

empart

Winter 2011/2012

IABC/Atlanta's Emphasis on Communication



IM Creative - Golden Flame Winner



***Can There
Be Trust in
Government?
p. 6***

***Establishing a New
Dialogue on Childhood
Obesity in Georgia.
p. 16***



OFFSET DIGITAL CROSS MEDIA & eCOMMERCE MAILING & FULFILLMENT PROMOTIONAL ITEMS



Standard Press
Since 1932

Standard Press, Inc.
1210 Menlo Dr NW
Atlanta, GA 30318-4163
404.351.6780
www.stpress.com

PEACE OF MIND. DELIVERED.



6

Let us know what you think of *empart* as well as anything you'd like to see us cover in future issues. Contact *empart*'s editor at communications@iabcatl.com. *empart* is published four times a year for the members, sponsors and friends of IABC/Atlanta.

Address correspondence to:
The Editor, *empart*
P.O. Box 550088
Atlanta, Ga 30355

Editorial Board: Anne Wainscott-Sargent,
Maureen Tschirhart

Contributing Writers: Lawson Cox, Jo Ann McCracken, Anne Wainscott-Sargent, Michelle Fry, Greg Guthrie, Kate Modolo, Terry Cerisoles, Drake Osterhage

Design: Laurie Scott

Contents

President's Letter.....	4
Can There Be Trust in Government.....	6
Resourcefulness is the Key.....	11
Doing Social Good.....	11
Logistics Live In Chicago.....	14
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.....	16
2011 Southern Region Conference.....	18

On the Cover: 2011 Golden Flame Winners, Karen Bowers (IM Creative); Scott Ihrig (IM Creative); Karen Cole (UPS); and Shannon Morrison (IM Creative).

Top Photo: The CDC launched a popular zombie apocalypse preparedness campaign in 2011 to spread the message about the importance of making plans for emergency situations.

2011 – A Year of Change and Opportunity for IABC Atlanta



*By Lawson Cox and Jo Ann McCracken
President and President-elect*

Change was, once again, word of the year for 2011. In an iffy economy, communicators continued to master the art of doing more with less. Many of us assumed new responsibilities, took new jobs or looked for new

employment. And even if we continued on the same track, the tools of our trade were constantly changing. Some of us were stressed by the challenge, some were energized by the opportunity, but whatever our experience, IABC members benefitted by coming together to navigate change.

At monthly meetings this year, we learned about a broad range of strategies and tactics for building corporate culture and internal brands, making successful executive videos, selling ideas to bosses and clients, publishing corporate history, using search engine optimization, and connecting design with business objectives. At mixers in Midtown, we swapped stories and expanded our circle of professional friends. At our Golden Flame Awards gala in October, 21 companies earned the Gold – a 10 percent increase over last year – proving that local communicators are getting measurable results from their efforts. All of these programs and events were possible because of the hard work of many volunteers. Thank you!

A few NEW highlights from 2011:

- 64 new members in 2011 at the time of this publication. We continue to be one of the largest chapters in the United States with 246 members.
- An electronic newsletter, which debuted in March. By the time our member survey was conducted in July-August, E-News had risen to be one of our most popular communication channels, thanks to Anne Wainscott-Sargent, Lisa Williams and the rest of our E-News team.
- A strategic planning process launched to help us stay on track and meet our goal of supporting members at every phase of their careers.
- A new Catalyst award to honor a superhero communicator who is a model for leading successful change initiatives.

What's in store for you in 2012

Our board members listened to what you said in the recent member survey and in other forms of feedback and planned 2012 with what you asked for in mind. Look for more meeting locations, more tips on using technology tools, more case studies, more senior speakers, more mixers, and if you have more requests, send them our way, directly to individual board members or through LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter.

