

2019 AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PORT AUTHORITIES (AAPA) COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

Submission for: Port Milwaukee Website Modernization to www.portmilwaukee.com

Classification: Websites

Name of Port

- Port Milwaukee

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Contact Name

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Director, Port Milwaukee

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Port Budget Category

- Category 1
Entrants with a marketing/PR/advertising budget, including related salaries, less than \$300,000.

Entry Title

- Port Milwaukee Website Modernization

Entry Classification

- Websites

Short, Descriptive Summary

- Port Milwaukee, a City of Milwaukee department, enhances the overall economic and social environment of the region by stimulating trade, business, and employment as a premier provider of transportation and distribution services in the State of Wisconsin. For over a decade, the Port maintained its primary web presence at <https://city.milwaukee.gov/port> (see attached file list) utilizing a Content Management System (CMS)-web platform required of all City departments. Port-specific content and information was, depending on the page, difficult to access, cluttered, and stale. In short, Port Milwaukee's webpage was no longer a definitive resource or frequently accessed online tool utilized by the Port's domestic and international customers nor invested stakeholders or interested members of the Milwaukee community.

Upon joining Port Milwaukee in August 2018, [Director Adam Schlicht](#) prioritized the modernization of the Port's website as an immediately accomplishable goal for increasing the Port's visibility and overall marketing posture to its worldwide stakeholder base. In establishing a new web presence at www.portmilwaukee.com, the Port sought to simultaneously address numerous operational goals through an improved web presence, including: increasing the ease of information about Port Milwaukee's multimodal and transportation operations; catalyzing domestic and international trade at the Port; increasing Port revenues through more readily available information about commercial real estate availability; and providing the general public about the Port's recreational responsibilities within the City of Milwaukee.

What are/were the entry's specific communications challenges or opportunities?

Describe in specific and measurable terms the situation leading up to creation of this entry. Briefly analyze the major internal and external factors that need to be addressed.

- Prior to the 2018-2019 modernization effort, Port Milwaukee had not undergone a major website development update in over a decade, as most of its web infrastructure was inherited through and required for use by the City of Milwaukee. Overall cognizance and understanding of the Port's operation and economic significance had plateaued within the City and the region.

As the Port has traditionally operated with a two-person marketing staff and limited marketing-specific budget, the Port sought to immediately create a coalition of stakeholders internal to the City that would support the website modernization effort both financially and programmatically. The strategic decision was made by the Port to establish a public-private partnership (P3) to support the effort. Through deliberative consensus building, Port Milwaukee established a web-development team inclusive of both the City of Milwaukee's Information and Technology Management Division (ITMD), led by Chief Information Officer Nancy Olson, and the City's local, marketing and website development contractor, Northwoods Digital. The City and the Port agreed to equally split (50/50) the financial cost of an expedited web development using existing operational funds of both organizations.

As part of the web modernization effort, the Port coordinated with its 20+ tenants to ensure that www.portmilwaukee.com would better synergize with the ongoing business development and marketing efforts of the Port's external stakeholders. The Port also specifically sought to increase the availability of educational information about its recreational responsibilities in the City of Milwaukee as home to many of Milwaukee's lakefront events and community destinations, including: Summerfest, the world's largest outdoor music festival; Discovery World, Milwaukee's premier, family-oriented science and technology center; and the Lake Express, a seasonal, high-speed ferry service between Milwaukee and Muskegon, Michigan.

How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization's overall mission?

Explain the organization's overall mission and how it influenced creation of this entry.

- Port Milwaukee has been steadily preparing to enhance its business development and marketing approach since the release of its new logo, “**Connecting to the World**”, in 2017. With renewed vigor, Port Milwaukee aims to magnify its statewide, regional, and international reach. Port Milwaukee's successful and ongoing operations generate over \$100 million each year in local economic activity, providing critically needed transportation connectivity to area manufacturers that depend on the Port's infrastructure-based access to domestic and world markets. In February 2019, Port Milwaukee's Board of Harbor Commissioners (BHC) approved the Port's *2019 Marketing Plan*, a first-of-its-kind effort at the Port to unify, structure, and coordinate the Port's efforts to support growth targets and related objectives that will increase the amount of commodities trafficked through Port Milwaukee as well as to increase the overall media and market knowledge of Port Milwaukee's operational capabilities as a regional, multimodal hub for the City of Milwaukee, the State of Wisconsin, and within the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Seaway (GLSLS) region.

The Port's ability to continually grow its commercial opportunities depends on the ability of the Port to improve, enhance, modernize, and replace its aging infrastructure as well as its ability to target existing and new revenues in a strategic way. Port Milwaukee's modernized website at www.portmilwaukee.com is a foundational goal of the *2019 Marketing Plan*, and one of the earliest, fully realized accomplishments set forth by the BHC and Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett.

What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?

Describe the entry's goals or desired results.

Describe the entry's objectives and list specific, measurable milestones needed to reach its goals.

Identify the entry's primary and secondary audiences in order of importance.

