AAPA 2020 Communications Awards
Entry Category: Web-based media
Port of New Orleans
Entry Name: Port NOLA Digital Learning Toolbox

Summary: In March 2020, amid the Louisiana's stay at home mandate during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA) launched a Digital Learning Toolbox to provide educational resources regarding Port operations and maritime careers.
The toolbox included resources for students, parents and educators to explore the Port's four lines of business through a Port 101 presentation, handouts, a virtual reality video, coloring and activity book and a Youtube playlist.

1. What are/were the entry's specific communications challenges or opportunities?
In March, New Orleans was named an epicenter during the COVID-19 pandemic, ultimately leading to a statewide stay-at-home mandate. While communities across the country were rocked by stay-at-home orders, our public affairs team began to have conversations with teachers to see how Port NOLA could assist.

As echoed by our own employees who were now working from home due to the mandate, we knew that parents of school-aged children were particularly challenged as they shifted into the role of a teacher. Additionally, from our exploratory conversations with local educators, we knew that teachers were struggling to find and create engaging lesson plans in the new landscape of a digital classroom.

Each year, the Port receives various requests from schools to host field trips, give presentations, send lesson plans, etc. Knowing that schools are an integral part of the workforce development pipeline, Port NOLA finds ways to engage with students through events and presentations throughout the year so that the maritime sector remains front of mind as these students begin to think about their future.

Under the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent stay-at-home orders, the Port identified an opportunity to provide free, engaging and educational content to our community. In order to execute a Digital Learning Toolbox, we compiled the content/topics that are most requested by school groups—from elementary to high school—each year.

2. How does the communication used in this entry map back to the organization's overall 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.

As an economic engine for our region and state, and as a Louisiana state agency, it is our responsibility to engage with interested parties and educate the public about our mission. In our 2018 Strategic Master Plan, we identified workforce development as a focus area. With the Port's mission in mind, we realize that we cannot drive regional economic prosperity without cultivating the workforce that drives it. In order to remain competitive as a Port, we recognize that investing in our maritime workforce is as integral as investing our infrastructure. As such, we believe that workforce development starts with K-12 education, which is why it is important for us to create initiatives around this demographic.

3. What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?
The primary goal of the Digital Learning Toolbox was to raise stakeholder awareness and positive sentiment of the Port by providing educational content at a critical time when the classroom landscape shifted dramatically.

A secondary goal was to create a space on our website in which this evergreen educational content could live permanently, thereby always having resources for schools outside of the parameters of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the Digital Learning Toolbox press release went out, our objective was to receive 50 hits on the webpage and garner media mentions in our local news media.

The primary audiences for the Digital Learning Toolbox were educators, students and parents. The secondary audiences were community partners, industry partners and elected officials.

Digital Learning Toolbox can be found here. Elements include:
- Port NOLA 101 video: Learn about the Port of New Orleans, what we do, our lines of business and maritime careers in this virtual presentation!
- Virtual Reality Video: Experience day-to-day operations at the Port terminal through our virtual reality video! We recommend watching this on a computer. For VR headsets users, we recommend using your phone.
- Maritime Career Info Sheet: The local maritime industry employs over 19,000 people, and you could be one of them someday—explore career opportunities on the River!
- Regulatory Roles 101 Info Sheet: This brochure explains the roles of different agencies and organizations who help to regulate what happens on the River.
- Port NOLA Coloring & Activity Book
- Port NOLA Fact Sheets
- Photo Gallery

4. What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?
To create a successful Digital Learning Toolbox, we knew we could not do so without the input of teachers. Through discovery calls, our public affairs team learned more about age-appropriate content for elementary, middle and high school audiences. While the majority of content in the toolbox is geared for middle school and above, elementary students can engage with the coloring and activity book, as well as the interactive VR video.

The idea for the Toolbox was conceptualized and executed within 4 days. Because the stay-at-home order was sudden, and at that time, Louisiana schools would only be closed through April 13, we wanted to act quickly to ensure we were timely with our content, as many teachers were struggling to lesson plan for a digital classroom. Three public affairs staff members worked on the project, and while the

Toolbox itself was created in house, some of the curated content within it such as the VR video, the **Youtube playlist** and the coloring and activity book were previously outsourced projects.

