

2022 AAPA Lighthouse Award Websites Category

Green Marine website: a better perspective on greater sustainability

www.green-marine.org

Summary

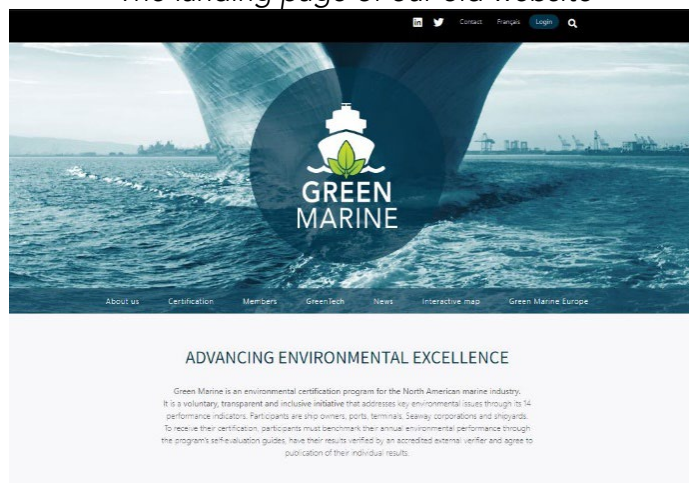
The [Green Marine website](http://www.green-marine.org) is the organization's primary communications tool, both with its members (notably through a secure section where they have access to reference documents) and with various maritime industry stakeholders. This is where all the news about Green Marine and its members, along with program information, participant results, various research and resources, GreenTech conference details, and the Green Marine Magazine is all published.

This platform is used for the environmental certification program's various commitments, including support to its membership, new member recruitment, and other key communications. The Communications team is in the great habit of diligently updating the website so that visitors always have up-to-date information.

1- Communication challenges & opportunities

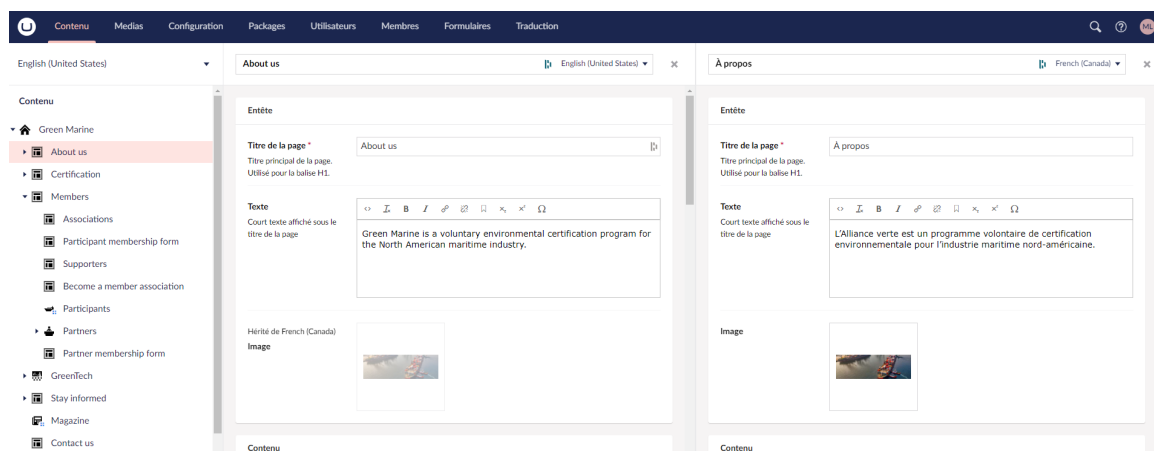
Prior to its current form, the Green Marine website had last been redesigned in 2014, with some additional improvements made in 2016. The previous website had a generally outdated and static design, with unfriendly navigation and a less-than-optimal organization of the information, which did not properly reflect the program's values or unique character.

The landing page of our old website



The quick expansion of **Green Marine Europe**, the program's European counterpart, further accelerated the need for a website redesign to include all of its information on the website in a clear and concise way.

Additionally, an earlier content management tool (i.e., WordPress) made the website's maintenance an onerous task inasmuch as the content's integration was never an intuitive process. Given that this is a **lingual** (English/French) organization, integrating the content in both languages using the old content management tool was extremely *time consuming* for the Communications team. In fact, it was essential to improve the user experience in the administrative user interface in general, to reduce the clutter and optimize the flow of procedural steps. The website's redesign, therefore, had to include the use of a much more flexible content management tool. The new Umbraco CMS allow for updating both languages simultaneously:



Always keen to improve efficiency and gain time, the Communications team also sought to streamline certain internal processes to avoid repeating the same operations. The previous website's lack of flexibility made it impossible to have it link with Green Marine's self-evaluation tool (i.e., Smart Guide) for participants whose results are made public on the website. At the end of every annual self-evaluation period, the results of the each and every participant (175 as of May 2023 and regularly increasing) had to be manually entered within the platform in English AND French – a task requiring a lot of time and involving a significant risk of error.

