

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION ENTRY FORM

(Please copy and complete this form for each entry)

Check only ONE entry classification below:

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| 1. AAPA Awareness Initiative Messaging _____ | 8. Overall Campaign _____ |
| 2. Advertisements – Single _____ | 9. Periodicals _____ |
| 3. Advertisements – Series _____ | 10. Promotional/Advocacy Material _____ |
| 4. Annual Reports _____ | 11. Social/Web-Based Media XXX __ |
| 5. Audio-Only Presentations _____ | 12. Special Events _____ |
| 6. Directories/Handbooks _____ | 13. Videos _____ |
| 7. Miscellaneous _____ | 14. Visual-Only Presentations _____ |
| | 15. Websites _____ |

<input type="checkbox"/> CATEGORY 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CATEGORY 2
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Entry Title: The Port of Cleveland: Public Engagement on Twitter and Facebook

Port Name: The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority _____

Port Address: 1375 E. 9th Street, Suite 2300, Cleveland Ohio 44114 _____

Contact Name/Title: Sandra Livingston, Vice President of External Affairs _____

Telephone: 216-377-1341 _____ Email Address: Sandra.Livingston@portofcleveland.com _____

Please indicate precisely how your port's name should be listed on any award(s) it may win:

Name: Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority _____

Being as precise as possible, attach a separate entry statement, in English, that includes a descriptive summary of your entry and lists answers to each of the following four key questions:

1. What are/were the specific communications challenges or opportunities?

- Describe in specific & measurable terms the situation leading up to creation of this entry.
- Analyze the major internal and external factors needing to be addressed.

2. What were your communications planning and programming components?

- Describe your overall goals (desired results).
- Describe your objectives (identify specific, measurable milestones needed to reach your goals).

- Identify your target publics (list primary, secondary and tertiary audiences in order of importance).

The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority

2013 AAPA Communications Awards

Category: Social Media

Title: The Port of Cleveland: Public Engagement on Twitter and Facebook

<https://twitter.com/portofcleveland>

<https://www.facebook.com/ThePortofCleveland>



The Port's revamped Facebook page highlights the range of ways the organization builds connections across the community

Challenges and Opportunities

In recent years the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority has stepped up with new, targeted and innovative initiatives to maximize its benefit to the community – and with this historic pivot has come a more energized and strategic approach to communications, public outreach, and community engagement.

The Port does face communications challenges. While it has strong working relationships with private and public stakeholders, the general public is far less familiar with the Port, its value to the community, and its re-invigorated approach.

This lack of knowledge results in part from two facts: first, the general public typically does not experience the Port directly or frequently; and second, many people are not aware that the Port connects with people in important ways that are not obvious.

This knowledge gap also stems from and is compounded by other factors. The Port previously went through a difficult period marked by instability and an overly ambitious plan (that has since been rejected) to move its maritime facilities. The Port also has received some negative media coverage and suffers from misconceptions.

Opportunities to address these challenges arose in June 2010 with the hiring of a new President/CEO. Since that time, the Port has produced a series of solid accomplishments and moved forward on unprecedented initiatives. The process has been strategic, methodical, and measurable, and communications and outreach have been a significant part of this new era for the Port.

In the fall of 2011, the Port adopted a new Strategic Action Plan, Vision, and Mission. Simply put, the Port is focused on job growth, economic vitality, and vibrant waterfronts. Key messaging focuses on the mission, the mindset, and the work.

By way of background, the Port is a public agency that receives funding from a countywide property tax voted on by residents, placing an even higher duty on the Port to inform the public about the use and benefits of its tax dollars, and making education and meaningful dialogue even more important.

The Port targets three key areas to enhance the region:

- **Maritime:** The Port is a leading international gateway for waterborne trade on the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway System, connecting regional companies to the global economy
- **Development Finance:** The Port helps enterprises – from businesses to hospitals to arts institutions – connect to the financing they need to expand and invest in new facilities
- **Environment & Infrastructure:** The Port has taken on an expanded role as a steward of Cleveland Harbor, which includes the downtown Lake Erie shoreline and the Cuyahoga River ship channel. The Port has launched environmental and infrastructure programs to safeguard the channel, and has opened the 88-acre Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve to enhance the public's connection to the waterfront.

The Strategic Action Plan identified communicating for “transparency, public engagement, and accountability” as one of its seven strategic policies. In 2012, the Port developed a Strategic Communications Plan that included a series of actions centered on key messaging, education, outreach, and engagement.

