

## Editorial

by Lise St-Arnaud

### Ovation 2005: Benchmark yourself against the best!

In our day-to-day lives, we have grown so accustomed to gauging and measuring that we almost don't realize we're doing it. Distance, temperature, and much of what we do is governed by units of measure in one form or another. Unfortunately, in the field of communications, we often have only our instincts to rely on due to lack of time and resources, or because we're dealing with one project after another at breakneck speed.

Yet measuring, evaluating and benchmarking what we do are critical in order to effectively fulfill our role as consultant/advisor and justify the value and importance of our work.

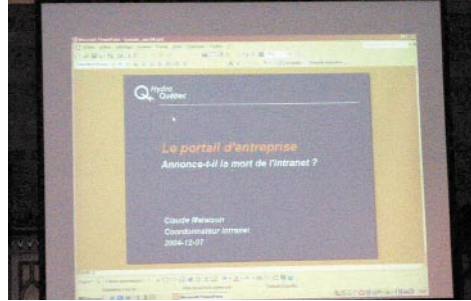
As such, the theme for the ninth edition of the Ovation competition will be benchmarking. This event is an excellent opportunity to benchmark yourself against the best! Each party that submits a project will receive an evaluation and comments from the judges' committee outlining the strengths and areas of improvement of the submission, based on the best practices in the field.

So the word is out! Now it's up to you to get involved and strive to rank among the best!

For further information about the competition, please contact Lisa Neufeld at (514) 982-0101, extension 108.

L.S.A.

## IABC Learning Night: Trends in the management and development of intranets and employee portals



The intranet is a quickly developing tool that is central to organizational communications. An intranet is an invaluable asset to large and small companies alike. At our workshop on December 7, 2004, we took an in-depth look at this topic. Our two recognized experts, Claude Malaison, former president of the Association des professionnels en intranet (API) and Intranet Coordinator at Hydro-Québec, and Irving Alvarado, Information Specialist at Bombardier Aerospace, gave us a presentation on the best practices in this field.

The participants—all keen to learn something new—enjoyed the meeting's informal structure and the way the speakers managed to demystify how the intranet is used and applied in today's communications context. Several relevant topics were addressed. For Hydro-Québec, which was participating for the fourth time, the challenge was a big one indeed: the company needed to cut administrative-structure costs and, at the same time, create a unified tool capable of integrating content from several departments. Using leading-edge content-management technologies and a scalable architecture, Mr. Malaison and his team

managed to find a solution. According to our guest speaker, the future of portals lies in customizing information and integrating it with software programs such as SAP. The more complex a company's structure, the more transversal its portal should be, i.e. the integration of business processes and access to information.

Last year, employee satisfaction reached 92% at Bombardier Aerospace, which says a lot about how far its portal, Bnet, has come. In 2004, there were more than 9 million visits to the site. A major redesign of the site was initiated in February 2002, prior to which there was an unmanageable and

excessive amount of content from some 100 different intranets that was incurring exorbitant costs to the company. A thorough clean-up was in order! In the last few years, the new platform has made it possible to centralize information intended for employees, provide greater visibility for corporate

information, and actually educate the company's staff at the same time. Bnet is constantly evolving, and the next big challenge for the Bombardier Aerospace team will be to switch from an information portal to a fully decentralized work portal. As such,

*This year, more than 85% of the 2,000 biggest companies in the world will be using a portal*



this tool will more effectively meet the needs of the hundreds of content managers spread around the globe.

*In 2008, 88% of businesses in North America will have an intranet, 71% in Europe, and 49% in Asia.*

We would like to thank our two speakers for doing such a terrific job sharing their expertise in the field and answering our participants' many questions!

P.O.



## Is one of the crucial roles of the communications professional at risk? The findings of a communications expert as she tracks how the job of communicator has evolved

A true leader with 27 years of communications experience, H el ene Laplante is very sensitive to the current situation of the communications profession, which she considers as much a vocation as a social responsibility. Her findings in terms of the parameters being imposed on today's communications professionals cause her to keep a keen—and constructive—eye on her favourite field.