As a non-profit, the organization has a limited **budget** to allocate to communications as compared to that of large companies. These redesign projects can easily exceed \$100,000. With a smaller budget, it's essential to clearly identify and focus on priorities to justify each dollar invested. By using Google Analytics to help us to identify the website's most visited pages – the Home/landing page, About us, Scope & criteria, GreenTech, Results, Member access, Certification, and Partners – we could make certain that we put a proper emphasis on these pages during the redesign.

This kind of project always entails a heavy workload. We, therefore, had to ensure that we found an agency that would be able to properly guide and support our

Communications team consisting of two staff members to ensure their time was best used with several other projects also on the go.

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

It was imperative to have our new website reflect our mission and our values, while considering our growing membership:

Green Marine (a non-profit organization) is a unique voluntary environmental certification program that aims to strengthen the environmental performance of North America's maritime industry through a process of continual improvement.

Since its creation, the voluntary initiative has quickly gained credibility and popularity because of its relevance, rigour, collaborative approach and ability to lead the industry beyond regulatory requirements. To reflect these values within its actions, Green Marine demonstrates huge transparency and makes public all information concerning the program, including the results of participants and the program's full range of criteria.

Today, the program is open to any maritime enterprise in Canada and the United States, and its membership has quintupled since its launch in 2007. There are now more than 465 members in Canada and the United States. And that's not counting the members of the new European program!

We know the redesigned website has assisted in the membership's expansion by being told by existing members that it's where they recommend others first visit to learn about the program, and by having the ease of the website's use complimented by new recruits.

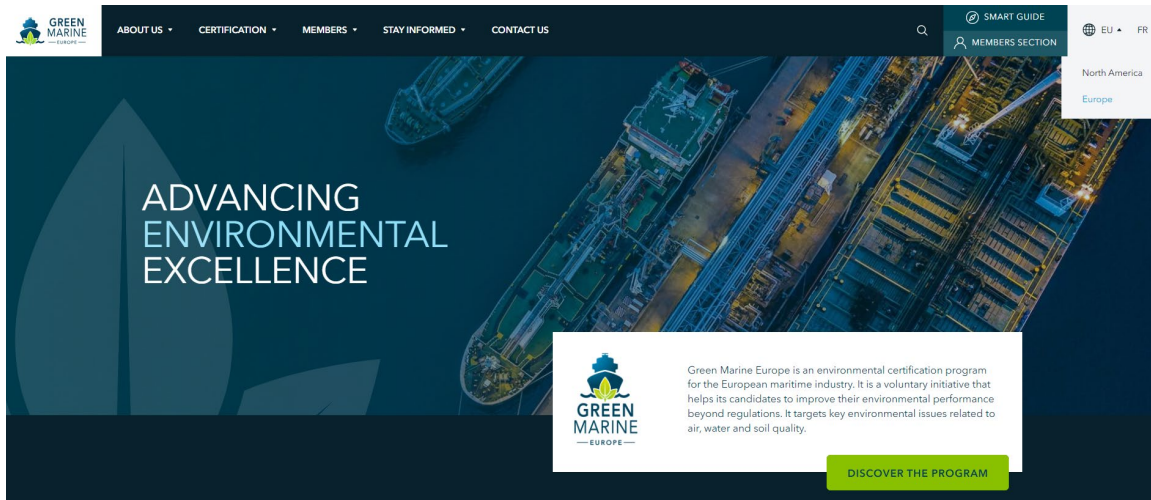
3- What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?

Along with providing up-to-date information in a contemporary design with easy navigation (and responsiveness to all screen sizes and formats), the objective of the new site is to promote communications with current and potential participants, as well as the general public interested in the environment and the maritime industry. To do so, Green Marine had to ensure that its main communications tool was attractive, well-organized, user-friendly and dynamic so that the number of visits to the website increased and visitors took the least amount of time (the fewest possible clicks) to find information. These indicators are measurable with Google Analytics.

