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Georgia:

#1 State in the Nation to do Business



**SUMMARY**

In the fall of 2017, the Georgia Ports Authority developed a special publication titled “Georgia: #1 State in the Nation to do Business,” which focused on economic development and Georgia's ranking for the fifth year in a row as the best state in which to do business. (As listed in Site Selection magazine.) The book featured editorials from leaders in Georgia’s private and public sector, including a foreword from Gov. Nathan Deal, and testimonials from influential business leaders from nationally recognized corporations including The Home Depot, Kia and Coca-Cola. It also included profiles of major agriculture industries in the state such as forestry and poultry.

**1) CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES**

The primary challenge for this publication was to ensure that each factor contributing to Georgia’s economic success and different regions of the state were represented. GPA’s Corporate Communications team began compiling a list of integral companies and officials to include beginning in September 2017.

Since the individuals and companies featured in the publication maintain busy schedules, another challenge was coordinating the production schedule with those of our contributors. The publication was first distributed at the Georgia Foreign Trade Conference, which attracts hundreds of industry leaders and decision-makers, from senior-level shippers to maritime executives.

**2) GEORGIA PORTS MISSION**

Georgia Ports Authority’s mission is to empower entrepreneurs, strengthen industries, sustain communities and fortify families by relentlessly striving to accelerate global commerce. The GPA was founded in 1945 to promote trade and economic development for our state.

This publication worked in tandem with GPA’s mission and vision by promoting Georgia’s ranking as the best state in which to do business.

According to a study recently released by the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia’s Terry College of Business, port activity accounted for 11 percent of Georgia’s total sales in FY2017, reaching $106 billion. The report also found that maritime trade amounts to $44 billion in state gross domestic product, or 8 percent of Georgia’s total GDP. Business conducted through the ports resulted in $5.9 billion in federal taxes, $1.4 billion in state taxes and $1.5 billion in local taxes, according to the report.

Since the GPA is such a large economic driver in the State of Georgia, this publication was developed to create a testament to the business-friendly environment in the state. Working in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, GPA Corporate Communications staff identified the contributing factors to Georgia’s success including workforce development, low tax burdens and the logistics advantages throughout the state. As a state authority, GPA also made sure to highlight different regions of the state such as Northeast Georgia and Metro Atlanta.

**3) PLANNING & PROGRAMMING**

Goal: To create a testament to the business-friendly environment in the Peach State, which has become a global destination for companies in a wide range of industries.

Objectives:

* To share testimonials from state officials and business leaders in order to define what makes Georgia the best place to start or grow a business.
* To print and distribute 5,000 copies of the publication, which serves to promote Georgia’s business-friendly environment.

Target Audience:   
Current and potential port customers, state and national legislators, site selectors.

Secondary Audience:   
Georgia Ports Authority stakeholders and leaders in the logistics and maritime community.

GPA’s Corporate Communications team began compiling a list of companies and officials for possible inclusion in September 2017. The list was then narrowed down, making sure to highlight all sectors of business, from manufacturing to agriculture, contributing to Georgia’s success. Once the list was finalized, the GPA team began reaching out to communications representatives for the selected individuals and companies. The requests for participation were well-received and all contributors sent testimonials and additional content in a timely manner.

GPA met with a designer to ensure the publication would complement its recently rebranded materials, providing a cohesive look. Edits were made and redesigns completed throughout December 2017, with the final product being printed in mid-January 2017.

This allowed GPA to distribute the book at the annual Georgia Foreign Trade Conference in early February.

**4) ACTIONS & OUTPUTS**

**Timeline:**

September 2017 – Once the announcement about Georgia’s business ranking was made public, GPA’s Corporate Communications team began compiling a list of individuals and companies to include in the book.

Oct. 15, 2017 – Contact made with individuals and companies for possible inclusion in the publication.

Nov. 30, 2017 – Deadline for all submitted content including letters, testimonials and supplemental copy.

Nov. 1-15, 2017 – Worked with Georgia Department of Economic Development to select photos to accompany testimonials, letters and business profiles.

Dec. 7, 2017 – First round of edits for content submitted.

Dec. 15, 2017 – Copy editing testimonials and other content.

Dec. 20, 2017 – Submitted copy for publication.

Dec. 30, 2017 – Feedback on layout/design concept sent.

Jan. 5, 2018 – Second proof received, feedback on design/layout provided.

Jan. 12, 2018 – Revisions back, changes made to layout and copy.

Jan. 19, 2018 – Corporate Communications team final proof.

Jan. 22, 2018 – Final content and changes submitted.

Feb. 1, 2018 – Publication printed and delivered for distribution at the Georgia Foreign Trade Conference.

“Georgia: #1 State in the Nation to do Business” is a print publication, but will also be available electronically on Georgia Ports Authority’s website. The testimonials will also be distributed via GPA’s blog and shared across GPA’s social media channels.

The 72-page publication provides a comprehensive overview of the robust business environment in Georgia, reflecting the state’s collaborative economic development efforts and ongoing investment in workforce and infrastructure. GPA’s Corporate Communications team worked closely with the Georgia Department of Economic Development to select photos that illustrated the reasons why Georgia is the best state in which to do business.

**5) OUTCOMES & EVALUATION**

Goal: To create a testament to the business-friendly environment in the Peach State, which has become a global destination for companies in a wide range of industries.

Result: This publication was distributed to business leaders and state, regional and national legislators. Because so many businesses call Georgia home, and so much commerce flows through Georgia’s ports, this book is effective in showing the importance of additional funding for infrastructure improvements such as the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project. The project, which is halfway complete, will deepen the Savannah River, allowing heavily laden vessels to call the Port of Savannah. This, in turn, will give GPA’s customers more flexibility in making goods available in the U.S. Southeast and beyond.

Objective: To share testimonials from state officials and business leaders that define what makes Georgia the best place to start or grow a business.

Result: Seventeen Fortune 500 headquarters and more than 450 Fortune 500 companies call Georgia home because of the high quality of life and low cost of doing business. By featuring several of those companies, this publication helps make the case for additional companies and business owners to make Georgia their economic hub.

Objective: To print and distribute 5,000 copies of the publication, which serves to promote Georgia’s business-friendly environment.

Result: A total of 9,000 copies were printed and distributed from February 2018 to April 2018. A limited number of copies (500) were printed in time for the Georgia Foreign Trade Conference in early February. Because the trade conference attracts industry and logistics leaders, GPA wanted to ensure that attendees received a copy of the publication. The remaining 8,500 copies were mailed to influential legislators, GPA’s stakeholders, business leaders, logistics and maritime professionals and participants in the book.

“Georgia: #1 State in the Nation to do Business” was part of a marketing effort to celebrate the state’s fifth consecutive ranking as the best state in which to do business.

Both internal audiences at GPA and targeted individuals who received the publication agree on its value, praising the book’s positive reflection of Georgia’s economy and its ability to attract new businesses to the state.

Bart Gobeil, senior director of economic development and governmental affairs at GPA, said: “By emphasizing the strong economic climate in Georgia, this publication will attract industry leaders from across the country and around the world.”