

2013 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION ENTRY FORM

(Please copy and complete this form for each entry)

Check only ONE entry classification below:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 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 _____ |
| 5. Audio-Only Presentations _____ | 12. Special Events _____ |
| 6. Directories/Handbooks _____ | 13. Videos _____ |
| 7. Miscellaneous _____ | 14. Visual-Only Presentations _____ |
| | 15. Websites _____ X |

 CATEGORY 1 CATEGORY 2Entry Title Port of New Bedford WebsitePort Name Port of New BedfordPort Address 52 Fisherman's Wharf, New Bedford, MA 02740Contact Name/Title Wendy CullumTelephone (508) 748-9972 Email Address wendy@MichelCullum.com

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

Name Port of New Bedford, New Bedford, MABeing 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).

3. What actions were taken and what communication outputs were used?

- Explain your strategies (e.g., identify media, timing & venue choices requiring tactics to complete).
- Specify your tactics (actions used to carry out your strategies).
- Map out your implementation plan (include timelines, staffing and budget).

4. What were your your evaluation methods and communications outcomes?

- Describe formal or informal surveys, or anecdotal audience feedback, used to evaluate success.
- Determine communications outcomes by assessing changed opinions, behaviors and attitudes.

ENTRY: Classification: WEBSITES – Port of New Bedford

Out of Dry Dock and into the 21st Century –

The Port of New Bedford Website launched in October of 2011:

Background:

The Port of New Bedford is the City's greatest natural resource, both economically and historically, and annually generates over \$1 billion in economic activity. The Harbor Development Commission (HDC) oversees all aspects of this deepwater port.

The mission of the HDC is to support the Port of New Bedford by continually upgrading port resources, preserving its spot as the #1 United States fishing port (in landed catch dollar value) and expanding the New Bedford economy. In order to stimulate commerce, the HDC must promote the Port to multiple marine industry sectors (Commercial Fishing, Shipping, Recreational Boating, Cruise Ships, Ferry Boats and Excursion Boats).

Since there was no City Office of Tourism*, the HDC was charged with marketing the Harbor to recreational boaters and small cruise ships and promoting the attractions, art galleries and restaurants in the historic downtown area (although a "tourism" website existed – Destination New Bedford, there were no funds to promote it). At that time, the New Bedford side of the Harbor was perceived as a strictly commercial port that did not welcome or have any accommodations for recreational boaters. Boaters had no access point from the water even though the working waterfront abutted the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. To rectify this, the first dinghy dock was installed in the summer of 2009.

The New Website Project

The Port started the new website project in late 2010. The Port wanted to change its image to a welcoming harbor to attract the cruising community. Equally important to the current and future economy of the City were the Commercial Fishing and Shipping industries. Therefore, the Port's website had to serve the business community as well as building tourism.

The Situation with the Port's Internet Presence

The Port of New Bedford's Internet presence, housed on the City of New Bedford's official website, was suboptimal on multiple fronts:

- The Port's section was hard to find and was not intuitive.
- The Port's "home page" (landing page) was not listed under the Port of New Bedford or New Bedford Harbor! Instead, the Port's page was buried in the long list under "City Offices" and then under "Harbor Development."
- Once you found the Port's landing page, it was confusing, unprofessional and cluttered.

- The Port's section was missing a lot of requested information and much of the posted content was out of date as the HDC staff had no easy way to manage its own content.
- Finally, the City of New Bedford's Official website was not attractive, user friendly or image enhancing. (<http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/>)

The Challenge and the Opportunity:

The Port needed to be able to communicate directly with very different audiences in order to expand the local economy. Since the fishing industry was well established, the target groups for economic growth were Shipping, Recreational Boating and Cruise Ships. Being able to showcase all the Port had to offer to those groups was the opportunity.

The challenge was multi-tiered:

First, the Port's site needed to be much easier to find on the Internet - but we could not change the City's website.

Second, specific information needed to be easy to find — whether you were a captain of a freighter, a trucker picking up a load of fresh seafood, a cruise line director selecting a port of call, or a sailor looking for a slip for the season.