More specifically, here are some key elements identified to meet the aforementioned characteristics:

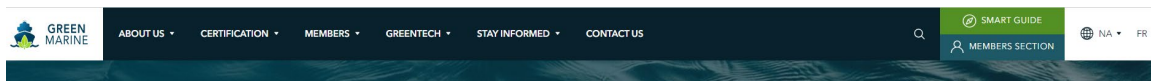
- Highlight the program's collaborative approach and network of members

- Illustrate the [certification process](#) to make it as **concrete** as possible in the eyes of the public
- Emphasize the program's international nature with a multi-site setup (that makes it possible to switch between the North American website and the European site, and between each of the two languages)

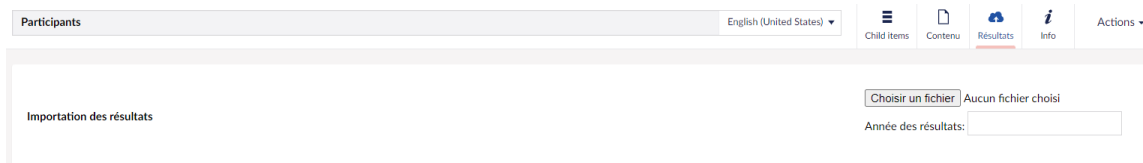


- Integrate a transaction functionality within the platform, to offer, for example, the option to pay online for GreenTech registration or to become a Green Marine member (e.g. online embed form for a new partner: <https://form.jotform.com/221095095903254>)
- Ensure the automatic sharing of specific information between the Smart Guide and each participant's online profile.

Button on the main menu to access the Smart Guide for participants:



Admin tool allows for annual results upload based on a Excel sheet template of downloaded results directly from the Smart Guide, no manual, individual entries as it was the case with the old website:



Smart Guide	
Smart Guide ID	310
En provenance du fichier d'export du Smart Guide.	
Résultats	
Ces données sont mises à jour via l'import du Smart Guide	
	2021
	2020

We have identified our website's target audiences as follows: Green Marine members (participants, partners, supporters, associations); representatives of the maritime industry and environmental organizations; federal and provincial/state representatives involved in issues affecting the maritime industry.

4- Actions taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?

From the moment we decided to initiate our website redesign project, the first step was to draw up a list of our needs including the elements that we hoped to improve. This step facilitated drafting a call for proposals ([See RFP in French only](#)) which, once published, garnered submissions from seven agencies, two of which were selected by Green Marine, and ultimately one chosen.

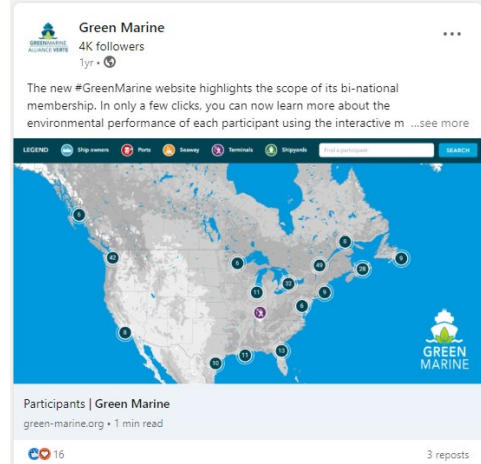
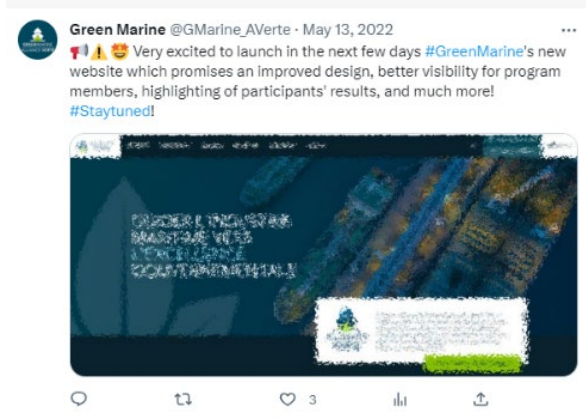
An initial meeting with the agency took place in October 2021 with the desire to have the project delivered before Green Marine's annual GreenTech conference in June 2022.

With weekly follow-ups, a precise and continually updated schedule, and impeccable organization, the Communications team of only two people were able to pull off miracles! Along with maintaining a close relationship with the agency throughout the process of relating items or approving models, the Communications team assumed the challenge of proofreading and revising all of the website's content to ensure a clear and concise presentation of the information for the website's more than 20 pages (in English AND in French). Hours of copying and pasting!

It's also important to mention that this redesign project coincided with two other major projects for the Communications team, namely organizing [GreenTech](#) (a conference welcoming 300 people), and the redesign of [Green Marine Magazine](#) which was migrating to a 100% digital format.

When it became time to officially launch the website online in May 2022, Green Marine began its communications strategy to promote the new site. Taking into account all of the organization's communication channels (newsletter, social media, GreenTech, etc.), Green Marine prepared a [specific communications outreach for the new website](#) with each action completed within a precise timeline.

Example of Social media posts



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

Since the website's launch, Green Marine has received numerous positive comments about it. The most frequent comments by visitors are on how well the content is organized and how easy it is to find information on the website.

By adopting the DashThis analytics tool, the Communications team regularly monitors its various communication channels, including the website, by obtaining a [monthly report presenting the statistics](#) related to a channel's use.



