difficult concept and many agencies grapple with the task of measuring their results. Francois van Dyk, head of operations at Ornico, gave a presentation all about measurement and stated how international demand for AVE (advertising value equivalent) is decreasing.

He took the audience through the seven Barcelona principles which is a guide to set a framework for communications measurement.

The seven principles are:

1. Goal setting and measurement are fundamental to PR
2. Measuring communication outcomes are recommended versus only measuring outputs
3. Effect on organisational performance should be measured
4. Measurement and evaluation require qualitative and quantitative methods
5. AVEs are a value of communications
6. Social media can and should be measured consistently with other media channels
7. Measurement and evaluation should be transparent, consistent and valid

Find out more about the Barcelona principles by clicking [here](#).

## Looking forward

Prakash Patel, MD of FOGG, took the crowd into the future and spoke about two key technologies that are set to change the world of communications: augmented reality and virtual reality. “The opportunity we really do have is in creativity. Understanding technology as an ideator – an incubator for great ideas,” he says.

We watched the below campaign by Reebok which brings the world of technology to print.

Needless to say it blew a lot of people's minds, and this is a great example of how brands are thinking outside the box and creating a digital world inside a print magazine.

"10, 15 years ago we had great ideas, but we didn't have the technology then. Today it's up to your imagination to push the boundaries," says Patel.

## Expectations from the IABC

The IABC is committed to bringing the best resources to PR and communications practitioners. Taking over from Daniel Munslow as the new chair for 2016/2017 is Dianne Chase.

"Things are only going to get more complex in communications, and how do we address that complexity? We address it by simplifying it, and really getting such clarity that our messages cannot be misinterpreted, and they will be of interest and value. We can't just communicate for the sake of communicating," she concluded.

Find out more about the IABC here: <https://www.iabc.com/>

## ABOUT BEVERLEY KLEIN

Beverley Klein is the editor of the Marketing Media South Africa section on Bizcommunity.com. With a background in journalism and historical studies, she's dived into the world of industry news, curating content, writing and interviewing thought leaders. She's often spotted in a forest on the weekend and rarely seen without a camera. Follow @BevCPT.

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