

IABC Africa Drumbeat

MARCH 2026

The Voice of the IABC Africa Region



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Letter from the Chair

Dear IABC Africa members,

It is my pleasure to invite you to savour this new edition of Drumbeat, our Africa Region newsletter. Since the last edition, a great deal of work has taken place across our region, reflecting the commitment, resilience, and collaborative spirit that continue to define our community of professional communicators.

Across our portfolios, we have seen steady progress in line with our revised strategy to ensure members maximise the benefits of being in the IABC. In this edition, you will find updates on past and upcoming webinars, announcements on Quills and other professional opportunities, news from West and East Africa, certification updates, and reports on recent activities.

Our webinars have continued to serve as platforms for Thought Leadership and provide valuable learning opportunities not only for our members but also for the general public, while our Interest Groups in West and East Africa remain committed to sustaining important conversations that keep our profession relevant in a rapidly changing environment.

Professional certification remains one of the strongest ways to demonstrate credibility in our field, and I commend everyone who has taken steps toward this important milestone. We look forward to welcoming more people into the SCMP and CMP fold.

A key activity on the horizon is the Africa Conference 2026, which is already generating strong interest across the region and beyond. The conference represents more than an event. It promises to be a platform for insight sharing, professional renewal, and strengthening the bonds that make our regional network unique. I encourage all members to stay engaged as plans progress and to support the conference in every way possible.

The new membership categories introduced late last year, along with the change in the IABC financial year from January to December, provide colleagues with an easy way to track their membership benefits and status. While we note the initial challenges some of our colleagues have had in aligning this change with their organisation's financial calendar, we must remain intentional about attracting, retaining, engaging, and delivering value to our members. Our strength as a region depends on active members who see this association not just as a network, but as a professional home.

As always, I encourage you to stay involved, attend events, share knowledge, and invite others to join our community. The future of communication in Africa will be shaped by professionals who are willing to learn, lead, and collaborate.

The richness of this edition of the Drumbeat reflects the hard work of many volunteers who continue to give their time and expertise to keep the Africa Region vibrant. Thank you all for your continued commitment to our profession and to our regional community.

Warm regards,



Yemi Adeyemi PhD, SCMP®
Chair, Africa Region

"Our strength as a region depends on active members who see this association not just as a network, but as a professional home."





AFRICA CONFERENCE 2026

Leading the future of communication in Africa

Excellence | Innovation | Impact

The conversation starts in October in Cape Town, South Africa

After more than a decade, the IABC Africa Conference is returning, and it promises to be bold, strategic and future-focused.

In a continent defined by transformation, communication is no longer a support function. It is strategy. It is influence. It is impact.

From **21-23 October 2026**, communication professionals from across the continent and beyond will gather in Cape Town, South Africa, to explore how strategic communication is shaping Africa's future.

Across the continent, the profession is gaining momentum. More communicators are pursuing global accreditation. Leaders increasingly recognise communication as a strategic driver. Organisations understand that reputation, trust and influence are essential to success. The demand for communication that meets global standards has never been greater.

Key Themes



Youth development



Climate resilience



Digital transformation



Health systems

Hosted at the Protea Hotel Cape Town Waterfront Breakwater Lodge, the conference promises both world-class discussions and an unforgettable setting.

The 2026 IABC Africa Conference is more than an event. It will bring together communicators, policymakers, business leaders and development partners to explore the conversations that matter most for Africa's growth and global influence.

It's where Africa's communication future takes shape.

For more information:



email Enquiries: info@iabc.co.za



LinkedIn: [IABC Africa](#)



Website:
IABC Africa: www.iabc.co.za



Facebook: [IABC Africa](#)



Member Spotlight

Confessions of an IABC Volunteer: Why I Keep Renewing

There are a gazillion reasons to become an IABC member. From building community and advancing your career to staying ahead of global trends. You can read more about those on the website.

For me, however, IABC has been much more than that.

Over the course of my 30+ year career, I have spent as many years employed by large, often multinational, organisations as I have working as an independent consultant. It is in those consulting years that my IABC membership has added the most, not only to my profession, but also to my sanity.

Like many communicators, I am someone who tends to volunteer. Over the years this has led to serving on several IABC committees, including the Africa board, the Gold Quill committee, the Finance committee, and the Blue-Ribbon Panel.