Within one year of operation, the new website generated more than twice as many visits as the old site:

	Year	Total visits	Average session time	Bounce rate	Year	Total visits	Average session time	Bounce rate
May	2021	7 846	00 :01 :60	2.1	2022	10 137	00 :02 :13	4.0*
June		7 431	00 :01 :39	2.1		19 168	00 :01 :05	1.7
July		5 840	00:01:35	1.9		14 112	00 :00 :45	1.4
August		4 329	00 :02 :07	2.1		15 154	00 :00 :47	1.4
September		5 088	00 :01 :55	2.0		20 376	00 :00 :34	1.3
October		4 663	00 :01 :60	2.1		20 479	00 :00 :35	1.3
November		4 736	00 :02 :38	2.2		15 630	00 :00 :59	1.5
December		4 489	00 :02 :01	2.0		15 081	00 :00 :44	1.4
January		6 349	00 :02 :09	2.2		19 116	00 :00 :44	1.4
February		7 868	00 :02 :10	2.2		17 255	00 :00 :51	1.5
March		8 515	00 :02 :15	2.1		20 060	00 :01 :03	1.6
April		7 087	00 :02 :29	2.3		17 104	00 :00 :54	1.5

Source : DashThis / Google Analytics

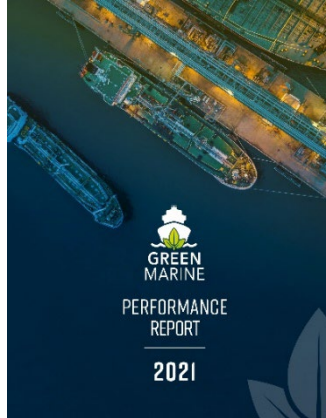
* *May 2022 marked the launch of the magazine’s 100% digital format which might have triggered an initial curiosity with the intention to revisit the site later to read the articles, thus explaining the higher bounce rate.

As the above table reflects, site visits have increased considerably since the launch of the new website in May 2022. During some months, the number of visits actually tripled! The second interesting metric to note is the bounce rate. The bounce rate indicates the proportion of website visitors who navigate away from a site after viewing just a single page. A low bounce rate indicates that the vast majority of visitors tend to interact with the website by clicking on other pages. The chart above indicates an improved bounce rate over the last 11 months.

Of course, other factors may have influenced the number of website visitors. This may have included the magazine’s migration to a fully digital format that may have required visitors to return when they had more time to read articles. Additionally, Green Marine adopted a communications strategy last year that relied heavily on its new website, which encouraged more visitors.

Since the website’s publication, the Communications team has continued to diligently update the site’s content, which has included adding new Green Marine members, acknowledging GreenTech sponsors and exhibitors, as well as sharing industry environmental news. The [content is updated almost daily](#) to provide an accurate platform.

The website’s redesign also motivated revamping the organization’s communication tools for uniformity. Green Marine began by identifying all the documents requiring adjustment, including the [PDF membership list](#), the [social media posts](#) announcing new members, the [Green Marine overview presentation in PowerPoint](#), the [MailChimp campaign template](#), with a review of each design to ensure it matched the website’s visuals. The 2021 Annual Report was launched in June 2022, a month after the website, and it was also adapted to match the new visual identity:



Lastly but not least, a yearly budget has been allocated to continually maintain and improve our website. In fact, as we approach just a year of using the new website, we are launching a second optimization phase with the same agency to focus on making the improvements that we have noted and prioritized in recent months.

Additional webpages to review with this entry:

Participants' map and results: <https://green-marine.org/members/participants/>

Certification process: <https://green-marine.org/certification/certification-process/>

Performance indicators details: <https://green-marine.org/certification/performance-indicators/>

Results: <https://green-marine.org/certification/results/>

Each participant gets a dedicated profile and tailored URL to their results:

<https://green-marine.org/members/participants/port-of-seattle>



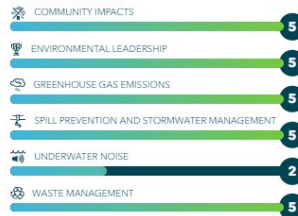
PORT OF SEATTLE

Member since 2013

Founded in 1911, The Port of Seattle owns and operates Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, four container cargo terminals, two cruise ship terminals, one grain terminal, a public cargo terminal, four public marinas, and manages a number of real estate assets for financial return and economic advantage. The port's operations currently help create nearly 200,000 jobs and \$7 billion in wages throughout the region. Over the next 25 years, the port's "Century Agenda" seeks to create an additional 100,000 jobs through economic growth while becoming the nation's leading green and energy-efficient port.



RESULTS OF 2021



Participant address

2711 Alaskan Way, Seattle, WA
USA 98121