A great way to get more out of your membership in 2012 is to get involved as a volunteer. Raise your hand if you'd like to be on a committee or serve on the management team. If you can't make a big commitment, consider signing up to do just one thing on one day to help with our programs. We'll have some suggestions coming your way. There's something else you can expect to see in 2012 – an emphasis on using communications to get business results and positive outcomes. After all, we're part of a powerful network of international business communicators, so getting results is what we know, what we practice, and what differentiates us from other professional associations.

The point of all of this – the meetings, the communications, the focus on results – is to help you enjoy your work, hone your skills and advance in your career. Please share your ideas, get involved and help make it happen!

Thank You to Our Sponsors

Website: Prescott Alexander

Printer: Standard Press

AV: Galaxie Pictures Audio Visual

Photographer: Leland Holder

Social Media: Social Butterfly

Design: Scott Design

A graphic advertisement for Scott Design. The background features a vibrant, multi-colored wave pattern in shades of blue, orange, yellow, and purple. The text is overlaid on this background. At the top, 'SCOTT DESIGN' is written in large, bold, red capital letters. Below it, 'Effective Graphic Design Solutions For Print' is written in a smaller, bold, dark blue font. Further down, the text 'For a free design quote, email' is in a smaller, dark blue font, followed by the email address 'LScott7@bellsouth.net' in a bold, dark blue font. At the bottom, the website 'www.ThumbprintDesign.com' is written in a bold, dark blue font.

SCOTT DESIGN

Effective Graphic Design Solutions For Print

For a free design quote, email
LScott7@bellsouth.net

www.ThumbprintDesign.com

Can There Be Trust in

By Michelle Fry

Government touches us all. And right now it is the cold hand of insecurity that is changing and shaping communications messages to a variety of audiences.

Or so I thought.

Yes, the economy struggles, and the future of our healthcare is unknown. Taxes change, credit disappears and budgets are cut. Environmental preservation and energy growth rise in conflict. I could go on and on. Every day, government decisions affect messages within our organizations, in the marketplace and around the dinner table.

What about government insiders? How are communications professionals in governmental organizations working within an environment that appears so fraught with gloom and doom? As part of our industry spotlight series, *empart* magazine sat down with three government communicators to get some perspective. What they shared was both surprising and inspiring.

Turning the Tide – Transparency and Good Stewardship

Before the recession hit, the number of individuals who said they trusted the government, "always" or "most of the time", was in the low-to-mid 30's. Slightly more than a decade ago, trust was in the high 30's and occasionally over 40 percent. As of September 2011, it's 15 percent, according to a poll by CNN.

With this as a backdrop, it was exciting to hear from three well-respected federal and local agencies – the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) and Fulton County. Their organizations are not only committed to increasing confidence and trust in government, but are also succeeding.

With the economy as it is, and government spending at the top of everyone's list, it is only logical that the first place to focus on building trust is to increase transparency and communicate acts of good stewardship. For example, CDC has felt the effects of the economy and experienced budget reductions in the past few years. In response, the agency has streamlined efforts to run as tight a ship

Government?

as possible. This included a restructuring of the communications office in 2010. CDC recognizes the value of communicating and developing valuable programs, but has also made an effort to stay lean.

“We are trying to do what we can to have a secure nation from a health perspective,” says **Barbara Reynolds**, acting director, Division of News and Electronic Media, Office of the Associate Director for Communication, CDC. “All of our communications depend upon trust and credibility with our audiences. While it is never a good time to cut back on work being done to protect the nation, the CDC is always working to be as accountable as possible with taxpayer dollars. We are committed to work with less to do more.”

IABC member **Ericka Davis**, who serves as Fulton County’s director of communications, told us that Fulton’s efforts at accountability go far beyond traditional transparency initiatives. “I think citizens are always watching government to see if their tax dollars are being spent wisely, and that we’re being good stewards,” says Davis. “Most criticism and distrust comes from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the process.”

So this year, Fulton County educated and engaged the public with a series of Citizen Sense Budget Sessions. Citizens were given “money,” a list of county programs and services and guidance as to which services were mandated by law. Participants were then asked to share how they would spend the available funds. They were even given the opportunity to raise taxes.

