

# 2018 Communications Awards Program Entry Preparation Webinar

*Tips on making your submissions award-worthy*

March 29, 2018



Alliance of the Ports of Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States

Seaports  
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American Association of Port Authorities  
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# Webinar Presenters

- *Aaron Ellis, APR, Fellow PRSA, Public Affairs Director, AAPA*
- *Mitch Marovitz, PhD, APR, Fellow PRSA, Chair, PR Program, University of Maryland University College*
- *Judy Phair, APR, Fellow PRSA, President, PhairAdvantage Communications*
- *Debbie Ayers, PR Director, American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics, Inc.*
- *Marie Manning, Director, Mktg. Communications, American Heart Association*
- *Suzanne Holroyd, PhD, APR, Fellow PRSA, Director of Communications, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response*



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## COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

### Goals for this webinar...

- **Describe program, purpose, entry guidelines & classifications, and online entry access.**
- **Examine write-up of one of the top 2017 entries.**
- **Get useful tips from program judges to help your submissions win!**



## Program Description

- *Now in its 52<sup>nd</sup> year, AAPA's Communications Awards Program offers port communications professionals opportunities to showcase and receive peer review of their best work.*
- *To ensure fairness, each entry is segmented into one of three budget categories, based on submitting port's marketing/PR/advertising budget.*
- *Entries judged by independent panel of senior communications professionals from Washington, D.C. area.*
- *Each entry scored on a point-scale basis to be eligible for Excellence, Distinction and Merit awards.*
- *Top-scoring entry in each of three budget categories wins an Overall Excellence trophy.*



# 2018 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

## Program Purpose

- *To recognize excellence in port communications.*
- *To showcase superior communications pieces and programs that produce quantifiable results, achieves strategic goals of the organization and builds relationships between ports and their key constituencies.*
- *To receive valuable critique from respected public relations practitioners and educators.*
- *To win prestigious awards that help validate an entry's quality and professionalism.*





## Entry Guidelines

- *15 entry classifications – use proper classification for each submission*
- *3 entrant categories – select appropriate category based on your budget*
- *Fee is \$125 per entry*
- *Each entry must include short summary and answers to all 5 entry questions*
- *PowerPoint slide from provided template must be submitted with each entry*
- *Judges score on answers to entry questions; up to 100 points total*
- *Submissions are all online, although supplemental materials may be mailed as long as they reach AAPA by Tuesday, May 1.*
- *Incomplete entries or those received without payment may be rejected*



## Entry Classifications

- *Don't confuse budget **Categories** with entry **Classifications***
- *The 15 entry classifications cover nearly every conceivable type of PR piece, program and activity*
- *Each classification may be used for both print and electronic entries*
- *Miscellaneous classification is the “catch-all” for unique entries that don't seem to fit elsewhere*
- *If in doubt about a classification “fit,” email or call Aaron Ellis at AAPA ... [aellis@aapa-ports.org](mailto:aellis@aapa-ports.org) or (703) 684-5700*



# COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

## How To Enter

- *On the AAPA website ([www.aapa-ports.org](http://www.aapa-ports.org)), look under the **Unifying Ports of the Hemisphere** tab and click on **Port Industry Recognition Programs***
- *Click on **Communications Awards***
- *Scroll down to*  

- *Click the **Enter** button and follow the online directions*
- *Beginning this year, all entries are electronic, although entrants can mail supplemental materials to AAPA that can't be easily uploaded electronically.*



❖ **Award of Overall Excellence (Cat. 2)** ❖

## COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM



Advantage Stockton: Port of Opportunity



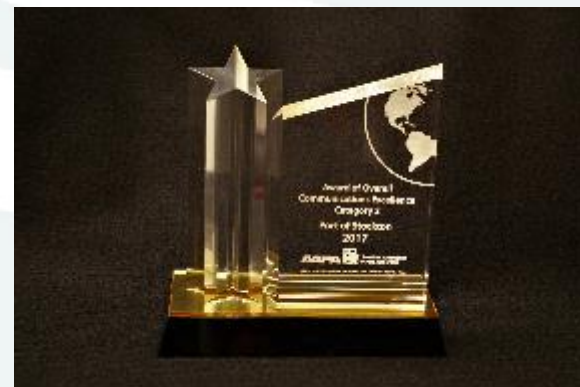
840 views



Alliance of the Ports of Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States