- The overall goal of modernizing the Port's website was to ensure that visitors could quickly and clearly engage with Port Milwaukee-specific information. The Port sought to expand the availability of information about its commercial and recreational mission for the benefit of current and potential Port customers, both domestically and internationally, as well for members of the general public, public officials and policymakers, and members of the media. A second goal of the modernization was to ensure that the website was fully mobile, ensuring readability across personal computers, tablets, and smart phones; the Port's former website was not accessible and visually dynamic for use across multiple platforms.

What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?

Explain what strategies were developed to achieve success and why these strategies were chosen.

Specify the tactics used (i.e. actions used to carry out your strategies).

Detail the entry's implementation plan by including timeline, staffing, and outsourcing used.

- Port Milwaukee and its website modernization team sought to utilize an agile-based development scheme to achieve its goals, including frequent development “sprints” to complete the project on budget (less than \$20,000) and on time (completed in less than 6 months). The Port's implementation plan was multi-tiered: content creation was completed by Port Milwaukee marketing staff, ADA and other regulatory compliance efforts were led by the City of Milwaukee, and the Northwoods team were responsible for overall site look-and-feel. Bi-weekly website



meetings were held to ensure that simultaneously scheduled work was not siloed and that complications were addressed in real-time.

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

Describe any formal/informal surveys used, or anecdotal audience feedback received, that helped in evaluating the success of the entry.

If possible, explain how this entry influenced target audience opinions, behaviors, attitudes, or actions.

- Port Milwaukee has primarily used Google Analytics to understand stakeholder response to the modernized website in its first month of availability. In 2018, the Port's previous website totaled 7895 total "hits". Over the month since its launch, www.portmilwaukee.com has demonstrated a notable increase in viewership, totaling 1500 "hits" in less than 30 days. The preliminary statistical feedback demonstrates that the Port is experiencing a 90% increase in web participation as a result of the new site conversion. Prior to implementation, the Port Milwaukee team specifically identified a number of "primary" pages to draw particular attention to given the anecdotal feedback the Port had received from its stakeholders. 40% of web viewership now frequents the Port's homepage to access content, a 25% increase from the previous website. Port Milwaukee has also seen a significant uptick in local media attention following the launch of www.portmilwaukee.com, including two feature articles in the Milwaukee Business Journal.

Attached Files List

Required

- 2019 PowerPoint template (Port Milwaukee)

New Website – Reference Pages for www.portmilwaukee.com

- New Page 1 – Homepage
 - <https://portmilwaukee.com>

Designed to feature five rotating slides at the top of the homepage, visitors to www.portmilwaukee.com can now more easily access all Port Milwaukee content with one-click. New infographics visually summarize the economic significance of the Port's commercial operations. A live feed from the Port's [Facebook](#) page and other external links offer readers with the most recent Port news.
- New Page 2 – Economic Impact
 - <https://portmilwaukee.com/Port-Mke/About-Port-Milwaukee/Economic-Impacts>

Port Milwaukee has incorporated technology offered by Issuu, an electronic publishing platform, across its new website to offer readers a more contemporary method of discovering Port Milwaukee's digital marketing material. Ensuring compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, standard .PDF formats are also available.
- New Page 3 – Port Property Map
 - <https://portmilwaukee.com/Port-Mke/Work-with-the-Port/Port-Property-Map>

An interactive map of the Port's commercial operations on Jones Island was developed for www.portmilwaukee.com. With one click, visitors can quickly ascertain information about the Port's commercial tenants, their parcel leasehold location, information about their commercial offerings, and corporate contact information.
- New Page 4 – Port Tenant Directory
 - <https://portmilwaukee.com/Port-Mke/Commercial-Services/Port-Tenant-Directory>

Almost unfindable in the earlier Port website iteration, a Port Tenant Directory ensures that interested customers can more readily reach Port Milwaukee's long-term leaseholders and their own, autonomous web content.
- New Page 5 – Discovery World
 - <https://portmilwaukee.com/Port-Mke/Cruises--Recreation/Discovery-World>

As a City of Milwaukee department, the Port's responsibilities also include promoting recreational use of Lake Michigan and Milwaukee's urban waters through hosting of lakefront community destinations and availing non-commercial tenants at the Port's North Harbor Tract, including Discovery World. A newly designed cityscape graphic of Milwaukee, which includes the Hoan Bridge and the Port's [Wind Turbine](#), is included at the bottom of every page on www.portmilwaukee.com, reaffirming the Port as an economic flagship of the community.
- New Page 6 – Port Partners
 - <https://portmilwaukee.com/Port-Mke/About-Port-Milwaukee/Port-Partners>

Port's Milwaukee's local, regional, national, and international partner organizations, including the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), are highlighted on www.portmilwaukee.com, providing ease of access for information about those organizations that support Port Milwaukee's ongoing operations on a daily basis.



Old Website – Reference pages for <https://city.milwaukee.gov/port>

- Old Website 1 – Homepage
- Old Website 2 – News
- Old Website 3 – Foreign Trade Zone
- Old Website 4 – Commercial Services