And when the inevitable lean times of freelance life rolled around, it was often that very involvement that carried me through.

My IABC colleagues became career lifelines. They offered encouragement, advice, support, camaraderie, and a sounding board. Serving on committees gave me purpose and connection at times when projects were few and uncertainty was high.

So, if you're wondering whether you should renew your membership, my answer is simple: yes, you should.

IABC is more than a professional organisation where you can earn global certification, access professional development, stay current on critical industry topics, and connect with communicators worldwide. It can also become something far more personal – a community of peers who understand the challenges of our profession and who walk the journey alongside you.

Therésa Lee, SCMP®
IABC Africa Board Member

***"Some memberships give you benefits.
The best ones give you people."***



Thought Leadership

The Silent Stakeholder

A shift in the stakeholder landscape

For years, business communicators have worked with a clear and familiar stakeholder map. We identify employees, investors, regulators, communities and media. We build engagement plans around them. We craft messages, manage relationships and measure sentiment. That model still matters. But it is no longer complete.

There is now another group of stakeholders shaping perception. They do not attend meetings, they do not respond to surveys, and they do not engage with your communication. Yet they influence how your organisation is seen every day. These are the silent stakeholders.

Who the silent stakeholders are

Algorithms, search engines, bots and generative AI systems have become part of the stakeholder environment. They do not create trust in the way people do, but they determine what becomes visible, what gets repeated and what gains traction. In practical terms, they decide what stakeholders see before they ever engage with you directly.

Why this changes everything

In the past, stakeholders formed opinions through direct experience and organisational communication. Today, many stakeholders encounter your organisation through a digital layer first. A search result, a social platform or an AI-generated summary often becomes the starting point. That first interaction already frames perception.

By the time a stakeholder engages with your leadership or your communication, they are not starting from a neutral position. They are responding to a version of your organisation that has already been filtered, ranked and interpreted.

Why issues escalate faster

This shift explains why issues now escalate faster and feel harder to contain. A small signal can become a dominant narrative within hours. A local issue can turn into a national conversation. The speed is not driven only by people. It is driven by amplification systems that reward visibility, repetition and emotional response.

The silent stakeholder does not create the issue, but it determines how far and how fast it travels.

The difference between human and silent stakeholders

Human stakeholders remain central to trust. They create experience. They respond to behaviour. They interpret what organisations do.

Silent stakeholders play a different role. They scale everything. They decide what is surfaced, what is prioritised and what is ignored.

If communication teams focus only on people, they see only part of the system. If they focus only on sentiment, they miss how visibility is being shaped.

What this means for communication strategy

This has direct implications for how we approach communication. We can no longer ask only what message we want to send. We need to understand what is being seen first, what narratives are gaining dominance and how digital systems are interpreting the organisation.

A simple test makes this visible. Ask an AI tool to describe your organisation. The answer is not written by your communication team. It is assembled from digital traces, public content and patterns across multiple sources. That description becomes part of how stakeholders understand you.

The new role of the communicator

Communication is no longer only about crafting messages. It is about shaping the information environment that feeds perception. The role of the communicator is expanding. We are moving from message management to perception management. From engagement planning to understanding amplification. From storytelling to managing narrative risk.

The trust reality

Behaviour still drives trust. Experience still matters most. But the way perception forms around that experience has changed. Trust has become more fragile, not because stakeholders are more emotional, but because amplification is now automated.

The leadership question

For business communicators in Africa, this shift is already visible. The organisations that recognise it early will be better positioned to protect credibility, respond to risk and build trust in a more complex environment. The question is no longer whether silent stakeholders exist. The question is whether we are actively managing their influence.

Christine Breet, SCMP®
IABC Africa Board Member





Professional Development & Webinars

Upcoming Webinars

Stay tuned – dates and topics for our upcoming webinars are being finalised. Keep an eye on the [IABC Africa LinkedIn](#) page for announcements.

Webinar Recap – Catch Up on What You Missed

If you missed any of our recent professional development webinars, all recordings are available on our [IABC Africa YouTube Channel](#). Subscribe to stay notified of future sessions.

SAVE THE DATE
FREE WEBINAR

26 FEBRUARY 2026
09:00 SAST
REGISTER TODAY AT:
info@iabc.co.za

WE ARE ASKING THE QUESTION:
Is it time to become an AI-ready strategic communicator?