During the latter part of 2012, the Port moved forward with an integrated communications strategy that includes the following online initiatives:

- Launching a redesigned and rewritten website
- Developing an electronic newsletter disseminated via email and the Port's website
- Distributing periodic President/CEO stakeholder letters shared via email and posted on the website
- Strengthening the Port's presence and engagement on Facebook and Twitter
- Partnering with The Civic Commons (<http://theciviccommons.com/portofcleveland>), a social media site designed for civic and civil dialogue.

The Port is also measuring the success of its outreach efforts through ongoing analysis of feedback and statistics.

The Port's presence on Twitter and Facebook gives the organization the opportunity to expand its presence in social media, reach individuals who might not otherwise have felt a connection to the Port, establish an online role as a good neighbor, and create more active dialogue with the public through this rapidly growing communications sphere.

The impact can be measured by audience growth, monthly data analysis, and ongoing dialogue on Twitter and Facebook.

Planning and Programming Components

In the past, the Port Authority had a presence on social media, but no clear strategy. Once the 2012 communications plan was completed, the Port drilled down and developed a social media plan that includes strategic goals, target audiences, specific content plans, and measurable outcomes. That plan complements the Strategic Action Plan, with social media posts highlighting the Port's key policies, initiatives, and messages.

The overall aim is to engage with an ever-growing and more diverse audience in a lively dialogue that helps the Port accomplish its education and engagement goals, and strengthen public trust. More specifically the goals are to:

- Educate more members of the public on the breadth and depth of the Port's work and value to the community
- Engage the community in dialogues around broader maritime, economic development, and environmental issues that dovetail with the Port's key focus areas
- Engage with Port stakeholders in an online environment
- Share the content of others to encourage collaboration and sharing of Port content through additional social media channels
- Integrate social media with the Port's other forms of communications
- Develop a vibrant, interactive online community where the Port engages with both organizations and individuals who ask questions, offer comments, or provide information that the Port can share as a good neighbor.

To reach these goals, the Port developed specific objectives. They include:

- Share information, news stories, photos, and facts on a consistent and timely basis
- Highlight both information that is specific to the Port as well as broader issues pertinent to the Port, including maritime and freight shipping; economic development and financing; and, waterways infrastructure, and the environment
- Use pictures to help the general public better understand what happens at a working port and the importance of waterborne transportation
- Follow other organizations and share their content
- Interact with members of the online community and develop a relationship with them by responding to their questions and comments, and by sharing information that the Port can share as a good neighbor.
- Encourage readers to visit the Port's website, and read the eNewsletter and CEO stakeholder letters to learn more about the Port and its work
- Invite comments and questions
- Create similar graphic designs for Port's Twitter and Facebook pages using a variety of pictures to emphasize the Port's value and community, and how the Port connects with people in ways that are both obvious and not so obvious.

Target audiences:

- Members of the general public who subscribe to social media sites
- Stakeholders in the Port's three focus areas
- Non-profit organizations (general community, civic organizations, environmental organizations, recreational organizations, economic development organizations)
- Government (local, state, and federal officials & agencies)
- Local, state, and national media outlets and trade publications
- Internal stakeholders (board, staff, terminal operators, terminal workers)

Actions and communications outputs

In the summer of 2012, the Port began working with a strategic communications consulting firm to develop and implement the social media plan. It was important to not just have a presence. The goal was to craft a clearly articulated rationale for how and why the Port uses social media. The initial focus has been on enhancing the Port's presence on Facebook and Twitter. The Port recently posted a video

on YouTube and plans to increase its YouTube use as part of a second phase of upgraded social media activity.

The Port/consulting firm team was intentional in its approach, brainstorming about the Port's online presence, audiences, messaging, and which forms of content work best in different settings (for example, Facebook engagements have been most successful when the message is delivered by pictures, not words). The team developed a broad list of people, organizations, and issues to track via Twitter and Facebook; and they discussed strategic options for increasing followers and likes.

At the same time, the Port decided to revamp the look of its social media landing pages to both better illustrate its broad engagement in the community, and to be more welcoming to individuals who might not have previously seen their connection to the Port (for example, birders who enjoy the Port-managed Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve). The Port worked with an outside designer to create an image using 18 thumbnail photos to graphically illustrate the breadth of its work and its connections to the community.

The new social-media approach was launched in August. The Port and the consulting firm regularly discuss both content and strategic ways to broaden the Port's reach to educate more people. Social media content is developed based on strategic priorities, press releases, news, and a good-neighbor approach. Content is also continually refined as monthly reports measure the impact of social media posts by click through rates, comments, retweets, and shares, showing what is most effective. For example, metrics have shown that Twitter engagement is strongest when the tweets are informational or when the content drives readers to the website. In comparison, engagement on Facebook is highest when photos and other visual elements are posted.

