

**AAPA 2018 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS**

**Port of Palm Beach**

***Import. Export. Your Port.***

**Entry Classification: Advertisements**

As part of its marketing plan, the Port of Palm Beach advertises in regional, state and national publications. In March of 2018, the Port of Palm Beach District hired a new public relations and media specialist with extensive experience in advertising and art direction. In order to elevate the Port’s brand presence, public image and messaging as a distinctive seaport, the advertisements underwent a complete redesign.

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

The advertisements lacked consistency, visual impact, and overall appeal. Without a dedicated graphic designer on staff, the Port’s former public relations and media specialist would create the advertisements. And once that specialist left her position on personal leave, the director of planning and development created ads in the interim.

Internally, one only needed to request budget, which was readily available, in order to outsource the advertising work to a professional, freelance graphic designer at a nominal rate.

As new advertisement opportunities arose and ads were purchased, the new public relations and media specialist recommended the discontinued use of the previous ad layouts, selection of an external graphic designer, and creation of new advertisements for the Port.

Externally, the Port, both as a brand and business, was not very well known. Most people in South Florida seemed unaware of the Port of Palm Beach and its operations.

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

The Port’s advertising plan complements its mission by accomplishing the goals of expanding the frequency of communications with the citizens within its District, providing support to the community through charitable causes and economic development, and establishing a more open dialogue and transparency between Port Staff and the community at large.

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

In redesigning the advertisements, the goals were to elevate the brand image through the use of modern, high quality layouts, imagery, fonts, and call to action.

To achieve these goals, budget was obtained in April 2018 for outsourcing graphic design and conducting a professional photo shoot. A job brief was developed in April for communicating project terms and details to the graphic designer.

The advertisements’ primary audiences are customers such as current and prospective tenants, license holders and users; residents in the District; past, current and prospective cruise ship passengers; and the South Florida community.

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

Strategies for Success:

* Graphic Designer
  + In order to achieve the desired levels of excellence in the advertisements, a designer with an extensive portfolio of high quality works was required. A freelance, professional designer with more than 25 years of experience was hired in April 2018 on an hourly, per project basis. The Port’s public relations and media specialist had previously worked with the designer for about 5 years at a cruise line. The rapport and understanding of each other’s work style was inherent.
  + Under the direction of the graphic designer and the Port’s specialist, the advertisements improved in these areas:
    - Standard use of the Port logo including its original colors, kerning and proportions to ensure brand identity
    - Consistent usage of modern fonts with clean kerning and syntax to maintain the brand’s look
    - Clear call to action including the phone number, website address and social media accounts to make contacting the Port easier
    - Use of bulleted lists to increase legibility
    - Colorful, appealing and impactful photography to elevate the Port’s image and marketability
* Photography
  + The Port hired a professional photographer with an established portfolio of quality work in the local community. Photo shoots were conducted in June 2017, September 2017 and April 2018. Since a small percentage of the audience had actually visited the Port, it was important to show the Port through compelling imagery including aerials and wide shots.
* Art Direction
  + A critical component of creating quality advertisements is the proper set up of a job by the project manager on the client side. A thorough understanding of the layout specifications, deadline, purpose, audience, publication, content and copy are essential. And being able to convey all those details to the designer, in a language they understand, is key. Since the new public relations and media specialist hired in March 2018 had more than 15 years of experience working with graphic designers, having proper art direction for the Port’s advertising projects was achieved.

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

The new advertisements were well received by the Port’s staff, especially the new photography. Having seen the Port’s ads for the last several years, the advertising manager for the U.S. Coast Guard’s Tide Rips publication noted that the Port’s new ad, created in late April 2017, was “excellent”.