Seaports  
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*Congratulations to  
Port of Stockton*



**Overall Excellence in  
Communications (Category 2)**  
for  
*"Advantage Stockton – Port of  
Opportunity" video*



## PORT OF STOCKTON – 'ADVANTAGE STOCKTON' VIDEO

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW VIDEO](#)

The video, *Advantage Stockton – Port of Opportunity*, highlights the dynamic advantages of the Port of Stockton for potential customers, tenants and local stakeholders. From an exceptional location that is a central transportation hub of “road, rail and river,” to the extensive availability of customizable warehouse space and excellent infrastructure, the Port of Stockton contains many unique advantages not often seen in other port locations in California. Told through actual case studies of existing tenants and customers, what emerges is a portrait of a customer-centric port, infused with a “can-do” spirit, that tangibly demonstrates the competitive advantages inherent with locating operations at the Port of Stockton.



## Judge's Notes:

- Short, succinct description of project, like this one, helps judges better understand scope of entry.
- For this description, entrant might have included how video was distributed. It would also be helpful to indicate the reason for making the video. Does it replace a previous video – or is this a new initiative?
- It would also be helpful to understand the audience for this video: Who was it targeting and why? The messages, images, content-approaches, etc., found to be compelling by that target audience would serve as the foundation for the video development.
- Was this video part of a broader strategic communications effort? If so, how was it leveraged?

# 1. WHAT ARE/WERE THE ENTRY'S SPECIFIC COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES OR OPPORTUNITIES?

According to [comScore](#), online video is booming. By some estimates, online video accounts for more than 70% percent of consumer internet traffic.

As more people watch, and read less, it's clear that percentage will only continue to grow. As a result, video is utilized by millions of businesses of all types to highlight their products and services. Add to this support through social media, and you have a very effective and powerful marketing and sales tool.

With 220,000 square feet of available warehouse space and 500 acres of undeveloped land, the Port of Stockton is always looking to grow its business by attracting new tenants and business partners. Given that corporate decision makers are notoriously busy, the idea of making a brief, focused video promoting the port's attributes at the click of a mouse was an opportunity that couldn't be ignored.

## Judge's Notes:

- Appreciate the context and justification for choosing an online video over other tactics.
- Were there any stats on the awareness that the port enjoyed before the video?
- Is this the port's first foray into video? If not, what worked/didn't work previously?
- Good points about popularity of the video; some data on the use of/receptivity to video in the port industry would make this even stronger. Were there specific business challenges that could be addressed most effectively by video? What were they?



The port had several internal and external challenges to address. The key to any online video is to rise above the noise of so many competing videos, and to make sure the content will resonate with the target market – in this case potential customers, tenants, and stakeholders. To do this the port decided to highlight the tangible advantages through the stories of actual customers and tenants, and to promote the video through on-line and social media outreach to the target market.

Second, we also had to select a video production company that we could trust to produce a professional video product in a cost-effective and timely matter. We had to provide that production company with a vision for what we wanted, the facts and figures to flesh it out, and access to the tenants and properties best able to tell our story.

Working with the right production company is critical to the success of the product.

## Judge's Notes:

- Again, the context here, especially first paragraph, is very helpful.
- Very good narrative justifying the use of the video and the goal.
- Citing specific communications challenges and opportunities would enhance the strategic aspect of developing the video, and connect with the evaluation of success.
- Selection of production company is interesting, but not necessary.
- Would be helpful to know more about target audiences and distribution to address fact that many do not know port exists.
- In first paragraph there's mention of the decision to use case studies to rise above "the clutter" of other products. Were potential viewers asked if case studies would be compelling? If that kind of research was done, definitely reference that here since that is ultimately why one would want to go the case study approach.



Finally, we have the ongoing issue that many potential customers and tenants don't even know there is a port in Stockton. So we emphasize how sophisticated our operations are and our infrastructure is, and we work hard to position ourselves as the can-do port who you want to partner with for success.

