



**VIRGINIA PORT AUTHORITY**  
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## **AAPA Communications Awards Submission**

### **Category: Promotional/Advocacy Materials**

**Summary of Entry:** This report was the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual (and 2<sup>nd</sup> ever) sustainability report distributed by The Port of Virginia. While last year's was an "e-book" that was made available on iTunes and epub distribution sites, this year's version was a platform and operating system agnostic, web-based report that educates viewers on The Port of Virginia's comprehensive approach to sustainability.

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

While the port has been a mindful steward of the environment for many years, many of our stakeholders are only aware of efforts we undertake in their specific areas (e.g. environmental, fiscal, health & safety, etc.). We believe that true sustainability means being sustainable financially, operationally and environmentally. This 2<sup>nd</sup> annual effort by the port continued our efforts to reinforce our comprehensive approach to sustainability.

Emissions reductions, lost work days, ISO certifications and the like can be extremely dry topics. The challenge we faced was to educate our audiences about our efforts across all aspects of the organization in a way that would hold a reader's attention.

### **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.*

The Sustainability Report helps demonstrate our commitment to our communities, as well as our operational excellence and fiscal responsibility by educating the public about our sustainability efforts across our entire organization.

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

The goal of this piece was to be the first annual report that helped educate our stakeholders and provide a deeper understanding of our comprehensive approach to sustainability.

We created a piece that was web-based so that we could track visits via Google Analytics. Further, we used MailChimp as our distribution method so that we could track open rates, clicks and give our team the opportunity to send follow up emails to those who had not opened communications.

We created this piece with several audiences in mind. In order, they include:

- i. The general public
- ii. Elected officials at the local, state and federal levels
- iii. Potential and existing users of The Port of Virginia

- iv. Our partners and stakeholders (e.g. motor carrier community, our board of commissioners, our labor partners, etc.)

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

We created a piece that was web-based so that we could track visits via Google Analytics. Further, we used MailChimp as our distribution method so that we could track open rates, clicks and give our team the opportunity to send follow up emails to those who had not opened communications.

We used a marketing agency to write the copy for this piece to ensure we were communicating in language that was easily understood and in brief articles that would hold a reader's attention.

The Port of Virginia's VP of Sustainability and VP of Marketing and Communication acted as project leads for the project. They formed a team of port colleagues from every division of the organization in late November, sharing the vision of a piece that communicated our comprehensive approach in an engaging way. We asked each of them to create a list of items from their respective areas that they felt were important to share in terms of how they made the port sustainable. We also asked each to be available for short telephone interviews with the agency over the next few weeks to help draft the copy.

Next, the project leads met and edited the list down to a manageable number of topics – creating a rough outline for the report.

The agency interviewed port colleagues over the first two weeks of December. The initial draft of the copy and design concepts were presented to the project leads the third week of December. A design concept was approved in early January, and a second round of copy edits was presented. After another round of revisions, the final product was complete in mid-February and distributed on February 28.

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

According to our Google Analytics, we've had over 1,000 unique visits to the report since February 28 ([www.portofvirginia.com/2016-sustainability-report/](http://www.portofvirginia.com/2016-sustainability-report/)). The average length of visit on the site is over three minutes, which we believe is an encouraging sign that viewers are spending time reading the short articles, viewing the infographics and watching the videos.

To view the interactive Sustainability Report, please click here:

<http://bit.ly/POVsustainabilityreport>