“Every single citizen who attended came away saying: 1) We have a really tough job making the determination of what to fund, 2) They had a better understanding of how the process worked and 3) They appreciated the opportunity. It was awesome!”



Citizens try to plan the budget at one of Fulton County's "Citizen Sense" sessions.

At the state level, **Nicole Linton**, IABC member and public relations manager with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) Public Affairs Division, works hard to communicate *positive* financial news.

As a result, more than \$300 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), GEFA expanded its water, sewer, energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. Instead of working in an atmosphere of budget cuts, Linton was tasked with communicating financial boon and new opportunity. With the expansion and addition of programs in the agency's communications programming, Linton found herself taking traditional PR and marketing strategies to a new level, adding and expanding tactics to meet her audiences' voracious appetite for "good news."

Communicators Committed to Innovation and Outreach

In today's challenging economic and budgetary climate, government communicators are

faced with a public starved for information, clarity and assistance. Reynolds, Linton and Davis have risen to the occasion with ideas, innovations, humor and help. Most importantly, they are making themselves increasingly available to citizens, organizations and businesses.

At the CDC, Reynolds noted that government communications is experiencing a lot of change. No longer is there a set news cycle; information is moving at the speed of light and through a plethora of channels. In response, the CDC has become a leader around the use of social media in a government context. For example, after the White House, the CDC has the most Twitter interaction of all government offices with 1.3 million followers.



"Lots of people are paying attention. It's interesting, and we are developing a real sense of how these channels should be used effectively. Everything we do here [in social media] is an effort to be trusted and credible. We strive for an authentic relationship with the public."

The above image is from the call for participation online video promotion for Fulton County's "Citizen Sense" program.

That authentic relationship has allowed the CDC to use humor and creativity to draw attention to one initiative – emergency preparedness. A member at the CDC wrote a blog entry on how to prepare for a zombie apocalypse. (Yes – you read that correctly.) You can imagine the cult following, reposts, comments and resulting media coverage this created – all which drew attention to the message at hand. The post was followed up by a free, downloadable, zombie comic book on preparedness.

Fulton County’s online interactivity has expanded in droves. Recent efforts include: *Fulton Focus*, an e-newsletter; *Fulton Features*, a monthly e-version overview of media coverage; *Ask E.R.A.N.* (Fulton County’s Research Access Network), an electronic research repository; and live Twitter chats on tax assessments, foreclosures and the budget. The county also has expanded its Facebook presence, and even hosted a live town hall meeting on the budget where citizens could watch on TV, online and call, email, tweet or post questions in real time.

“We’ve been working hard to find ways to communicate to our citizens and stakeholders,” says Davis. Perhaps the county’s biggest

success is its new-and-improved website. Due to citizen feedback and a C- rating from online government watch dog, *The Sunshine Review*, Fulton County has spent the last two years creating a website that meets audience needs. Simple navigation, better organization and a new transparency section, “Eye on Fulton,” has resulted in an updated A+ rating and positive feedback from citizens.

A Light in the Dark— Resources for Troubled Times

Fulton’s website was deemed A+ because citizens could turn to Fulton County and find what they wanted and what they needed. Davis says, “As citizens find themselves facing their own economic challenges, the need for government becomes more pronounced, not less so.

For example, something as simple as going to a bookstore and buying books now becomes a luxury, and you will see more citizens using our libraries to check out books or use computers. Citizens who work in places without health insurance turn to public health facilities for care. Interest in our services definitely increases.”



Communicating the availability of services and making them easy to access has become critical in recent years, and has spotlighted government organizations as they serve as valuable resources for citizens and organizations who need help.

For example, GEFA's programs, such as the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program and Georgia's Clean Energy

Property Rebate Program, make it possible for

community developments to save money, and increase community value as they are developed in environmentally and cost-efficient ways. The expansion of programs, such as the Weatherization Assistance Program, has made it possible for thousands of low-income residents to improve their homes' energy efficiency— saving money and improving the overall effect on

Georgia's environment. All of these programs increased GEFA communications efforts, from announcing funding to communicating information and updates on individual projects.