## **2. HOW DOES THE COMMUNICATION USED IN THIS ENTRY COMPLEMENT THE ORGANIZATION'S OVERALL MISSION?**

Our overall mission is to create jobs and economic activity for the region as well as provide excellent service to our current business partners and attract new business, all while being a positive force for the local Stockton community and an exemplary steward of the environment at large. This promotional video focuses on attracting new business to the port by highlighting what makes it unique among ports:

## **Judge's Notes:**

- It seems self-explanatory, but it's important to state the overall mission clearly and upfront. Some entries don't, leaving the judge – who may not have experience with ports – to make that link.
- Depending on what data and messaging from which the entrant could draw, it might also be compelling to link back to the mission of creating economic activity for the region. Organizations want to be linked with other groups which are doing “good” work outside of just the business environment. If that's the case here, then perhaps weave that in as well...or at least as the key audience if that is something they see as compelling.

## Location

Situated on the San Joaquin River 80 miles inland from the San Francisco Bay, the Port is described in the video as the “Gateway to the Western United States.”

Erin Jenkins of Best Logistics notes that the port works great for her business because it is minutes away from Interstate 5, which goes all the way from Mexico to Northern Canada.

Lisa Mortenson of Community Fuels also appreciates the location’s access to a skilled labor force.

## Judge’s Notes:

- The location is a key element in messaging and seems to have guided selection of spokespersons.
- Keep it tight to make it an easier read:
- ...“which goes all the way from” could be shortened to ...“which goes from...”



## Transportation Modes

The video highlights the port's advantage in multiple transportation modes. Footage is shown featuring not only the marine activity at the port, but also its connections to the Interstate system and the two largest rail networks in the country.

Carlo Martinelli of Yara International remarks that the port's ability to accept ships of up to 30,000 tons decreases the cost of receiving product from Europe.

## Judge's Notes:

- These are good, specific points that advance key messages and address challenges/opportunities.
- Would it be possible to add any stats about the costs avoided by using this port? If a client wants to reach Market X, it is \_\_\_% cheaper, faster, easier, (?) to use the Port of Stockton than using another more distant port?



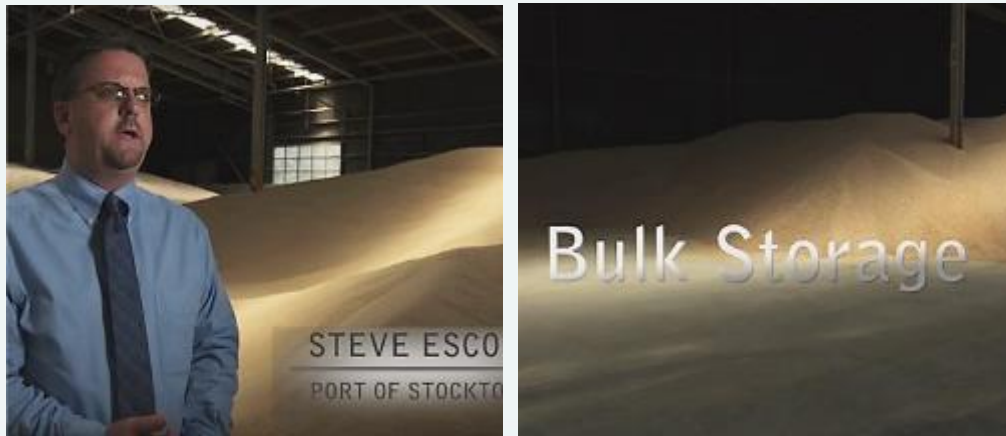
## Space and Facilities

The copious amount of warehouse space, open storage, and undeveloped land are all highlighted in the video. Jenkins appreciates the expandability of the port's storage.

Steve Escobar, Deputy Port Director Real Estate & Port Development, appears onscreen to explain the port's robust construction support, including the fact it holds an approved Programmatic EIR. This allows the Port to save tenants time and cost when applying for permits, he explains.

## Judge's Notes:

- Using customers to present key messages heightens credibility with other potential customers.





# Can-Do Spirit

The video ends with some final statements from port tenants and employees, including the port’s director, who extols the positivity of the port: “The Port of Stockton does have a real can-do spirit. It looks to bring in tenants. It looks to bring in jobs.”

Martinelli sums things up: “With the lease the Port of Stockton provided for us, it was just the choice that we couldn’t pass up.”

Highlighting these strengths is, in effect, highlighting the port’s mission of providing excellent service to existing business partners and attracting new business.

