



VIRGINIA PORT AUTHORITY
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AAPA Communications Awards Submission

Category: Miscellaneous

Summary of Entry: A twice-weekly subscription-based online news service to help port colleagues stay up-to-speed on industry events.

1. What are/were the entry's specific communications challenges or opportunities?

Like most port employees, our colleagues get busy with the day-to-day operations and challenges that they face. It can be easy to fall into silos, or worse, lose touch with the happenings in our industry that help shape our day to day – and beyond.

We created this “news service” to help inform our colleagues about the issues that impact our industry, and do so in an engaging and easy-to-digest manner.

2. How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization's overall mission?

The Port of Virginia's mission is as follows:

Guided by our company values, The Port of Virginia will achieve our shared vision of operational excellence, fiscal responsibility, and sustainable growth. Above all, we will remain responsible members of the communities we serve, a valuable resource to our customers, an excellent place to work, and an economic engine for the region.

Channel Markers helps provides a valuable information to our colleagues, contributing to a positive work environment. Additionally, by staying current on the issues of our industry, colleagues are better able to understand their role within a large organization, and its critical part as an economic engine for our region and state.

3. What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?

The goal of this piece was to provide a simple resource to help inform our colleagues about the issues that impact our industry, and do so in an engaging and easy-to-digest manner.

Our audiences for this piece were as follows:

- Internal colleagues
- Board of Commissioners
- Senior Leadership at the port (those with “Chief” in their title)

Last year, we completed our second-ever employee engagement survey. Among the many interesting bits of data was a desire on behalf of our colleagues to be informed about industry news.

Prior to this service, our Senior Director of Media Relations would send an email twice each week to our Senior Leadership Team (“SLT”) that contained links to news stories of relevance that he compiled manually.

We realized that we had an opportunity to build on the service we were currently providing and meet an expressed need of our colleagues – a further example of “living our values,” specifically, mindfulness, accessibility and innovation.

Playing on the name of our internal newsletter, “Open Channels,” we named this newsletter “Channel Markers,” as it helps our colleagues find their way in an ever-changing industry.

4. What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?

We created an account with paper.li – a news curating website that allows users to create their own “newspapers.” Paper.li takes the links you provide and allows you to arrange them in any order you like and include images. Further, the site is built in responsive design, so regardless of the device that the newspaper is displayed upon, it’s easy to read and use. Last year, we added a “subscribe” button to the newspaper and encouraged colleagues to subscribe so they would automatically receive the newspaper in their inbox twice weekly.

This year, we utilized the ability to insert advertisements into the paper. However, instead of placing actual advertisements, we use it to reinforce port messaging and celebrate milestones. For example, the current ad featured on Channel Markers shares that the port realized a 20.3% growth in total TEU imports – the highest growth rate of major U.S. ports moving more than 100,000 TEUs in January 2017.

5. What were the communications outcomes from this entry and what evaluation methods were used to assess them?

Now in its second year of use, Channel Markers has grown to 152 colleagues (27% of colleagues) and we continue to see more subscribers with each issue.

To view “Channel Markers” online, please click here: <http://bit.ly/ChanMark>