At the CDC, the agency has a straightforward policy as a resource: nothing they produce is copyrighted, and it is available to all. The CDC Learning Connection (www.cdc.gov/learning) exists as a forum for those looking for tools in their own world. CDC partners with state and local health agencies, and budgets at all levels are being decimated. To fill the gaps, the CDC tries to share communications expertise and research, in addition to developing and offering products like PR tool kits, templates, advertising, etc., which can be tailored for a community.

"The CDC is committed to sharing knowledge and making ourselves available 24/7. We are a mere phone call or email away," says Reynolds.

For Nonprofit Communicators, Resourcefulness is the Key



By Greg Guthrie

Imagine that you have to develop an advertising strategy to promote your organization's new service or product. For many communications departments, it's a matter of figuring out how to best utilize your resources. Now imagine that you have no advertising budget to work with. The strategy just got trickier, didn't it?

A lack of adequate funding is one of the many challenges confronted by communicators, like me, who work for nonprofit organizations, aiming to provide a service to society for the greater good. (I am a four-year communicator with the American Cancer Society and currently serve as Managing Editor, *ACS Internal News*, on the ACS internal communications team). Nonprofit communicators have many of the same types of job duties in common as their private sector counterparts, such as public relations, advertising, media relations, and creative design. But due to staff and resource limitations, a nonprofit communicator may have to cover two or more of these areas on his or her own. And some are involved in areas that are unique to the nonprofit field, such as communications to donors.

Doing Social Good through Social Media

By Tori Vogt

Although the Atlanta region extends more than 60 miles in every direction, you won't have to travel far to experience IABC Atlanta's impact on the nonprofit organizations that nurture our community. Some of our chapter members work full-time for charities, while others volunteer their time and talents.

It is a joy and an honor to help the community and simultaneously do the work I love while expanding my knowledge base.

I work full-time in Corporate Communications for a not-for-profit health system, and volunteer at the Atlanta Mission on a short-term social media campaign through the Change Challenge, a collaboration of Georgia State University and four teams of social media enthusiasts united for cause marketing. The volunteers run grassroots marketing campaigns online, gather one Saturday a month to learn social media tools and tips, and to share lessons they've learned.

We set quantifiable goals to measure the campaign's success, and we're vying with three other teams, each working with other nonprofit organizations, so there's accountability as well as competition.

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 10

Finding Opportunities in the Face of Challenges

Communications in the nonprofit world may pose unique challenges, but resourceful communicators can always find opportunities among those challenges. Two Atlanta nonprofit communicators epitomize such resourcefulness: *Jan Still-Lindeman*, senior director of Public Relations at Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and *Elaine Armstrong*, director of Public Relations at Goodwill of North Georgia.

Jan has managed communications in the national office of Boys & Girls Clubs of America for the past 17 years, after some time spent working in communications in the private sector. The organization manages nearly 4,000 clubs serving more than four million young people nationwide.

“There are never enough resources,” says Jan, who works with a small number of communications colleagues on a very tight budget. In fact, her organization has no advertising budget with which to promote its good work nationwide.



Despite these resource issues, Jan and her communications colleagues have found innovative ways to advance the mission of Boys & Girls Clubs of America through effective communications. First, she cultivates relationships with key partners to help increase awareness of their organization’s programs. Jan and her team have leveraged relationships with famous alumni of the clubs, such as national spokespeople Denzel Washington and Jennifer Lopez, to

produce public service announcements at little or no cost that reach large audiences through TV, radio and print. The organization also works with corporate partners like Microsoft on outreach activities, such as a recent program called “*Faces of the Future*” to educate the public about technical programs available through the clubs. The organization also fosters relationships with journalists to gain exposure through national media outlets.

