



## **PORT OF STOCKTON - UNION PACIFIC RAIL WELDING FACILITY RIBBON CUTTING**

AAPA 2017 Communications Awards Program, Classification 12 - Special Events

Last fall marked another big milestone for the Port of Stockton when the new Union Pacific rail welding facility opened its doors to operation. A ribbon cutting jointly hosted by UP, Sumitomo Corporation of Americas and the Port commemorated the occasion. The culmination of this project is a testament to the Port's unique capabilities and assets, their diverse real estate opportunities and ability to cultivate successful partnerships.

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

The new Union Pacific (UP) rail welding facility consists of a 90,000 square foot rail storage structure with a 200-foot span overhead crane, an 18,000 square foot welding and inspection building and 17,000 feet of new rail. Specifically for this project, the Sumitomo Corporation constructed the world's first long-rail transport ship, the M/V Pacific Spike. This custom-built ship now carries rail from Japan to the Port facility where it is welded into 1,440 foot lengths and shipped out on special rail cars to project sites throughout the United States. The opening of the 38-acre, \$18 million UP rail welding facility at the Port of Stockton's (Port) West Complex was the culmination of years of planning and coordination between the Port, UP, and Sumitomo Corporation. It was an opportunity for celebration, with a ribbon cutting ceremony at the facility that would bring together leadership and staff of the involved parties along with civic leaders and members of the community.

Internally, Port staff were tasked with planning and hosting this large event. That included creative scheduling, format development, promotion, catering, equipment, and staffing for setup and strike. The event was to be held while the President and CEO of Union Pacific was on a nationwide tour so that he, along with other VIPs, could be in attendance. Promotion of events such as this facility ribbon cutting offer the Port additional opportunities to engage with industry leaders, business partners, and the general community. The Port engaged attendees through word of mouth, distribution of electronic invitations and a press release to local/regional media outlets as well as national press. Through their efforts, the Port and their partners had over 60 people in attendance at the event, many who had traveled from across the nation and some international attendees to be there for this ceremonial ribbon cutting and opening of this unique facility at the Port.

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

Our overall mission is to 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. The opening of the UP facility afforded the Port the distinction of being the only Port in the world to handle 150-meter rail. Hosting the ribbon cutting ceremony allowed the Port to demonstrate its superior customer service and highlight the reasons why UP chose the Port for this unique and important facility (the Port's vast developable area, extensive onsite rail network, and direct connection to UP's nation rail network among them). The ceremony was an opportunity to attract new business while celebrating the relationships and achievements forged with the current business partners.

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

With the UP rail welding facility ribbon cutting ceremony, the Port sought to not merely celebrate the opening of a new tenant's facility, but to highlight the ways the Port attracts a wide range of business partners with its unique attributes and assets.

#### **Planning**

In addition to the normal tasks associated with planning a ribbon cutting ceremony, the Port also had to coordinate with some high profile speakers including Lance M. Fritz, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of UP, and representatives from Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corporation and Sumitomo Corporation, producers of the steel rail and the specially constructed ocean vessel that transports the rail from Japan.

#### **Implementation**

As host, the Port facilitated the entire event which included logistics planning, equipment rental, refreshments, set up, onsite management, and cleanup. Multiple Port staff members helped to implement this successful and seamless event.

#### **Evaluation**

To determine the success of the invite-only event, the Port looked at both attendance and informal, anecdotal feedback from the attendees. The quality and quantity of press coverage of the event was also an evaluating factor. As a result of the promotion of the event within the media, dozens of articles and mentions were recorded.

The attendees included elected officials, industry leaders, and others in the region's business community.

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

The Port's simple strategy behind the ribbon cutting ceremony was to host a great event that clearly demonstrates the Port's competitive advantage in attracting a business partner like UP.



### **Important Speakers**

Attendees heard remarks from UP CEO Lance Fritz, the Port's Director Richard Aschieris and Chairperson Jay Allen, Representative Jerry McNerney, and Holland LP President Jordan Wolf, as they explained what made the project a success.

### **Onsite Celebration**

Hosting the event at the site allowed attendees to see up close not just the new facility but also the rest of the Port's impressive properties and facilities. A lunch was served at Shed 20 immediately after the ribbon cutting.

### **Commemorative Coins**

Giving away beautiful custom-made coins commemorating the ribbon cutting event allowed attendees to leave with something to remember the occasion by. The coins featured the date and title of the event, Port, UP, and Sumitomo Corporation of Americas logos, and an illustration of the Pacific Spike vessel that was built specifically to transport steel ribbon from Japan.

The Port engaged its Communications and Public Involvement sub-contractor, HDR, to design the electronic invitation, design and produce the commemorative coins, and be onsite during the event to photograph the occasion.

The timeline for the event was as follows:

- December 10, 2014: First ship carrying steel rail from Japan arrives at the Port
- September 20, 2016: Port and UP confirm event date via email
- October 6, 2016: Invitations are sent out via email
- October 25, 2017: Date of event

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

The dedication of the UP rail welding facility was about celebrating the hard work put into the planning, design, and construction of the facility as well as educating the community about the overall mission of the Port: to create jobs! The event was well covered by the media and received positive feedback in a number of local publications.

We received feedback from Port Commissioners, Congressional Representatives, State Assembly and Senators, local elected officials, and UP and Sumitomo executives that the event was well coordinated and informative. Attendees were thrilled to receive the commemorative challenge coins as a memento to display in their offices. The Port also sent out images and information on social media that received significant praise and a sense of pride from the community and those associated with the Port of Stockton.