# Judge’s Notes:

- Good tie back to the mission.
- The examples provided throughout this section offer concrete backup to the mission and clearly show a link.
- Great messaging about bringing in new clients. Are there any stats to suggest that the port has also been able to keep those clients? That is, anything to suggest that meeting client needs over the long term is important as well? Getting new clients is one thing...retaining them could be another. That retention message could be one that is compelling if an organization wants to make this decision one time.



### 3. WHAT WERE THE COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMPONENTS USED FOR THIS ENTRY?

This entry's goal is to provide prospective port customers a brief but informative video that will make them want to reach out to the port and learn more. It details the numerous business and operational advantages of locating at the port through the voice of actual customers who can tangibly discuss the advantages to their own organizations.

The major objectives that were identified to meet this goal include:

#### **Effective and strategic use of the video**

To do this we leveraged our extensive email list and used other social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, combined with personal appearances to ensure the video and its message was disseminated. With over 10,000 views we consider this a success.

### Judge's Notes:

- Be sure to proofread your entry. (e.g., it's vs its in last paragraph).
- Nice overview of the strategy.
- Could have included a breakdown of the views and where it was shown in other instances.
- First objective is really a tactic. Use the SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant and **T**imely) formula for objectives.
- The number of views alone is not a measure of success – was any survey research done to ascertain impact/opinions after viewing?

## Reaching our audience

Catering our outreach to the port stakeholders, and business organizations of related companies that use ports, was essential in getting our message out. In addition, personal appearances in which the video is highlighted in presentations to many stakeholder, affinity organizations, and community groups helps guarantee that our target market understands the benefit of the business and operational advantages of the Port of Stockton.

## Audience

The primary audiences for this piece are company CEOs, COOs, boards of directors, facilities directors, decision makers and others with responsibility for evaluating site locations for a company's business operations. The video is also part of the marketing department's trade show booth and is played at various trade shows and industry conferences.

## Judge's Notes:

- A little more information about the number of public showings would have been a nice addition.
- Good explanation of the various audiences and other uses for the video.
- Paragraphs would be more effective if reversed – define audience first, then explain how a dissemination strategy was developed to reach those audiences. Dissemination is addressed in bits and pieces in various places – it's more helpful to judges to have one paragraph, following description of audience, that outlines all methods of dissemination. Also, is there any dissemination beyond personal appearances and trade shows, conferences, given the range of target audiences?

Secondary audiences include the general population of Stockton, especially those who visit the port's website or are connected with the port through social media. While the video is for promotional purposes, it is broad enough to be enjoyed by anyone wishing to learn about what the port does.

Also, it was decided to use a “soft” approach to “sell” the port. Some of that was achieved by letting the current tenants tell their positive stories, and further achieved simply by relying on dynamic images supported by appropriate music. It was felt that this would convey the dynamism that characterizes the port's growing volume and robust infrastructure.

## Judge's Notes:

- Good explanation of the point of view of the video.
- Please include secondary audiences following description of primary audiences – it's confusing for the judges to find them here.
- It'd help to address issue of approach further – what role did research play in determining this approach?
- Active voice is more persuasive than passive – why was “it felt” that storytelling would be more effective?
- “Soft approach” is a sound choice, but, again, more evidence of any sort of research would make a stronger case.



#### 4. WHAT ACTIONS WERE TAKEN AND WHAT COMMUNICATION OUTPUTS WERE EMPLOYED IN THIS ENTRY?

Certainly having current tenants attest to the impact of the Port's advantages having a positive effect on their business is the most important strategy employed. This creates an authenticity that validates the claims expressed in the video.

Our strategy for this promotional video was to show what makes the port special. We chose to break up the video this way to keep the narrative organized. The onscreen special effects titles clearly delineate these sections in an eye-catching way, and they focus the viewer's attention on the points being made. The video was loosely broken up into four sections.

#### Judge's Notes:

- This detail for the creative strategy is quite good. Again, it's about providing context – why you did what you did.
- Testimonials are always a great way to sell your product without selling it yourself. Very effective use of testimonials in this video.
- Watch definitions. Strategy is defined in second paragraph; using current tenants supported that strategy – very effectively!
- Specificity helps – outline the four sections very briefly.