Going Social at Boys & Girls Clubs of America

Boys & Girls Clubs of America uses its interactive website and social media channels to cost-effectively communicate to audiences. It also shares marketing tools, such as logos and photos, through a dedicated

Jan Still-Lindeman (above) is senior director of Public Relations at Boys & Girls Clubs of America (www.bgca.org).

marketing website available to all clubs.

Similar challenges and opportunities can be found in Elaine Armstrong's work with Goodwill of North Georgia. For the past five years, Elaine has been involved in communications to drive the organization's mission to put people to work. Goodwill of North Georgia currently operates 37 stores, more than 60 donations centers, and seven career centers throughout the northern part of the state. The stores sell donated clothing and goods, which generates funding for career centers that help the unemployed in the region.

Elaine, a former journalist, primarily manages media relations for the organization and is their "first point of contact" for the media.

Elaine is one member of a small communications staff at Goodwill of North Georgia that faces limitations on resources. Elaine sees her role as part of a small staff as an opportunity, not a challenge. She gets a more well-rounded view of communications, learning more about, and being involved in, areas like advertising and marketing outside of her main media and public relations focus.



Partnering Pays at Goodwill of North Georgia

Elaine also views the cultivation of partnerships as critical to her organization's communications efforts. She works with businesses and local colleges to develop programs that build awareness of Goodwill's services, particularly the offerings from its career centers. She has also led efforts to better identify the audiences for Goodwill communications by conducting interviews and focus groups with staff in the nonprofit's business units that interact with the public. Knowing her audiences better has helped Goodwill communications staff tailor messages for certain groups, leading to more successful communications efforts.

Cost-effective electronic communications are an increasingly critical communications strategy for Elaine's team. Though print communications are still important vehicles for promoting services to external clients, and for internal communications among staff, Elaine and her team are working on projects, such as a more interactive website and a greater social media presence to reach wider audiences, online, with minimal costs.

Elaine Armstrong (above) is director of Public Relations at Goodwill of North Georgia (www.ging.org).



Energizing the UPS Brand Through Creative Social Media

By Kate Modolo

The Situation

Through the global launch of its new “Logistics” communications campaign, UPS wanted to convey its passion for logistics and precision to consumers while positioning its brand as fun and creative. To help UPS get there, **IM Creative**, a leading event design and production firm, came up with innovative ways to connect UPS with its consumers on a personal level.

“As a global organization known for its reliability in package delivery and conservative brown uniforms, UPS could easily be overlooked in the ‘fun’ or ‘savvy’ departments,” said Karen Bowers, vice president – Communications & Business Development at IM Creative. “Why not flip those preconceived notions on their ear?”

That’s why IM Creative strategically orchestrated “flash mobs” and roaming UPS brand ambassadors who descended on the streets of Chicago on Oct. 5, 2010. By doing this,



UPS could interact with the public in ways that could be both personal and one-to-many; both spontaneous and planned; both fun and reliable; and it was all captured on video for posting to social media sites, for viral consumption.

The Challenge

Bowers said the biggest challenge was coming up with something that spoke to logistics and the UPS brand, but also had a spontaneous quality to create instant buzz. “We wanted to do something that would surprise people with the UPS brand. We wanted people to get excited about the idea of logistics,” she said. “Our secondary objective was to bring in positive feedback to the UPS website, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and other social media avenues.”

The uncertainty of the unknown was another challenge. “You can plan these events, but you never know what the outcome and

2011 Golden Flame Winners: Karen Bowers (IM Creative); Scott Ihrig (IM Creative); Karen Cole (UPS); and Shannon Morrison (IM Creative).

reaction is going to be. Flash mobs were new at the time and we wanted people to ‘get it’ so they’d take pictures and post to their own social media accounts and create event more buzz. The last thing we wanted to hear was crickets in the background.”

