**2019 AAPA COMMUNICATION AWARDS SUBMISSION**

Port of Baltimore

Port of Baltimore Proactive Social Media

Classification 11: Social/Web-Based Media

Port Category: 3

## Summary:

The Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration (MDOT MPA) deployed a new social media strategy on its channels in 2018 focusing on proactive media to engage and reach its audience. Following the hiring of a digital news media manager, the strategy would involve using social media to tell stories about the Port of Baltimore. The MDOT MPA connected with its audiences by sharing more about the outreach and environmental efforts it undertakes while also highlighting the success of the Port of Baltimore's business in new ways. The approach resulted in Facebook engagement nearly quadrupling, Twitter engagement tripling and YouTube subscribers doubling– all without paid boosting.

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

The MDOT MPA wanted to develop social content that would expand on explaining the Port's capabilities, its people and advantages with both the community and prospective customers. The content had to have a "scroll-stop" quality to it to capture the eye and make users stop to read, consume and share.
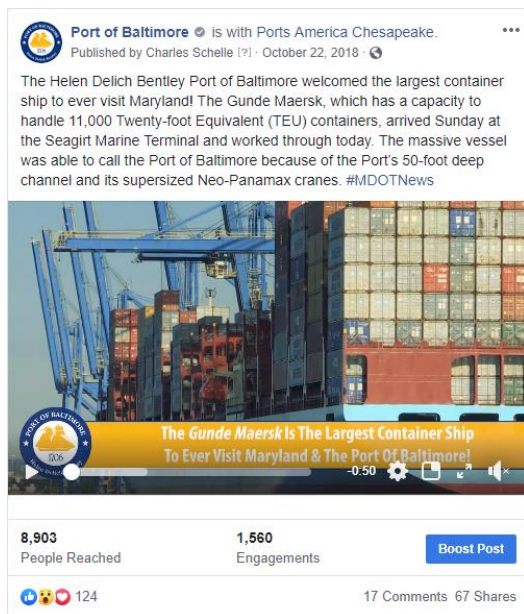


A strategy was executed to make a goal of posting one item per day, with a heavy focus on photo, videos and utilizing the Note feature on Facebook to post news releases and repost magazine and newsletter articles that may not have individual links available.

On Twitter, an emphasis on using short video clips and live tweeting during events or speeches was emphasized to boost engagement. To maximize the news contained in a release, details would be sent out as individual posts and photos with text overlaid that would enhance the posts.

For YouTube, it was discovered that years ago another user had claimed a URL for the Port of Baltimore without permission. To avoid a protracted copyright battle, POB's channel URL was able to be changed to YouTube.com/c/PortofBaltimore to help boost visibility for search engine optimization. Each video would also feature an end screen encouraging viewers to watch other videos or subscribe to the channel.

To increase the quality of the content, the department had to acquire Adobe Creative Cloud suite software for video editing and a new Canon XF200 and equipment for improved video production.

Because of budget constraints, the MDOT MPA relied on scheduling and optimizing through the native platform scheduling tools on Facebook and Twitter/TweetDeck. The MDOT MPA couldn't benefit from the automation of content scheduling and optimization through a paid tool like HootSuite Enterprise or Sprout.

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

By focusing on those core missions while increasing the frequency and quality of posts, one of the goals is to raise awareness of the Port's success, abilities and contributions to the community and state. The comments and the data on social media demonstrate that more people are learning the positive benefits of the Port of Baltimore than they have before.

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

The MDOT MPA focused on creating feature stories or individual clips and photos that would show a slice of life or activity at the port. The content had to have a "scroll-stop" quality to it to capture the eye and make users stop to read, consume and share.

Overall, the content would have to fit within these areas to make a relevant post to the Port's advantages, such as :

- Being the closest East Coast seaport to the Midwest
- Serving as one of Maryland's leading economic generators
- Ranking as the number one seaport for autos and roll/on roll/off cargo in the nation
- Being a good steward of the environment

The editorial approach is much like newsrooms would use, focusing on immediacy and relevancy to create our own news. In other words, "What's happening right now at the Port of Baltimore?" and "Are we showing an active Port?" Are cranes actively working ships? Are cars being loaded onto a Ro/Ro carrier?  Is there a shoreline clean-up going on?



Port of Baltimore ✔
Published by Charles Schelle [?] · July 19, 2018 · 🌐

Cargo to the left, fins to the right and we're the only Port in town. Thanks to David Sites for sharing this spectacular photo taken Wednesday of dolphins playing in the Chesapeake Bay as a MSC ship sails through. #mdotnews #movingcargo #portofbaltimore #🐟 #⚓

87,278 People Reached | 19,347 Engagements | Boost Post

👍❤️😮 Sandy Kalson, Dorothy Sinha and 715 others | 79 Comments  1K Shares

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



A reliance exclusively on iPhone photos was moved away to using the existing Canon T5 camera and acquiring a 400mm lens for remote placement sites that feature an abundance of wildlife and offshore dredging activities. The public information officer augmented the photos contributed to the Port by its freelancer to increase the variety of shots.

Social media feeds and groups were scanned for user-generated content opportunities, republishing photos with permission.