Once the Toolbox was created, a **press release** was sent out and it was shared on social media, via **newsletter** and announced during a **radio interview**.

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

The Toolbox was positively received by both our primary and secondary target audiences. The toolbox has received 842 page views on the Port NOLA website and earned 15 media mentions.

Media Coverage Examples:

Trade Publication - Waterways Journal - https://www.waterwaysjournal.net/2020/04/19/port-nola-launches-digital-learning-resources-for-out-of-school-students/

Local Popular Blog - New Orleans Mom Blog - https://neworleansmom.com/things-to-do/local-digital-resources-for-kids-during-covid-19/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=local-digital-resources-for-kids-during-covid-19

Local Publication - Biz New Orleans -https://www.bizneworleans.com/port-nola-launches-digital-learning-toolbox-for-educators-and-students/

We received positive anecdotal feedback from educators, stating that they would share the resource with their students and their parents. Ultimately, the toolbox served its purpose during the stay at home order—to educate students and create awareness about the Port of New Orleans and regional maritime careers.

Social Media Analytics:

The toolbox video on our Youtube channel has 119 views and garnered 537 impressions. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounted for over 4,500 impressions on the original posts alone for the Digital Learning Toolbox.
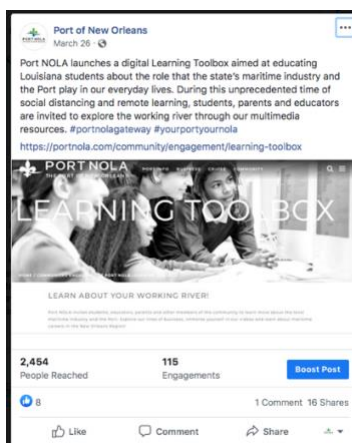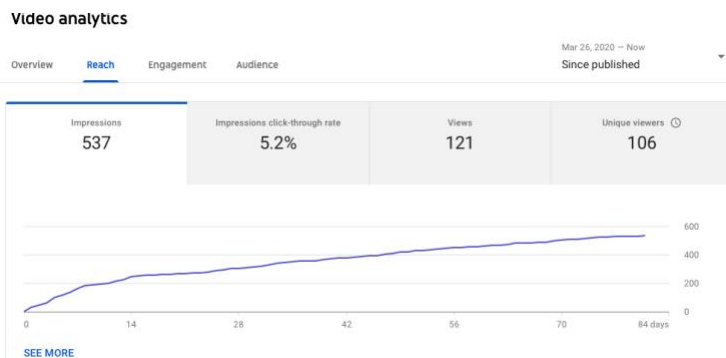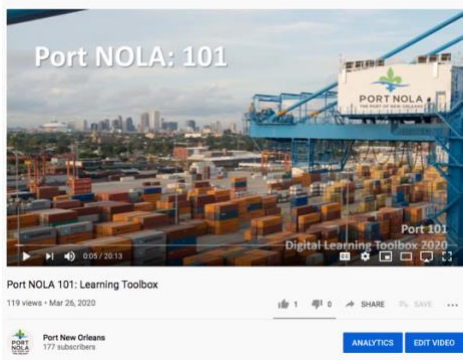
Port of New Orleans @PortNOLA · Mar 26
Port NOLA launches a digital Learning Toolbox aimed at educating Louisiana students about the role that the state's maritime industry and the Port play in our everyday lives.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR WORKING RIVER!

💬 1　　🔁 1　　♡ 10

Port of New Orleans @PortNOLA · Mar 26
During this unprecedented time of remote learning, students, parents and educators are invited to explore the working river through our multimedia resources. #portnolagateway #yourportyournola

Port NOLA Learning Toolbox
🔗 portnola.com

💬　　🔁 2　　♡ 2

Port NOLA Learning Toolbox
portnola.com

👍 🌐 12

👍 Like　　💬 Comment

Be the first to comment on this

Organic impressions: **791** Impressions　　　　Hide stats ⌃

Organic stats ⓘ
Targeted to: All followers

791	12	1.9%	0
Impressions	Reactions	Click-through rate	Comments

1	15	3.54%	
Share	Clicks	Engagement rate	