

Shipper's Summit

The Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA) saw an opportunity to collaboratively provide an event for customer appreciation, while connecting customers to their added-value service providers. Creating Shippers Summit also allowed for shipping industry leaders to speak and hear from panels about pressing topics of the day, share new initiatives and showcase the Port of New Orleans' achievements.

In order to stand out from many competing conferences and seminars, Port NOLA planned Shippers Summit to take place aboard a luxury paddlewheeler on the Mississippi River for an overnight cruise.

1. Challenges or Opportunities

One critical challenge was to maximize the number of rooms available while keeping the quality of attendees at the highest level without compromising attendance due to being a smaller attended event.

The Port used the opportunity to utilize the smaller number of people to intimately personalize the event and connect with customers while encouraging networking between added-value partners in the supply chain.

2. Mission

The Port of New Orleans mission is: To drive regional economic prosperity by maximizing the flow of international trade and commerce as a modern Gateway. **Our Vision:** Advancing global connections and infrastructure to exceed the needs of tomorrow.

Shippers Summit focused on connecting together shipping industry leaders to show them our appreciation for their business and to provide them updates on why continuing to ship via the Port NOLA gateway makes good business sense. Strengthening our relationship with our stakeholders and encouraging their collaboration with each other will advance our regional economic prosperity.

3. Planning and programming components

Overall goals/ desired results: The Port wanted to have a multipurpose intimate event with a focus on customer appreciation and industry advancement. At the same time, the event allowing customers to connect with each other organically and encouraged networking between added-value partners in the supply chain.

Objectives:

Create an unexpected shipping industry event that would entice C-Suite professionals to convene in New Orleans for education, networking, business development and customer appreciation.

Target Audiences: Executive Level Audience representing companies in the categories below.

Primary Audience: Ocean Carriers, Proprietary Cargo Owners, Railroads

Secondary Audience: Added-Value for Supply Chain, Terminal Operators, Chassis Providers

4. Actions & Outputs

Strategies: A planning committee that consisted of the Port's Commercial and Communications team members convened to discuss the timing and implementation of the event, the itinerary, branding, giveaways, menus, entertainment, sponsorship levels, sponsorship requests and collateral needed.

The Commercial team assigned (3 staff) and one event planning consultant project managed the logistics, invitation list, sponsorship solicitation, event planning and budgeting for Shippers Summit.

The Communications team assigned (2 staff) worked with the graphic designer to create the logo, electronic invitation, electronic email template, brochure, onboarding packet and program.

To staff the event itself, the Commercial team (6 staff), event planner, one Public Affairs staff and one IT staff member were aboard the vessel for run of show and general event needs.

Logo designed to incorporate the river and rail, as well as complement the Port NOLA logo:



Electronic invitation designed to be used in Constant Contact, the body of personal emails via Outlook and printed as needed:



**You are cordially invited to set sail with us
for the inaugural Port NOLA Shippers Summit**

March 13-15, 2019

Join us aboard the American Duchess, the only all-suite paddlewheeler in the U.S. for this exclusive Shippers Summit on the Mississippi River. The itinerary features keynote speakers and interactive panel sessions.

R.S.V.P.:

www.website.com

An Onboarding Packet was designed to send to attendees in advance of arrival to help them prepare since the majority of them had never been on a river cruise before and this was the inaugural event. Design elements from the invitation were incorporated into all following collateral for cohesion. The cover can be seen below:



What You Need to Know Before You Board

5. Outcomes & Evaluation

Evaluation of Success: The demand to participate in Port NOLA's inaugural Shippers Summit was tremendous, and it sold out well in advance of the ticket purchase deadline. A survey was conducted at the conclusion of the event and the responses were overwhelmingly positive – 100 percent of the respondents rated their overall satisfaction with Shippers Summit as “very satisfied;” 90 percent rated the sessions as “very relevant;” 65 percent rated the speakers as “excellent” and the remaining respondents rated the speakers as “very good.”

Written feedback from the survey includes:

“Very much enjoyed the one on one networking with all. We are so caught up in our emails and cellphones that we don't get the captive opportunity to visit and network as we did in this environment. Also enjoyed the panels. Very informative. Great job to you and your commercial team.”

“Felt engagement from participants was high, enjoyed the venue tremendously and thought the entire staff couldn't have been more professional/gracious!”

“As a shipper, it was nice to meet the people behind the carriers. We usually email each other now but it is different when we actually meet the people we interact on a daily basis.”

The Commercial and Communications teams also met to debrief the event and identify the successes and areas for improvement for a second iteration of the event.

Outcomes: There was overwhelmingly positive anecdotal feedback and eagerness expressed by industry leaders to attend next year. The positive word-of-mouth has been noted by the Commercial team, which continues to hear from customers who weren't able to participate and ask for the date of the next Shippers Summit so they can clear their calendars.

Port NOLA is planning its Fiscal Year 2020 budget and plans are being made to create a second Shippers Summit.