Tactics include the following:

- Posting new items several times a week on Facebook and Twitter
- Sharing photos of cargo handling and giant over-sized cargo
- Highlighting Port news, information and eNewsletter stories and including website links to full stories and other Port communications
- Following and sharing content from peer organizations, ports, industry leaders, and local thought leaders to encourage collaboration and sharing of Port content through additional social media channels
- Driving readers to the website to learn more about the Port with questions such as: "17,832. Any guess what this number is?" (Answer: jobs tied to Cleveland Harbor)
- Responding to online questions with friendly answers and on a timely basis seven days a week
- Asking individuals and organizations with a substantial social-media following to share the Port's work, news, and eNewsletter stories through tweets, retweets and Facebook likes.

With regard to staffing and budget, the Port's Vice President for External Affairs is responsible for social media, working with the consulting firm as well as Port staff to develop a regular flow of content. Staff members regularly take photos on the job – on the docks, along the water, and in the community – to both engage and educate the community on Port activities and functions.

The consulting firm posts information and pictures, and works to strategically expand the audience.

The cost for the landing-page design was \$300. The monthly cost for the consulting firm varies based on time, but on average is about \$750.

Evaluation methods and communications outcomes

The Port has made solid gains since August in the size of its social-media audience and the amount of engagement. The organization reviews metrics on a monthly basis, tracking information such as numbers of likes, followers, and retweets as well as comments and click-through rates. These metrics allow for evaluation of content shared with the social media audience, and gives an accurate measurement of what is or is not of interest to the audience.

The growth in audience since August is as follows:

- The Port's following on Twitter has grown by more than 515 percent and as of the end of April was at 673.
- Likes on Facebook have grown by 43 percent to 525, also as of the end of April.

Other insights from the monthly reports include: Twitter engagement comes largely from informational tweets and tweets that push readers to the website and news articles, while Facebook engagement is strongest when photos and other visuals are posted.

For example in March, the most clicked on tweet highlighted a report on the "green" advantages of Great Lakes shipping. Other top clicked-on tweets included a link to the AAPA Seaports Magazine and pushes to website pages focused on both River Infrastructure & Renewal, and the Port's role as a catalyst for economic development.

In contrast, the highest engagements on Facebook involved maritime photos, particularly those of the Port's first ship of the 2013 international shipping season.

These examples show that the Port is effectively moving toward its goals of educating its audience about the Port specifically and about broader issues related to maritime. They also demonstrate that Port's efforts to integrate content and drive readers from social media to the website are working, and that our tactics are attracting individuals with a diverse range of interests.

In addition, the Port's strategic efforts to broaden its audiences are also showing results, as individuals and organizations that are part of the Port's online community are liking and retweeting messages. This includes key community stakeholders who are sharing the Port's social media content with their constituents and communities.

For example, the Port has posted links to its eNewsletter stories and columns on social media, and then these posts have been retweeted by community leaders/organizations, including a City of Cleveland councilman with nearly 4,700 Twitter followers, and a downtown Cleveland economic development organization with more than 10,800 followers.

On a more anecdotal level the Port is able to use social media to directly and quickly respond to a range of questions and comments. For example, when a citizen posed an online question to a Cleveland councilman about dead fish floating in Cleveland Harbor, the councilman sent the question to the Port, which quickly responded with an explanation for why the fish were there (these fish naturally

die off annually), and with messaging about the Port's stewardship role (its harbor clean-up boats could later remove the dead fish (gizzard shad) not already picked up by sea gulls).

Facebook also offered opportunities to engage the community in conversation, and showcase newsy examples of how the Port is making a difference in the community. After Northeast Ohio suffered substantial damage from Hurricane Sandy, the Port shared photos and information about two custom-made boats it built last year to clean up floating debris in Cleveland Harbor. These boats were integral in clean-up efforts at a local marina, and photos of their post-storm work generated solid interest. Members of the community responded to the posts with questions and comments, giving the Port another opportunity for direct and timely interaction with people.

For all these reasons, social media has become key to the Port's communications strategy. Social media provides an opportunity to inform, engage, and connect with the rapidly growing online population. It also has the advantage of regularly tracking metrics that reveal the effectiveness of the Port's social media strategy. In a relatively short period of time, the Port's social media strategy has produced encouraging numbers and helped the Port reach and engage both existing and new audiences.