

AAPA Conference

Public Relations/Government Relations Seminar “Communicating the Importance of Infrastructure Investment”

June 21 – 23, 2011

The following are snippets from seminar participant feedback on the last day of the seminar when asked what their most important “take away” was from the conference:

- Most important resources we have are our own creativity – not necessarily requiring big budget outlays.
- Reoccurring theme of seminar – “Partnerships within and among ports are crucial.” This includes partnerships with tenants, labor, other ports, etc.
- I got valuable perspectives from others. It helps to remove the blinders we seem to have to put on ourselves in order to focus on our day-to-day work.
- I got a better understanding what the various facets of communication do within my organization (i.e. trade development, external affairs and government affairs).
- Seminar offered an important exchange of information among ports. Those from outside the U.S. can use many of the same principles they learned here about U.S. challenges; many issues are universal.
- I learned about balancing public and governmental relations.
- Seminar opened my eyes to the opportunities to partner with AAPA to promote local and regional port infrastructure development examples.
- You can give the public facts and statistics, but don’t forget to illustrate by sharing examples and stories. Stories help explain to the community how the port positively impacts their lives.
- Collaboration and outreach between public relations and government relations help to solidify the importance of both disciplines.
- Community events help increase the public’s perception of the port, including via on-terminal visits and through social media interactions.
- Communications and government relations professionals create synergy when they work together to reach out to legislators and emphasize job creation through transportation support, especially with regard to infrastructure development.
- The seminar presented eye-opening information for ports without separate government relations staff. Importance of nontraditional partners was emphasized and the value of telling stories that are clear, concise, emotional and heartfelt.
- Seminar helped me realize that politicians are people just like us.
- Seminar helped me realize that you shouldn’t assume people know, or care, what you’re talking about in your communications. Need to bring it down to community and individual level. Don’t talk about the benefits to the individual port; talk about the jobs and business your activities create for the community.

- Public relations and government relations are intertwined and create synergy. Working together offers value-added benefits.
- Integrated PR/GR approach needs to be part of an organization's strategic plan.
- Public relations can help government relations illustrate messages to policymakers. For examples, PR can illustrate the benefits of dredging by illustrating the "hole" in the water that you don't otherwise see.
- Public relations helps government relations tell their story to different audiences who influence policy makers.
- Seminar showed me the importance of designating a tireless "spear-carrier."
- Public relations informs and government relations persuades – together they can change attitudes and create success. Make sure the community knows what you do.
- You can do all engineering and public relations you want, but if you do not have government support – then you have nothing.
- (Atlanta) Mayor Reed provided wake-up call to importance of infrastructure development. Very inspirational.
- Seminar showed the value of using interns and younger generation to guide new media and social media. Seek out Facebook friends, use ads along with press release to help ensure media placement and coverage. Seminar speakers offered many great quotes and "words to live by."
- Use clear memorable messages, then repeat, repeat, repeat.
- Networking and free newsletters are great tricks.
- Include public relations in government relations to increase success of reaching policymakers.
- I was inspired and influenced by the ideas of my peers.
- I got a better understanding of who are our audiences and with whom we can/should partner.
- Grass-roots effort is vital to engage from bottom-up.
- Communications measurement and analysis is important.
- Use of internet, new media and keeping content updated and developed is important.
- I found out what other ports are doing to communicate their benefits.