As our first webinar of 2026, this session explores the critical role of strategic communication in the age of AI. We will examine how communication professionals can lead responsibly through skills development, ethical practice, and informed stakeholder engagement. Join us for a practical, values-driven conversation on what it truly means to place communication at the centre of the AI conversation.

SAVE THE DATE
FREE WEBINAR

20 NOVEMBER 2025
15:00 SAST
REGISTER TODAY AT:
info@iabc.co.za

WE ARE ASKING THE QUESTION:
Is it time for Change to Change?

As we close off 2025, our final webinar of the year explores this critical question during a global conversation with Justin Balaski from Canada and Kevin Liebenberg from South Africa. In this compelling discussion, two forward-thinking leaders will challenge conventional change models and inspire a reimagined approach to how organisations adapt, communicate, and evolve. Together, we'll unpack what's shifting in the transformation landscape – from leadership mindsets to employee experience – and explore what it truly takes to make change meaningful, effective, and impactful.

SAVE THE DATE
FREE WEBINAR

2 OCTOBER 2025
15:00 SAST
REGISTER TODAY AT:
info@iabc.co.za

GLOBALLY RECOGNISED COMMUNICATION CERTIFICATION: IS THE HYPE JUSTIFIED?

Professional certification is often praised as the gold standard for credibility, career advancement, and global recognition in communication. But is it truly worth the hype? Our expert panel will unpack the value of globally recognised communication certification, separating fact from perception.

HOST **SCMP** **GUEST SPEAKER PANEL**

RIANA SINDEN **ANDRE OBERHOLZER** **ANNE-MARIE PALMER-IKUKU** **SABRA SALEH**

SCMP: IABC Africa, Director of Professional Development & Events
SCMP: Group North Corporate Affairs, South Ltd
SCMP: Managing Director, Corporate Communications, W&A
CMP: Executive Director, Global & Regional Communications, Tanzania

A Closer Look at Becoming an AI-Ready Strategic Communicator

26 February 2026

Hosted by Adrian Cropley, OAM, FRSA, IABC Fellow, SCMP, GCSCE — this practical, values-driven conversation highlights what it means to place communicators at the centre of the AI conversation. We examine how communication professionals can lead responsibly through skills development, ethical practice, and informed stakeholder engagement.

[▶Watch now](#)

Change Management: Is It Time for Change to Change?

20 November 2025

The world is changing, but is the way we manage change keeping up? Award-winning change management experts Justin Balaski (Canada) and Kevin Liebenberg (South Africa) explore what needs to shift for transformation to truly matter.

[▶Watch now](#)

Globally Recognised Communication Certification: Is the Hype Justified?

2 October 2025

Communication experts and globally certified members Andre Oberholzer, SCMP (South Africa), Anne-Marie Palmer-Ikuku, SCMP (Nigeria), and Sabra Saleh, CMP (Tanzania) unpack the value of internationally recognised accreditation through the Global Communication Certification Council.

[▶Watch now](#)



Quills Awards

What Excellence Looks Like:

Inside the IABC Africa Silver Quill Awards

Africa's Silver Quill winners do more than showcase strong work — they define the standard for communication that delivers measurable business value, enables strategy and drives organisational outcomes across Africa.

The Silver Quill Awards recognise communication that makes a measurable difference where it matters most — inside organisations, across teams and in the decisions that shape performance. It is work that influences behaviour, strengthens systems and delivers outcomes that can be clearly demonstrated.

"The Silver Quills recognise communication that enables strategy and moves organisations forward. It is work that doesn't sit alongside the business — it shapes it, supports it and delivers measurable impact." **Elsabe Coetzee, IABC Africa Director of Quills**

What Excellence Looks Like

At this level, excellence is not about polish. It is about clarity of intent and strength of outcome. It shows up when strategy is grounded in real insight. When execution is deliberate. When results are measurable — and matter.

"Excellence is not what you say you achieved. It's what your work can prove — through clear logic, alignment and measurable impact." **Riana Sinden SCMP, Master Evaluator**

At its strongest, communication answers a harder question: not what was done, but why it made a difference. As one of the programme's guiding principles reminds us: "The Quills don't reward perfection — they reward evidence, intention and courage."