Ms. Laplante has been working in communications since the late 1970s. She has held management positions in public and private organizations and has worked as a consultant. On many occasions, she has listened to her communications colleagues complain about the uncertainty of their profession and about how communications budgets have been sharply cut back, even in large organizations.

"There aren't enough resources allocated to communications," she says. "Some organizations even consider the service a 'necessary evil,' which makes you think communications professionals aren't considered important."

With less and less room to manoeuvre, Ms. Laplante fears that communications experts won't be able to fulfill their important role as internal and external mediators for the companies they serve.

"Frequently, communicators are given very little time to act. Their decision-making power is very limited because the role they are given is to 'execute'. If the communicator deems that a project has an unacceptable social impact, they have to use their influence and determination to put the brakes on or delay the project so that public concerns are taken into account. Otherwise, it could negatively impact the communicator's credibility or bring their professional ethics into question," explains Ms. Laplante.

According to this expert, communications professionals should be involved at the very outset of a project and given a key strategic role, so they have the time to properly fulfill their mandate. In Ms. Laplante's opinion, "the communicator is the ideal representative who reflects public opinion in the planning stages of a major project. He acts as an intermediary between the client, the public and a wide range of specialists, such as economists, urban planners, engineers, etc. The communications professional works over the long term to build trust, obtain buy-in to a change, re-establish dialogue and get different parties to reach a consensus. It is essential to grant as much importance to the economic, legal and technical dimensions that a professional communicator brings to the table as to the socio-political dimen-

sion," she says. For Ms. Laplante, there is nothing as satisfying to a communications expert as helping improve a project or program by getting external parties involved in the design and planning process. Nothing, that is, except for all the travelling this globetrotter gets to enjoy! She has been to four different continents and still has a few countries left to discover.

H el ene Laplante has been a member of the Montreal chapter of the IABC for more than two years. She finds the international information distributed by the IABC especially educational.

H el ene Laplante



## Hélène Laplante's career path

Hélène Laplante graduated from UQAM in Communications and has completed management coursework there as well. She began her career in 1977 in the community network, helping to develop Montreal's community radio stations, among other things. In 1984, Ms. Laplante entered Quebec public service as a communications advisor, a position she would hold at the Office des services de garde à l'enfance, the ministère de l'Environnement and the ministère des Affaires culturelles. In 1990, she took on the position of Communications and Public Affairs Project Manager at Tecslut, a multidisciplinary consultancy firm operating in Canada and abroad. In 2001, Ms. Laplante became Director of the company's Communications and Public Affairs Consulting department, as well as a company shareholder.

She has designed and managed large-scale national and international programs for such clients as Hydro-Québec, the Department of National Defence, World Bank, Rio Tinto and Petroleos de Venezuela. As such, she has developed an expertise in managing socio-political issues, a very useful and strategic skill to have when it comes to launching or developing businesses, or implementing industrial projects or social or organizational reforms.

In September 2004, Hélène Laplante started up her own public affairs consulting business. Communication et enjeux publics specializes in communications program analysis, research, design and planning, and offers strategic consulting in managing communications, socio-political issues, and coaching.

Y.E.J.

## Attend our monthly board meetings: it's an educational experience!

Are you interested in hands-on involvement in our association? With a brand-new year ahead of us, why not attend a board meeting of the Montreal chapter of the IABC! Association members and anyone who is thinking about joining are welcome to attend.

Board meetings will be held on the following dates:

- February 16, 2005
- March 10, 2005
- April 7, 2005
- May 12, 2005
- June 9, 2005 *(to be confirmed)*

P.O.

## Searching for the perfect candidate for your company?

The resume section reserved for IABC members provides you with an exclusive platform to showcase your abilities and experience to peers and employers! Take a few minutes to browse other members' resumes and post your own. Keep in mind that your IABC membership entitles you to post job offers at minimal rates.