The Answer

IM Creative executed 17 strategically orchestrated “flash mobs” in three high-foot-traffic locations in Chicago, with the overall experience consisting of two major components:

- One, a two-and-a-half minute, 30-person dance designed to entertain the public and creatively illustrate the ballet of synchronized logistics that UPS performs every day for its customers and the joy UPS delivers to its customers; and
- Two, 12 UPS brand ambassadors interacting directly with the public, capturing fun karaoke versions of the “That’s Logistics” song by passers-by in social media-friendly video format and handing out UPS-branded premium items.

The Results

The “Logistics” events in Chicago were successful in generating more than 14,500 walk-by impressions and 750 performance views, while 3,050 UPS premium-branded items were distributed. IM Creative met its objective of driving impressions to social media sites by garnering 8,324 views of its UPS Dance and Karaoke video on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTtoDtEvE9w),



more than 31,000 Facebook impressions at Facebook/ups, and 50 total tweets to thousands of followers. In all, there were a total estimated 18,300 impressions from the live events in Chicago and nearly 40,000 impressions from online activity via UPS-branded sites. Online chatter also proved that IM Creative met its objective of positioning UPS as a fun brand.

Lessons Learned

Many communications professionals continue to struggle with proving the ROI of social media tactics like those used by IM Creative for UPS. Convincing clients or senior leadership to get on board with these ideas can be difficult and Bowers credits her partners at UPS for embracing IM Creative’s ideas early on.

“We were fortunate to work with **Karen Cole**, public relations manager at UPS, who was willing to take risks with a brand as established as UPS. We pushed the envelope while staying true to brand guidelines and created something very buzz worthy.”

Establishing a New Dialogue on Childhood Obesity in Georgia

By Drake Osterhage

The Situation

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, a pediatric organization serving children in the metro area and throughout Georgia, is on a mission to fight childhood obesity in Georgia. As part of a long-term research project to uncover children's wellness needs in the state, Children's discovered that childhood obesity is an epidemic in Georgia with 40 percent of children obese or overweight. The state's childhood obesity rate is the second-highest in the country.

Tim Whitehead, vice president of Marketing and Communications at Children's, remarks on the issue, "The bottom line is all zip codes in Georgia have a projected prevalence rate of obesity greater than 25 percent. To put that in perspective, the CDC recommends a 5 percent rate of obesity as what should be the target for a healthy population."

A year and a half ago Children's began developing the **Strong4Life campaign** to help educate children and parents and provide resources for them to overcome childhood obesity.

The Challenge

Research demonstrated awareness and education as the primary concern. Parents and children know how to lose weight, but they do not know why they should. Many parents even saw it as unachievable. Children's had to link obesity to other health risks and show that change is achievable for everyone.

"We wanted to establish a new dialogue. It's not about kids' appearance, but about setting up a generation to have serious life-long health risks. All our ads right now are designed to address the justifications we heard from parents for ignoring the issue," says Whitehead.



Getting parents to identify themselves in the ads was vital, according to Whitehead. Children's carefully researched how both parents and children thought about obesity, including how they understood language surrounding it, to have a clear definition of the problem that would lead to effective solutions.

"The kids are getting their own education [on obesity], but if they go home and their





parents create negative environments then that education is lost,” says Whitehead. Getting parents engaged and making sure they saw significant change as achievable added complexity to reaching Children’s audience.

“Parents said their pediatricians were the preferred source of information on obesity. But doctors were telling us that they need support to be effective,” says Whitehead. Because of an absence of issue-specific training for doctors, little time in examinations, and apathetic parents, many doctors had given up trying to talk to parents about obesity, according to Whitehead. Children’s developed a behavioral interview approach and is training doctors to be more effective with parents.

The Answer

After designing a campaign from previous research, Children’s piloted it in Macon and Columbus beginning in 2011. To date they have educated hundreds of schoolteachers and physicians, and 7,000 children in the area, reports Children’s. Children’s also partnered with local organizations to reach more children in those communities. They launched their campaign in Atlanta this fall.