Third, the look of the site had to appeal to both B2B and B2C audiences as well as attractively showcase the Port's terrific features.

Fourth, the Port wanted the current site taken down as soon as possible and needed an interim solution well before the new site could be ready.

Fifth, the Port needed a low cost way to communicate and promote the new website to each of its target groups.

Our Primary Goals were threefold:

- A. Promote the Port of New Bedford (and the City) with a website that showcases the Port's unique attributes.
- B. Position the Port of New Bedford as a welcoming harbor to all types of vessels and mariners.
- C. Create awareness of the new website among each of its target audiences (Shipping, Recreational Boating, Cruise Ships, Commercial Fishing, Ferry and Excursion Boats, and Government Officials & Taxpayers).

Our Objectives:

1. Have our own URL as a stand-alone website, but still have it linked to the City's website.
2. Ensure the website provides desired information to each one of our different audiences.
3. Enhance the overall image of the Port of New Bedford and the City of New Bedford
4. Have an easy to use content management system so Port's staff could update the site ourselves.

5. Complete the website in time for the first New England Trade Development Summit on October 17, 2011.
6. Create an affordable interim solution and communicate it to users while the new site was under construction.

Target Audiences:

As mentioned above, there are very distinct target groups the Port of New Bedford website needed to support. From a financial standpoint, increasing shipping and tourism represented the greatest economic growth opportunity.

Shipping – The Port wanted to expand its role as an intermodal shipping center for short sea shipping and international import and export trade. Additionally, the City and the New Bedford Economic Development Council had targeted clean energy as an industry to develop and attract, and were in competition with other Ports to support proposed and future off-shore wind farms (i.e., Cape Wind).

Recreational Boating – Since the Harbor is a natural “gateway” to the City, the HDC is responsible for attracting more recreational boaters and visiting sailing organizations to stimulate tourism. The HDC also manages a 198 slip marina, Pope’s Island Marina, and 500 moorings (the majority of which are recreational versus commercial.)

Cruise Ships – New Bedford wanted to increase small cruise ship visits as a port of call for tours of the New England Islands and Seaports.

Commercial Fishing – For the past 12 years, the Port of New Bedford has been the number one fishing port in the United States. Supporting the Fishing Industry is one of the HDC’s core missions.

Ferry and Excursion Boats – The City offers passenger ferry services to Martha's Vineyard and Cuttyhunk as well as sport fishing and harbor tours. The Martha’s Vineyard fast ferry brings in a lot of people to New Bedford because they can avoid Cape Traffic.

Government Agencies and Taxpayers – As one of the City's departments, the HDC must be transparent and explain how it governs the Port and manages all the Harbor facilities. The HDC also needed to communicate its vision for the future.

Our strategies were to:

1. Develop a good working relationship with the City’s IT Department to manage the transition to a new URL with a link to the City’s site
2. Make the site content-rich, user-friendly and easy to navigate so each target group could find what they needed quickly.
3. Link to the existing tourism site, Destination New Bedford, which already had restaurant listing and recreational information to avoid redundancy.
4. Design an engaging and cohesive layout that can be customized to resonate with each target group.

5. Create a custom and dynamic template within a content management system (like WordPress) so Port's staff could be trained to handle updates, posting and new pages as needed.
6. Organize all the content into a site map in order to plan the timeline for content development, design and coding.
7. Leverage the Port's segmented database to explain the interim site to all its different target groups as well as announce the new website when complete. As background – The Port had previously commissioned the creation of a master database that had 4,000+ individual emails addresses and was strategically segmented into 15 separate groups such as cruise ships, recreational boaters, forwarders & shippers and fish houses, etc.

The development of the new website for the Port of New Bedford included the following steps (tactics).

To be proactive, we had secured www.PortofNewBedford.org as soon as the website project was announced. We also initiated a briefing for the City's IT department so they understood the Port's goals and were comfortable with the Port's strategic plan for its website and how it would interface with the City's current platform.