The Standard Behind the Recognition

That standard is protected by a rigorous evaluation process. Across Africa and beyond, evaluators volunteer their time and expertise to assess each entry independently — looking for evidence of alignment, intent and measurable outcomes. Moderation ensures consistency across regions. A score carries the same weight in Kenya as it does in Johannesburg or Egypt.

It is this discipline that gives the Silver Quills their credibility — and their meaning.

How the Silver Quills Recognise Excellence

The awards reflect the full scope of the profession, while staying focused on what truly matters: effectiveness. Across four divisions — communication management, research, education and training, and communication skills — the programme recognises excellence from strategy through to execution.

•**Best in Division Awards:** Identify the strongest work within each discipline — entries that not only met the standard, but rose above their peers.

•**Distinguished Excellence Awards:** A new layer of recognition that marks work setting a new benchmark — advancing the profession through innovation, driving real transformation, and delivering measurable impact.

•**Best of the Best Award:** The highest recognition across all divisions and categories.

Recognises the single piece of work that demonstrates complete excellence: insight, strategy, execution and results working together with clarity and purpose.

The 2025 Winners

The 2025 IABC Africa Silver Quill Best of the Best Award was presented to the New Leaders Foundation's Data-Driven Districts Programme team for Train to Transform: Boosting user engagement through upskilling. This work stands as a clear example of communication used as a lever for measurable change — where strategy, execution and outcomes are tightly aligned.

"This recognition belongs to the Data Driven Districts Programme team at the New Leaders Foundation. We approached this work with a shared commitment to deliver something that would make a measurable difference. For us, communication is not an output — it is a driver of change." **Sophia Dower, IABC Gold Quill Evaluator & New Leaders Foundation**

The Distinguished Excellence Awards further recognised standout work across three critical dimensions: Innovation, Transformation and Impact. Across all divisions, Best in Division winners, Awards of Excellence recipients, and an Award of Merit reflect the depth, capability and growing maturity of communication practice across the continent.

A Profession Elevated

Behind every recognised entry is a decision to put work forward — to be evaluated against a global standard. That takes courage. Behind every award is a group of evaluators applying discipline, judgement and care. Together, they are strengthening the profession through standards that hold and work that proves its value.

Africa is not catching up. It is contributing by producing communication that stands confidently on a global stage.

Communication is not decoration. It is leadership. It is impact. It is change. And when it is done well, it does more than communicate. It enables strategy. It drives performance. It moves organisations forward. Africa's communication story is still being written — and the work recognised here is helping define what comes next.

West Africa

Winning with Communication: Insights from Professionals who shape the Story

The West Africa chapter's webinar, "Winning with Communication: Insights From Professionals Who Shape The Story", was a resounding success — attracting 201 attendees from across the region.

The session was moderated by IABC member Wisdom Chapp-Jumbo, with panellists Andy Odeh and Sola Abulu — both IABC members — bringing rich professional insight to the conversation. Their contributions sparked strong engagement and reinforced the value of IABC's network as a platform for meaningful, high-level dialogue.

The webinar also drew interest from academia, a welcome signal of IABC's growing reach beyond the traditional corporate communications community. In its wake, the chapter has seen a notable uptick in people wanting to register and learn more about the IABC — a testament to the power of bringing the right voices to the right conversation.

201 attendees.

Real conversations. Growing interest.

The West Africa chapter is building momentum — and the community is taking notice.





CMP / SCMP Certification Updates

**Global Communication Certification Council:
Are you our next IABC Africa SCMP or CMP?**

IABC Africa members interested in pursuing professional accreditation with the Global Communication Certification Council are encouraged to take this important step in their professional development journey.

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Strategic Communication Management
Professionals (SCMP)



4

Communication Management
Professionals (CMP)



Once you've applied to the GCCC and been approved, feel free to email us so that we can add you to our dedicated SCMP & CMP community WhatsApp group. It's a space where we share study resources, insights, and practical tips to support you along the way.

Existing IABC Africa GCCC-accredited members, keep an eye out for reminders from the GCCC to renew in time. Your certification is valid from the date of issue, after which you will need to recertify annually to maintain your accreditation.

Learn more at www.gcccouncil.org.

Connect with us



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Website:

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