Information: Hélène Fortier

at (514) 832-2935 or by e-mail at: [helene.fortier@thales-avionics-ca.com](mailto:helene.fortier@thales-avionics-ca.com)

IABC-Montreal

## Renew your membership and enjoy the many advantages it gives you!

It's time to renew your IABC membership. Don't hesitate!

There are many advantages to being an IABC member:

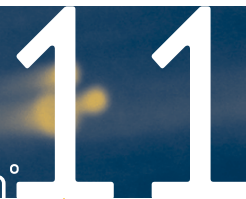
- Benefit from a worldwide network of over 13,000 communications professionals in 50 countries
- Belong to an association known for its excellence
- Share knowledge and information with other professionals
- Benefit from training through a variety of workshops and conferences available both locally and internationally
- Showcase your talents to potential employers
- Join one of our committees

If you still need convincing, consider this:

You can take advantage of a membership discount throughout the month of February. Hurry, this is a limited-time offer!

IABC-Montreal





## Don't miss these events!

IABC Montreal networking and professional development program

2005

### Informal Wednesdays at IABC-Montreal

#### A monthly networking opportunity at the Europa Hotel

Meet with new members and discuss topics of interest with your peers in a warm, friendly atmosphere. This activity was launched last year and has tremendous scope.

Mark the upcoming meeting dates in your agenda:

February 23, 2005 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

March 30, 2005 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

April 27, 2005 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

May 25, 2005 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Where: Europa Hotel, 1240 Drummond Street, Montreal; (514) 866-6492; Peel métro.

### IABC Learning Nights,

#### A professional development opportunity

This is a series of workshops and conferences given by experts in every sphere of organizational communication. Friends of the IABC-Montreal are also invited to benefit from the knowledge, experience, and know-how of these well-known communications professionals.

February 2, 2005 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

#### Psychological harassment... a communication issue?

Did you know that every week, more than 500,000 Canadians miss work due to psychological disorders? And that the cost of absences related to mental health problems has more than tripled between 1990 and 2000?

Given these circumstances, communicators—along with their human resources colleagues—are or will shortly find themselves on the front line in the battle against psychological harassment. But how do we put theory into practice?

Monique Deviard, PRO and CPRS Fellow, has been interested in the phenomenon of psychological harassment for a number of years. In her practice, she helps managers implement policies against psychological harassment within their organizations.

Monique Juteau, from the Société de transport de Montréal, will discuss the STM's efforts to implement and communicate an internal policy against violence and psychological harassment. The implementation of this policy and the awareness campaign conducted among employees merited an *Équinoxe* award and a *Prix d'excellence de l'administration publique québécoise* (Québec public administration award of excellence).

Where: UQAM, 1430 Saint-Denis, Athanase-David Pavilion, Room D-R200.

May 3, 2005, 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

#### Workshop: Communication and change management

Today's organizations are constantly changing. Proactive management of these changes includes communication activities. However, if communication is used alone, without other key change-management elements within the organization, it will only have limited success. Adopting an integrated approach to communication and change management is imperative.

This dynamic workshop will teach you about the principles and basics to take into consideration in order to effectively manage change, and about the powerful synergy between communication and other change-management tactics.

Invited experts:

Hélène Tremblay,

Communications Hélène Tremblay

Pierre Vallée, Habilis

Where: UQAM, 1430 Saint-Denis, Athanase-David Pavilion, Room D-R200.

Lunch boxes will be offered.

April 14, 2005, 6:00 pm.

#### Gala Ovation

This spring, you can look forward to a new and improved Ovation Gala. We hope to receive numerous submissions from you this year! Lisa Neufeld (from Coefficienne) is heading up a new committee that is busy organizing the Gala, slated for April 14. During this evening event, we will announce the winners of the Ovation contest, and the efforts of these communications professionals will be celebrated by their peers. A not-to-be-missed event!

P.O.



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Thank you to Stéphane Desaulniers, Sylvie Duchesneau, Yasmine El Jamaï, Ruth Fernandez, Hélène Fortier, Ginette Gélinau, John Gerstner, Carole Marcant, Pierre Ostiguy, Nicolas Poitras et Lise St-Arnaud.