Next we needed to develop the Port's interim solution while its website was under construction. The plan was to turn the Port's e-newsletter into its interim website. We used a state-of-the-art technology that transformed the e-newsletter into an electronic magazine with turning pages that could easily accommodate 16+ pages and populated it with beautiful graphics and informative stories and updates. We incorporated links into the format so important information could be accessed from the online magazine until the real site was ready.

We created two versions of the e-newsletter (Commercial & Recreational Editions) because we needed completely different content for our B2B and B2C audiences. We released those two e-newsletters with coordinating "e-blast" templates to explain the Port's website was in "dry dock" and the attached e-newsletter would serve as the interim site.

Then we began the huge task of organizing all the desired content into a 155-page site map. We segmented the website into seven navigable sections that served as the portals of information for the Port's different target audiences:

About the Port | Harbor Development Commission | Commercial Fishing | Shipping | Recreational Boating | Cruise | Ferries & Excursion Boats

To ensure the site was easy to navigate and user friendly, we selected a state-of-the-art navigation feature called "mega menus" to list and organize the content for the seven "portals." Mega menus ensure a visitor sees everything a section contains without the distraction of fly-outs or the need for hovering. An effectively designed mega menu allows you to find everything immediately.

The design of the website had to please a lot of masters. The unifying design layout required the flexibility to take Port's new look and morph into the relevant images for each target audience. We didn't want fishermen to only see pleasure boats and we didn't want sailors to only see freighters!

Additionally, as we were creating content for each section, we realized many pages needed to be repeated in multiple sections (e.g., *Your Guide to New Bedford*, *In the Press*, *About the Harbor*, *Harbor Maps* etc.). In order to maintain a true bread crumb trail, the programmers made each repeatable page editable and available through a single location, ***so edits and changes to one page were automatically reflected in multiple locations on the website.*** Besides being efficient, this feature has the added benefit of ensuring the visitor sees a page in the right context (for example, if you are in the Shipping section, the Harbor Maps page looks like it belongs to that section, surrounded by shipping vessels, and when you are in the Recreational Boating section, that same maps page takes on the Recreational Boating section's look and feel with lovely pictures of pleasure craft).

Once completed, the Port of New Bedford website has over 89 unique pages and hundreds of links to documents, articles, forms and resource information (such as maps, rules & regulations, permit application forms etc.).

Finally, to be interactive and time sensitive, there are several features we built into the website. We programmed an editable "Special Announcement" message board that appears at the top on every page so important newsworthy items we wanted to call out would be seen at an instant and be linked to related information. Additionally, to ensure two-way communication, we created a common "footer" that appears on every page so visitors can make suggestions, contact the Port as well as sign up to receive Port communications.

Results

The first measure of success was that the launch in October of 2011 of the HDC's new website was in time for the first New England Trade Development Summit.

The second measure was to see how well our database of 4000+ would receive the interim solution to use an electronic newsletter as the substitute website. We did not hear any complaints. Additionally, most e-marketers would agree successful open rates and click through rates are above 20% and 5% respectively. The first eblasts communicating the interim site far exceeded our expectations:

- The commercial e-newsletter had a 37% open rate & 35% click through rate
- The recreational edition enjoyed a 32% open rate & 21% click through rate
- Additionally, the executive director received numerous compliments from city officials such as the Mayor of New Bedford and other prominent citizens including the executive director of the New Bedford Economic Development Council (NBEDC) and the president of the Whaling Museum (who said, "This is the best Newsletter I have ever seen. Congratulations!").

The third measure of success was how smoothly we made the transition to have the link from the City site work perfectly for both the interim site and the real website. Having the URL of www.portofnewbedford.org is much more intuitive.

Finally, we know the statistics are important, but honestly, we had no history as the City didn't use Google Analytics and had no metrics to share. So we were essentially starting from scratch and hoping

that the use of the website would grow over time as we kept promoting it in our e-blasts and marketing material.

