

**AAPA 2018 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS**

**Port of Palm Beach**

***Community Connections***

**Entry Classification: Social/Web-Based Media**

In March of 2018, the Port of Palm Beach District hired a new public relations and media specialist with extensive experience in managing social media accounts and campaigns. Focusing on its Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts, the Port of Palm Beach revamped its approach to producing quality content, increasing the frequency of posts, and connecting more meaningfully with its community.

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

With its Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts already established, the Port of Palm Beach had a foundation from which to begin connecting to its community; the Port already had a base of fans across the three social media channels.

On [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/PortofPalmBeachDistrict/), the Port of Palm Beach had 1,561 likes as of March 2017. The Port had 301 followers on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/portofpalmbeach/) as of April 2017. And on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/PortofPalmBeach), the Port’s followers totaled 1,479 in March of 2017.

The opportunity for the Port was to maximize the effectiveness of its communications and leverage the power of social media as a proven mode of communicating easily and often to South Florida residents.

Internally, the Port’s staff does not generally use social media on a personal level; thus, there are few internal champions, users or advocates for social media apart from the designated media specialist. Also, there was no budget allotted for sponsored ads on social media or graphic design services for content. Externally, the Port had few allies, partners, or tenants active on social media.

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

The Port’s social media plan complements its mission by accomplishing the goals of increasing 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?**

The goals were to improve on the quality, frequency, and engagement; and ultimately increase the number of followers per social media account.

The objectives were to get more likes, comments, shares, mentions and followers across the three social media channels. A 10% increase in the fan base or likes was desired.

The primary audience on social media would be those persons who had already liked or followed the Port on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The secondary audience on Facebook would be those reached through sponsored or boosted posts. The secondary audience on Instagram would be those reached through hashtags. On Twitter, the secondary audience would be those reached through hashtags, tags, mentions and retweets.

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

In order to increase the quality of the content and frequency of posts on social media, the following strategies and tactics were utilized:

* Photography
  + Social media posts with eye-catching images get more engagement. The Port hired a professional photographer with an established portfolio of work in the local community. Photo shoots were conducted in June 2017, September 2017 and April 2018. The communications staff member and the director of planning and development also regularly take photos.
* Videography
  + Videos are the most impactful means to communicate on social media. The Port hired a professional drone pilot to shoot footage in March 2018 for an overview video utilized on social media. The Port’s own communications specialist often shoots short iPhone videos as well.
* Graphics
  + To keep the public informed of upcoming board meetings and to convey the Port’s status during Hurricane Irma, customized graphics were created to post on social media. The communications specialist on staff used canva.com, an online graphic design platform to create monthly graphic images. And a freelance graphic designer was hired to create the series of Hurricane Irma messages.
* Daily Log for Content Development
  + To track content across the three social media channels, a daily log in Excel was created. This allows the communications specialist to ensure variety in type of content and frequency of posts, and to plan ahead for future content.

To monitor and track social media accounts, a robust monitoring and analysis service was acquired in September 2017. Previously, a basic online service was employed for gathering statistics. The new service allows for daily review of mentions and tags, plus on-demand reports to assess and tabulate account activities, which were not available with the previous provider.

Since Facebook adjusted its algorithms so that businesses must effectively “pay to play”, a small monthly budget was allotted to sponsor and boost posts, beginning in April of 2017, to increase fan engagement.

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

In the accompanying PowerPoint slides, the content improvements are demonstrated, and additional metrics are provided.

Key Outcomes:

* Facebook
  + Increased fan base by 997 in a 13-month period
  + Maintained a 4.2-star, customer review rating out of 5 stars
* Twitter
  + Gained 262 followers in one year
  + Increased number of tweets from 127 in 2016 to 268 in 2017
  + Profile visits increased by 8,793, from 2,719 in 2016 to 11,512 in 2017
* Instagram
  + Added 640 followers in one year
  + Increased number of posts by 212, from 30 in 2016 to 242 in 2017
  + Likes on posts increased from 448 in 2016 to 6,409 in 2017 – a variance of +5,961
* Total fans added: 1,899

Audience Feedback:

1. singerislandscenes LOVE all this history!!!
2. ruggedcams Wonderful shot!
3. pauledgewater Love it!
4. myoneblood A lovely spot to save lives! Thanks for hosting a blood drive.
5. captainluney Wow... I need to swing by that way!!
6. everything\_conch Awesome Promotion
7. nordin.official Superb!
8. hroncic Good going
9. skyesherman Ahhh these photos get me so excited! Can’t wait for this

weekend!!!

1. extravagantgrp Great Post!
2. roxyvbarrios Best Port i love it :)
3. spankybusterlong That is so cool!
4. maik\_grnto Awesome pics
5. diagnosticmarine Keep it up
6. simarine\_net Nice picture!
7. mealkitt Great post!
8. brianreamss Your post is 100 ;)))
9. south\_florida\_beat Nice!
10. george\_561 Love seeing these photos!! Keep them coming!!!
11. rennfish Beautiful!
12. Mary Lou Long What a great picture.
13. Deborah L. DAmbrosi Great photo of the new ship.
14. CaptBenny Paquin Beautiful archives...
15. Judith Ann Great shot!!
16. Mary Widmer Wow great job
17. Danielle Silverman Great picture!!!!
18. Meredith Moore Beautiful pic
19. Melissa Williams Cool! Good to see these fine men and women handing things

there at the port!

1. Pamela Adams Keep up the good works, this conversation is much needed in

the U.S. and globally!

1. Bradford Gary Bravo to the Port and cruise line! Impressive new addition to

the Port and important job creating activity for Palm Beach

County!