A focus on creating videos as news packages complete with interviews, b-roll and a script for feature stories was also added. This would be mixed in with using iPhone clips to capture parts of stories for immediate use on social platforms while pushing out a complete product later. A subscription to Getty Images would help enhance videos for certain graphics and image elements needed for individual videos.

Information for cargo-related press releases were teased out on social media using graphics created in-house and overlaid on Port photos with text.

The MDOT MPA contracts with a photographer. As part of the push on increased video, staff has worked with the photographer to provide more video clips and b-roll that is used for video either now as a clip or as part of a video package.

The photographer also has deployed a drone to capture more waterside footage of vessels.

A spreadsheet tracks posts for photos, video, or live tweeting.  They are to track subject matter like environmental initiatives, action shots, promoting commerce/business or community/charitable initiatives.



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

Across the board, the Port's social media audience interacts more, and there is anecdotal evidence that its social media followers are ambassadors of the Port, eager to share good news.

For Facebook and Twitter, reach, impressions and engagement were identified as growth opportunities.

**Port of Baltimore Facebook**

Facebook reach nearly tripled, increasing by 180 percent from 2017 to 2018. Impressions, demonstrating the favorably of Facebook to deliver the content again and again on a person's feed, increased by 140 percent. Engagement nearly quadrupled having increased by 283 percent.

Further demonstrating the success of the strategy, none of the posts in 2018 were boosted through paid campaigns.

Facebook fans also increased. At year-end 2017, the Facebook page had 1,115 fans. At year-end 2018, that increased by 116 percent to 2,411 fans.

Videos also captured 47,640 unique views in 2018. In 2017, only 12 videos were uploaded to the Page account for 6,083 unique views.

Engagement is defined as shares, likes, comments and URL clicks on Facebook.

|  | 2017 | 2018 | Increase | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reach** | 153,296 | 429,785 | 276,489 | 180% |
| **Impressions** | 275,211 | 662,712 | 387,501 | 140% |
| **Engagement** | 5,922 | 22,729 | 16,807 | 283% |
| **Fans** | 1,115 | 2,411 | 1,296 | 116 % |



**Port of Baltimore Twitter**

Impressions on Twitter increased by 44 percent from 2017 to 2018, with 703,966 by year's end.

For Twitter, engagement is defined retweets, replies, likes and clicks.

Twitter engagement increased by 206 percent to 26466. When removing a viral tweet about students helping to raise turtles in classrooms that accounted for 14,828 clicks, engagement still increased by 35 percent.

|  | 2017 | 2018 | Increase | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Impressions** | 490,421 | 703,966 | 213,545 | 44% |
| **Engagement** | 8,649 | 26,466 | 17,817 | 206% |
| **Followers** | 5,972 | 6,538 | 566 | 9% |

# Port of Baltimore YouTube
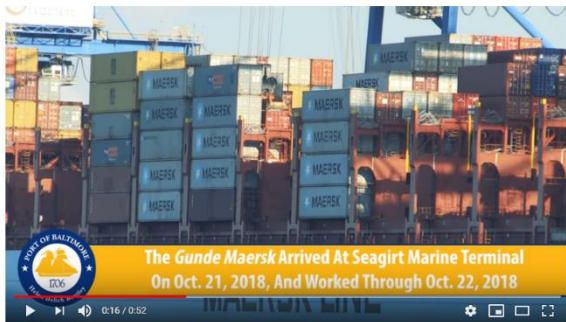


The goal for YouTube was to increase subscribers and views for the calendar year. For YouTube, subscribers increased by 37, an increase of 137 percent from 2017 to 2018. Views increased by 81 percent to 22,600 and watch time increased to 27,000 minutes, which is a 28 percent jump. Watch time increased to 27,000 minutes, which is a 28 percent jump.
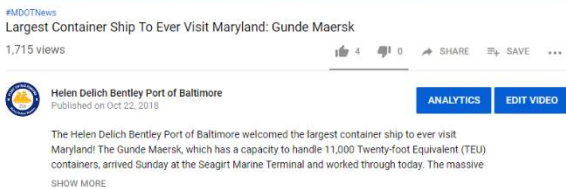
|  | 2017 | 2018 | Increase | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Views** | 12,500 | 22,600 | 10,100 | 81% |
| **Minutes Watched** | 21,078 | 27,000 | 5,922 | 28% |
| **Subscribers** | 27 | 64 | 37 | 137% |

# Audience Feedback | Social Media Comments on Posts

**Joan Nicolas** That's amazing.

**Leyla Krikor** Fantastic! I love to see the port busy!

**Annette Morgan** I am so impressed. Great for the port of Baltimore

**Sarah Sadler** that's awesome, i would have loved to see that

**Beth Crockett Strennen** I watched it on the news!

**Jennifer Ibex Moran** That's really cool! 😊

**Mary Theresa Weil** Love Our #PortOfBaltimore

**James Crowley** That means a lot for Baltimore

**Bill Maria Buszinski** Hey. I helped make that happen.

**Ann Klein** We've got alot of containers to pull from this ship.

**Derek Antoniw** I lash on crane 11

**Eve Adams Gordon** Great job!

**BettyJane Gilds Menta** Very interesting project..shared this.

**Daniel Miner** I believe the dredged materials is what saved the islands.

**Rich Rehberger Sr.** Another fine job by the men and women of the Port of Baltimore. A special shoutout to those that maintain our heavy lift cranes.
Go POB.