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Mayor Rob Ford “spins” top marks in PR Report Card

TORONTO, ON – Rob Ford’s campaign for Toronto’s top job was an example of excellence in communications, according to a 2010 Report Card released by the [Toronto Chapter of the International Association of Business Communications \(IABC\)](#).

“While some didn’t like what he had to say; the clear, consistent and passionate way he said it brought his supporters together,” said [Carrie MacAfee](#), President of IABC/Toronto. “Though it was not perfect, his campaign showed the power of strong communications.”

IABC/Toronto’s first *Communications Year in Review – Report Card on Toronto’s Top Newsmakers of 2010*, looked at four of Toronto’s top news makers in 2010 and evaluated them on the effectiveness of their communications efforts. The four evaluated campaigns were: [Rob Ford’s mayoral run](#), the [2010 G20 Summit](#), the [TTC sleeping fare collector](#), and [Adam Giambrone’s mayoral campaign and sex scandal](#).

“Now that information travels so quickly, *how well* organizations and individuals communicate can be as important as *what* they communicate,” said MacAfee. “The four campaigns that were evaluated by *IABC/Toronto’s Communications Year in Review - Report Card on Toronto’s Top Newsmakers of 2010* demonstrate this. Those who communicated in a consistent and targeted manner achieved the best outcomes.”

Ford’s campaign received solid grades across the Report Card’s five main evaluation criteria: strategy, messaging, spokespeople, execution, and outcome.

In second place, the Mayor’s Office’s handling of the G20 Summit received high grades based on Former Mayor David Miller’s efforts as the campaign’s spokesperson and his focus on issues truly important to [protecting the city of Toronto’s reputation](#). Giambrone’s campaign was dogged by [inconsistent messaging](#) around the sex scandal that came to light during his mayoral candidacy efforts. The TTC’s refusal to [communicate directly](#) about the issue of the photograph of a sleeping ticket taker that went viral on the Internet lost marks due to lack of transparency.

The report card highlights the incredible impact effective communications practices can have on the success of any campaign.

Report Card Grading Breakdown:

Criteria	Adam Giambrone	G20 Summit	TTC Sleeping Fare Collector	Ford for Mayor
Strategy	B-	B-	C-	B-
Messaging	B-	B-	C	B+
Spokespeople	B	B	B	B+
Execution	E	C+	C-	B
Outcome	E-	C-	D	A
Overall:	C-	C+	C-	B+

The Winner: Ford for Mayor

Rob Ford's dramatic rise to becoming Toronto's mayor won strong marks across the Report Card's grading scale. Ford's campaign targeted voters from outside Toronto's downtown core, [most from pre-amalgamation suburb regions](#). Ford's campaign developed strong, consistent and resonating messages to target this audience, centred by his oft quoted mantra to 'stop the gravy train.'

He did what was expected of mayoral candidates and used some standard tactics to get his message out – speaking at all-candidates meetings, campaigning on the streets, and even using various online and social media platforms to get his message across. This could be considered standard for any candidate; however, what sets Ford apart was that his campaign stands above the others as the most [tightly-focused, clearly communicated, and consistent from a messaging perspective](#). You may not have liked Ford as a candidate – but you certainly knew where he stood on the issues.

Ford also benefited from delivering his messages plainly, in a way that separated him from other candidates who often came off as intellectual and affluent. The unwavering consistency of his messages connected Ford to his audience in a powerful way. The campaign also personalized the connection to many voters using innovative tactics such as [“telephone town hall meetings.”](#)

Ford's campaign met significant adversity throughout the race including numerous issues from the [candidate's past](#) being brought to voters' attention. Ford did not shy away from speaking about these issues, but instead used them to solidify his reputation as a straightforward candidate. He also maintained composure against many negative comments regarding his appearance.

Ford's campaign lost significant marks due to the [creation of a fake Twitter](#) account by a campaign staffer. Though the unethical act did not harm Ford's mayoral bid, the repercussions to Ford's credibility and trustworthiness may hurt his reputation going forward.

The Competitors:

2010 G20 Summit – the Mayor's Office

In 2010 the G20 Summit was hosted in Toronto. This event is often associated with violence and disagreement no matter where it's held. The two-day summit caused some Torontonians havoc and headache; with numerous incidents of violence, vandalism, and arrests.

Positives:

- The Mayor's Office took a proactive approach by communicating with citizens regarding what to expect, [welcoming the world's media](#), etc.
- Former Mayor David Miller's focus on promoting the positive aspects of Toronto
- The Mayor's Office successfully walked a difficult line in sincerely [showing support for police](#) while not turning their back on citizens who may have experienced mistreatment caused by the extenuating circumstances
- Miller remained visible during the crisis through a series of press conferences and written communications
- The Mayor's office successfully connected with the concerns of their primary audience (citizens of Toronto) during the summit by [demanding financial compensation from the federal government](#) for repercussions caused by the summit on local businesses

Negatives:

- Some confusion with messaging, primarily surrounding support for police while also recognizing that possible mistreatment of protestors by police may have occurred
- Lack of follow up after the summit regarding financial compensation demands

Adam Giambrone's Mayoral Campaign and Sex Scandal

In the 2010 race for mayor of Toronto, Adam Giambrone, now former city counselor and TTC Chairman, entered as one of the candidates. Only a couple weeks into his campaign, a sex scandal involving a university student compelled Giambrone to withdraw from the mayoral race.

Positives:

- Giambrone's campaign had compelling messages aimed at [diverse ethnic communities and young Torontonians](#)
- Used a variety of communications vehicles effectively including press conferences, social and traditional media, and written communications
- Maintained consistent messaging with regards to his campaign platform prior to the sex scandal
- Showed a high level of what appeared to be genuine regret when communicating about sex scandal

Negatives:

- Slow to respond to sex scandal allegations
- [Initially lied to media, saying the relationship with the young woman only consisted of text messages](#)
- Failed to show adequate poise surrounding sex scandal
- Was ill-prepared for a press conference once the scandal broke, and [ended up leaving the podium](#), even though his speech was unfinished

TTC Sleeping Fare Collector

In January 2010, in the midst of a fare hike and token shortages, a TTC rider snapped [a picture of a TTC Fare Collector asleep on the job](#) and posted it on Twitter. This photo ignited more criticism for existing issues about the TTC's budget, customer service, and general standing as a publicly-operated transit system.

Positives:

- Both the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 113, and TTC management came out with responses quickly after the incident
- The TTC's strong reaction regarding [customer service](#) served to persuade the public that they recognized their concerns
- The TTC conducted public consultations to connect with the public regarding customer service issues

Negatives:

- The TTC initially failed to reference the incident directly, instead choosing to look at customer service in general, leading to a belief that they may be evading the issue
- The TTC management's messaging regarding the need for improved customer service conflicted with the TTC Union's messaging regarding the [public's uncaring response](#) to the employee, causing an escalation of the issue due to [perceived finger-pointing](#)
- The TTC Union's outward [criticism of the public](#) regarding taking a picture instead of checking to see if the attendant was okay was ineffective and inappropriate at a time when the public was already unhappy with the TTC's customer service

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About IABC/Toronto

With more than 1,700 members, IABC/Toronto is the largest IABC chapter in the world. The organization provides these members with multidisciplinary resources and a global network of more than 15,000 communicators, in 80 countries, working in diverse industries and disciplines to identify, share and apply the world's most effective communications practices. For more information please visit <http://toronto.iabc.com>