



## 2017 Port of Brownsville Directory

AAPA Communications Awards Program

### Summary

The first publication of its kind for the Port of Brownsville, the 2017 Port of Brownsville Directory is a comprehensive resource tool for port tenants, users, economic developers, chambers of commerce, media, elected officials, and public, outlining economic development initiatives, intermodal capabilities and contact information for port-related businesses, stakeholders and other maritime related industries.

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

The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) in South Texas covers 1,881 square miles, has a population of 1.5 million and is comprised of 46 cities and towns and more than 100 communities. The Port of Brownsville is the economic driver for this region, however this fact is often overlooked by much of the population since the restriction of public access to ports after 9/11.

The inaugural Port of Brownsville directory positions the port as a competitive and strategic hub for intermodal transportation and thereby a logical extension of each RGV cities' economic development initiatives. The Fast Facts section was written and formatted to provide site selectors and economic developers a convenient and easily understandable reference with service providers and contact information. Additionally, the directory opens the gate to the public by providing them with a glimpse of the activity that otherwise goes unnoticed daily.

Ten thousand copies of the directory were printed with 3,500 mailed to various ships agents, logistics firms, third-party logistics providers and ocean shipping lines across the United States. The directories were hand-delivered by communications and port staff to all RGV economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, port tenants, elected officials, media outlets, public libraries, and potential business partners. The directory was also published and featured on the port's website as well as distributed at industry trade shows and public port presentations.

### **Question 2: How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization's overall mission?**

*"It is the mission of the Port of Brownsville to be a leader in business development by providing state-of-the-art infrastructure expansion, developing economic opportunities, providing the best transportation facilities possible, and exhibiting high standards of public administration with the ultimate goal being to improve quality of life and create employment opportunities, gain the public's trust and confidence in order to increase growth development, and establish the port as a world class port."*

The content in the directory highlights \$43 billion in current and future projects at the port, logistical intermodal facilities, the port's strategic location to Mexico, and port tenants and other business partners. This information demonstrates not only the port's regional footprint but it's global reach, as well as the port's mission to advance regional trade and commerce while stimulating economic development and job creation.

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

The directory's goals are to position the Port of Brownsville as a competitive and strategic hub for intermodal transportation and industrial development; position the port as a regional asset; inform the business community and public about the port's significance as the region's leading economic driver; and provide local and trade media with an accurate and reliable source of detail.

Target audiences include the economic development and business community, potential customers, general public, and local and trade media outlets. To help establish relationships with the various entities, the directories were hand-delivered by communications and port staff to individual offices of the target audiences. The directory was also published and featured on the port's website as well as distributed at industry trade shows and public port presentations. An additional 3,500 copies were mailed to various ships agents, logistics firms, third-party logistics providers and ocean shipping lines across the United States. All newsrooms of local media received at least a dozen copies of the directory and trade media contacts received copies by mail.

A month after the directory was published, Port Director & CEO Eduardo A. Campirano received a letter from City of McAllen Mayor Jim Darling expressing interest in working together. McAllen is 60 miles away from the Port of Brownsville.

***Dear Mr. Campirano:***

***I want to personally thank you for mailing me the 2017 Port of Brownsville Directory. Congratulations on a very impressive and great plan.***

***We would be interested on how McAllen can work to promote the port for the betterment of our region and our City.***

***Thank you for your efforts to provide the region with such an informative instrument.***

***Sincerely,***

***Jim Darling***

This letter is one example of the directory's effectiveness in achieving the main goal of positioning the port as a regional asset. Receiving such compliment from a key regional stakeholder one month after publication was a significant milestone for this project.

Public interest has grown as well, and the directory has become a popular resource tool within the regional community. The Mission Chamber of Commerce, for example, requested hundreds of additional copies of the directory stating their visitors are interested in learning more about the port and continue to request copies of the publication.

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

This publication is the port's first comprehensive directory. The Communications Department is relatively new (2 years old) and has a staff of two. The objective was to pay for the project from advertising revenue without creating an onerous relationship with port tenants and users. By investing in the directory, advertisers would feel a sense of ownership and pride in the success of the directory. Ad sales for the first issue more than covered the hard costs of creating and printing the directory, achieving the objective of being revenue-neutral.

The first three months of the six-month project were spent creating an outline for articles and photography, soliciting advertisers, contacting all port tenants to provide their contact information, developing the port facilities map, and soliciting bids from printers. The remaining months were spent writing, photographing port facilities, editing, finally printing and distribution.

Organizing almost 500 companies with contact information into 59 categories consumed almost two months of daily additions and editing.

The directory content covers several topics: new business opportunities, capital investments, overall port capabilities, port facilities, business directory, and maps. To make the directory attractive to the reader and help staff keep track of the information, the content was divided into four color-coded sections (Explore the port that works; Fast Facts; Docking Facilities; Business Directory). The use of hi-resolution, professional photos and colorful graphics provide a supportive visual of the port that *works* – our port's tagline.

The Port of Brownsville is the only deepwater seaport directly on the U.S.-Mexico border and has established strong business relationships with international companies based in Mexico. To that end, a secondary component of the directory was the addition of a condensed version in Spanish for current and potential Mexican customers. Please see attached copy.

The directory has been distributed to EDCs, chambers of commerce, tenants, employees, media outlets, potential business partners, public libraries and elected officials. Thousands of copies have been hand-delivered personally. Copies have also been distributed at trade shows, regional, state and international events and by mail upon request, in addition to the 3,500 copies that were initially mailed to various ships agents, logistics firms, third-party logistics providers and ocean shipping lines across the United States.

An electronic version of the directory is also on the port's website at <http://www.portofbrownsville.com/business-with-the-port/directory/>

The directory's website version has recorded more than 4,400 views from July 2017 to date, with an average of 440 readers per month and an average time spent of 3:46.

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

Relationships with RGV communities have solidified over the last year as evidenced by three recently signed Memorandums of Understanding. The Mission Economic Development Corporation (66 miles), the Pharr International Bridge (57 miles) and the Cameron County Bridge System (7 miles), along with the Port of Brownsville, pledge to cooperate in the exchange of information regarding business development, economic development, market studies and transportation information.

Although these new partnerships may not be a direct result of the publication of the port's directory, there is a sense of greater understanding of the port's roles as the backbone of the regional economy among the various RGV cities and other entities. This can partly be attributed to the directory's publication.

A Survey Monkey survey was distributed to the various target audiences inquiring about their individual knowledge of the port directory. A response rate of 12 percent was achieved. The results showed an overwhelming majority of respondents (91.84%) viewed a copy of the 2017 Port of Brownsville directory and found it to be a useful and accurate resource (95.74%). Additionally, advertising sales for the 2018 port directory has grown by 30 percent allowing us to grow the publication through new pages and circulation. New advertisers cite the 2017 directory as their reason for wanting to advertise.

Port staff and commissioners continually receive positive comments from various sources about the quality of the 2017 Port of Brownsville directory.