## Timeline

Week 1: Research and brainstorming

Week 2-3: Concepting, storyboarding, and scriptwriting

Week 4: The port approves storyboards and script, schedules shoots with tenants

Week 5-6: Video shoots occur

Week 7-8: Post-production

Week 9: Port approves final version, places video on website and social media

The port staff that was involved in the making of this video included the Director of Environmental, Government & Public Affairs and his staff, the Deputy Port Director of Real Estate & Port Development, and even the Port Director himself.

## Judge's Notes:

- The last few words of the description on this page could draw negative attention. This clearly was a collaborative effort from top to bottom, and one would hope that leadership was involved along the way. Could even use that leadership involvement as a positive story for the port itself.

Working with a small but effective video production company, the port needed to plan the scope of the video.

With consistent evaluations at the pre-production, production, and post-production stage, the progress of the video moved forward with everyone's approval and satisfaction.

It's no small chore to synthesize the message. With a port as sprawling and diverse as the Port of Stockton, there wouldn't be time to cover everything.

The video had to make a compelling case for doing business with the port while still being under five minutes long. We believe we accomplished that balance of viewer interest and video length – while still maintaining a consistent message in a visually dynamic video.

## Judge's Notes:

- Nice overview of the process.
- Good, helpful description of constraints.
- This section is missing detail on how the video was disseminated, which is an important part of communications outputs. A higher score could have been achieved if the detail from the previous section were repeated here. (Repetition is not always a bad thing.)

## 5. WHAT WERE THE COMMUNICATIONS OUTCOMES FROM THIS ENTRY AND WHAT EVALUATION METHODS WERE USED TO ASSESS THEM?

The port has embedded the video to its website for prospective tenants to view on their own, as well as to YouTube for disbursement across social media platforms. To date, the video has been viewed on multiple platforms with more than 10,000 views. Additionally, a file for larger venues was created so port personnel can present at conferences, trade shows, and sales calls.

We believe the message of this video is clear: We have an extraordinary port here in Stockton that offers a Sea of Opportunity – a port that will provide customers with unparalleled advantages.

## Judge's Notes:

- Dissemination is not an outcome.
- It's unclear why "we believe the message of the video is clear" – where is the evidence? Evaluation needs to tie back to initial challenges and objectives.
- Would like to see a breakdown of the 10K views – how many on social media, how many on website, how many at conferences/trade shows and how many on sales calls?
- One of goals stated in Q.1 was to attract new business to the port – and this was also one of the goals for the stated audience. How was that achieved? It wasn't clearly outlined here.
- Often, a good way to show metrics in absence of hard data is through attributed quotes.



This is a message that has made it's way from Washington DC to the meeting rooms of port managers throughout the country. Perhaps the biggest indication of success is our continued sustained growth.

The Port of Stockton conducts an annual online survey to gauge the increase of local awareness. The most recent survey showed the following results proving that our most recent video was a success.

### **1. Rate your overall perception of the Port of Stockton**

Extremely favorable:

2015: 25.0%

2017: 48.5%

### **2. Rate the port's importance to the Stockton area**

Extremely important:

2015: 75.0%

2017: 85.7%

## **Judge's Notes:**

- Good use of metrics. Always nice to see how a project impacted public awareness, perception or cause the intended audience to take action.
- Please proofread (e.g., it's vs its).
- Cite evidence that message has been received in D.C. and around the country – the claim is not enough. Continued sustained growth is a good result – statistics would be helpful.
- Survey of local awareness is very good – should also be cited at beginning to establish role of research in determining goals/objective/strategies.
- It's helpful to judges to restate the objectives in this section, then put metrics underneath. Hard to flip back and forth through the document.
- While online surveys are great, how can entrant be sure the results link back to video?



# 2017 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

## Final Tips

- *Fully answer all five Entry Submission questions; list answers by number.*
- *Tie organization's mission or overall communications purpose back to entry.*
- *Identify goal of the communication entry and measurable objectives.*
- *Evaluate your communications project/program outcomes. Surveys, audience feedback, social media visits, re-posts, etc., help assess success.*
- *Be concise. Include only pertinent documentation in your entry write-up. Too much information makes it hard to find the most important elements.*
- *Start now! Quality submissions take time and late submissions may be disqualified.*