From Google Analytics, we know the following statistics (October 2011 – April 24, 2013) which were even better than our expectations:

- **Number of Visits:** Since the launch of the website in mid-October, 2011, there have been:
 - 23,948 unique visitors, 75% of which are new visitors that we have attracted to the site
 - 32,046 total visits to the site
- **Monthly Events:** Visits spiked appropriately when e-blasts announce salient information. For example:
 - January 6, 2011, was the release of the New Year E-Newsletter and visits to the website peaked at 221. The prior day was 48 and the following day had 49 visits.
 - July 12, 2012, visits peaked to 190 when the Port of New Bedford sent an e-blast announcing New Bedford was named one of Yachting Magazine's 50 Best Ports in North America. July is a high traffic month and the average is 120 visits per day.
- **Increases in Traffic:** The visits have grown steadily over time (they are higher in the summer months which is to be expected for the recreational boaters and ferry passengers). The total number of visitors for the month of October 2011 was 705 visits compared to 1759 total visits in October 2012, almost a 250% increase within one year. Every month shows an increase of visits compared to the same time period in the previous year.
- **Frequency:** About 84% of visitors have returned five or more times (26,739 out of a total 31,948 visits to site). We believe this confirms visitors are able to find desired information and come back.
- **Engagement:**
 - 70% of visitors have viewed three or more pages
 - 28% of visitors spend a minute or more on the site, suggesting visitors are getting information and reading it.

Appeal to multiple audiences: We needed the site to work equally well for B2C and B2B audiences. We feel confident we achieved that goal.

Improving our standing among recreational boaters and cruise directors was a key driver. We are proud of the changes from 2010 to 2013 that illustrate how New Bedford's "stock" has been growing in "recreational value."

- Sailing organization rendezvous increased from only one in 2010 to eleven in 2011! Transient slips and moorings rentals have been steadily increasing in 2012.
- In June 2012, *Yachting* Magazine named New Bedford one of the TOP FIFTY PORTS IN NORTH AMERICA for recreational boating!
- Small Cruise ship stops are steadily increasing: There were 16 in 2010, 21 in 2011, 26 in 2012 and 29 are planned for 2013 – almost a 90% increase over three years.

- A new Fishing Tournament started in 2011, grew 50% in 2012 and is continuing that momentum in 2013.

The Port also had to be credible to the business community. Since the launch of the website, freighter stops continue to increase. In July of 2012, The Port signed a "Sister Port Agreement" with Tuxpan, Mexico, and received significant and positive press from *The Boston Globe*, *The Providence Journal* and *The Standard Times*. In October of 2012, the second year of the New England Trade Development Summit had a 100%+ increase in attendance. Most importantly, The Commonwealth selected the Port of New Bedford to be the staging site for off shore wind and approved the funding for the New Bedford Marine Commerce Terminal, which will be the first purpose built facility in the country. The Mayor has called this a "transformative point" in the City's proud history.

In conclusion, we have two more anecdotal success stories:

As soon as the site was up, other New Bedford agencies began directing people to the Port's website as it provides a contemporary online presence as opposed to the City's official website. In particular, the New Bedford Economic Development Council (NBEDC) directed their callers to the Port's site as it gave a more positive impression of the City's momentum. NBEDC thought the Port's site was so strong that six months later they wanted to find out what it would take to upgrade their website in a similar fashion. Because the Port's coding is robust and flexible, the site could easily be "re-skinned" to meet NBEDC's needs. **

If one agrees imitation is the highest form of compliment, then the Port was truly complimented! Shortly after the Port's launch, the City of New Bedford's IT department created a "water" background to replace their plain black background, which added interest and was a welcome improvement.

For your viewing pleasure, please see the following:

www.portofnewbedford.org and the site map included with this proposal

Seven pages (Home page printed out plus six others we are most proud of)

Footnotes:

*The City hired its first Director of Tourism in February of 2013.

** In fact, a few weeks ago, the City of New Bedford asked for a proposal for redoing their website with the Port's coding and what it would take to implement the common Navigation treatment we recommended for the four "official" City sites (The Port, the City, the NBEDC, and Destination New Bedford)