“The idea behind building our movement, Strong4Life, is to create a big enough tent so anything that helps parents and kids to eat right, get active, get support, and have



fun can be part of the movement,” says Whitehead. The focus on partnerships is a unique aspect of Children’s campaign.

The Strong4Life campaign is designed to ultimately change behavior, but Children’s knows before that can occur, people must want to change. “The campaign is currently heavy on facts designed to bring people through awareness and consideration to intent to change,” says Whitehead.

The Results



While Strong4Life is an ongoing effort, Children’s is currently applying several lessons it has learned through the pilot. Lessons they learned include taking time to build a stronger level of awareness before moving into communications, outlining solutions and developing more refined ways of thinking about their audience.

“What’s relevant to similar programs is coalition building and support. We approached several relevant organizations in Atlanta so when we launched, we had a great community of people supporting us,” Whitehead said.

2011

SOUTHERN REGION CONFERENCE



By Terry Cerisoles

A Perspective



In many ways, our IABC regional conferences are much like our annual World Conferences except maybe even better. With fewer attendees, you can actually have more interaction and conversations as the sessions tend to be more intimate with the same rich dialogue. This year's SoReg conference stood out because it had a blend of three distinct areas of focus that were important to me. Firstly, there were lots of presentations with very practical, tactical tips. Sessions on how to plan a successful survey with question Do's and Don'ts, and pre-determining how you'll use the responses in your analysis and planning. A session on *"How To Improve Your Search Engine Rankings"* was presented with a quick overview before diving into the Top Five Recommendations. Then there was *"Building Governance Into Your Intranet"* that really hit home for me. So often, I'm asked to build a site without identifying the needed access, support and maintenance. I filled a notebook capturing so many practical and useful tips that I could put into practice immediately.

My second area of focus was the Thought Leadership sessions. *"Mastering The Art of Influencing Others"* made me re-think how I approached my corporate partners, and *"Journalistic Principles and Strategic Inspiration"* reminded me to engage, satisfy and delight my audience by putting more effort into descriptive content. Another excellent session was *"Changing The World Through Collaboration,"* which perfectly described our frenetic, noisy world of information but maintained that it was our job as communicators to filter and prioritize. Some social media myths were destroyed with real-life examples of achieving business strategies.

We saw how we could connect employees, customers and partners by integrating tools into day-to-day business. We learned how collaboration was perceived by generational preferences and lastly we were reminded that a social media platform should stay relevant and focused on implementing business strategy. By far, the most impactful session I attended was *"In Search of Business Truth,"* a thought-provoking look at how communicators are the guardians of truth and our authenticity defines the truth we seek to provide. Whether it's photoshop-



The above attendees enjoyed the 2011 Southern Region Conference, which took place in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 12-14, 2011.



ping an image or obscuring a negative issue, this session focused on the six core competencies communicators must develop: 1) Listen for truth, 2) Probe for truth, 3) Commit to the ethical foundation for truth, 4) Manage a truthful communication process, 5) Lead with truth and 6) Communicate with truth. It was both humbling and exhilarating to know that my role was to be a defender of the truth.

My third area of focus was what I call “*Expanding My Horizons.*” This conference was filled with very talented communicators, each of whom who could teach me something. And I was intent on reaping as much as possible. I sought out members of the IABC Executive Committee and IABC staff to introduce myself and inquire about the search for a new Executive Director.

During the breaks, I chatted with other chapter board members to share ideas on how to engage our members. Since the Southern Region is so large, spanning from Texas to the Caribbean, there were many opportunities to meet new people and to reconnect with others.

So, the combination of practical tips, thought leadership and expansion of my personal horizons made the conference energizing, inspiring and enriching. The small New Orleans chapter did an amazing job with the program by adding some special touches, and the city lived up to all its glory. I am grateful to be a member of IABC, partaking of its rich content, collective knowledge and sharing in such a relevant profession.



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATORS
Atlanta Chapter

IABC

P.O. Box 550088
Atlanta, Georgia 30355

ATLANTA

<http://atlanta.iabc.com>

