



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

### **Category: Special Events**

**Summary of Entry:** A lease-signing event to commemorate the historic, long-term lease inked in September 2016 for The Port of Virginia's Virginia International Gateway (VIG) facility in Portsmouth. The new lease gives the port oversight and operating rights at the facility until 2065. As part of the deal, the port is investing \$320 million to develop 60 unused acres inside VIG's 231-acre footprint to add 26 automated stacking cranes and expand the container yard. To accommodate the largest container vessels working in the Atlantic, the pier will be lengthened, four massive container cranes added and the rail operation expanded. The project will maximize industry-leading technology and double VIG's annual capacity to 1.2 million containers.

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

In July 2016, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe announced a \$350 million investment in The Port of Virginia. Specifically, \$350 million to make improvements to, and create additional cargo capacity at, the south yard of the port's Norfolk International Terminals (NIT) facility. The three-year project will transform the south yard from a straddle carrier operation to a Rail Mounted Gantry Crane (RMG) operation. By 2020, that renovation and reconfiguration project will add 60 RMGs supported by the industry's newest technology and increase the terminal's annual capacity by 46 percent without adding an inch of real estate.

A \$350 million deal to improve one terminal facilitated a \$320 million deal to improve another. By 2020, those projects will provide us the capacity to process one million additional container units through this port annually — a 40 percent increase overall.

We wanted to celebrate the occasion with a lease-signing event that would provide us with an opportunity to share the news of our investments and our continued growth and momentum with all of our colleagues, partners, stakeholders and the public.

**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.*

Our three consecutive years of operational excellence, fiscal responsibility and sustainable growth led to this moment. Neither the \$350 million investment nor the \$320 million investment would have been possible had the port not stayed true to its mission. This event enable the port to share its success story with the world.

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

We used an event brief template form we created in-house to help us identify gaps in our event planning process. An event team was created and leads for event aspects including staffing, branding, invitation lists, media relations, catering and safety were identified and met regularly to ensure success. The first meeting for the event took place in July of 2016 and the event took place on September 21, 2016.

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

Weekly event team meetings were scheduled during the months of July, August and September. To provide insight into what was involved, the final event team meeting report before the actual event is attached to this submission.

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

From September – December, we received at least 30 positive media coverage of the VIG event by local, regional, statewide and trade media. Estimates from Cision (3<sup>rd</sup> party PR software), placed the earned media value at earned media value at approximately \$535,000.

To see a sample of the coverage, please click here: <http://bit.ly/VIGLease>