



# Port of Montreal's Faces of the Port

## 2021 AAPA Communications Awards Program





## Port of Montreal's Faces of the Port

### Summary

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The Montreal Port Authority (MPA), which administers the Port of Montreal, conducted the Faces of the Port campaign from 2019 to January 2021. This series of profiles of MPA employees is available on our website and via our Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram social media platforms. Faces of the Port profiled an employee from a different port department each month. The stories are written primarily for neighbours of the port and other residents of Greater Montreal, our main followers on social media where the MPA is always looking to raise general awareness about the port and position the port as an important player in the lives of Montrealers. The profiles put a face on the port and humanize its image. Stories about the men and women who work at the port allows Montrealers to better understand the port, its business segments and its impact on their everyday lives. In turn, the port is able to promote its image as a good corporate citizen, show that it is a vital cargo logistics and tourism hub that plays a major role in the social and economic fabric of Montreal, and demonstrate that it works closely with the community and is attentive to its needs. Faces of the Port is also a tool for our employees—who work in various locations throughout the port—to learn more about their colleagues and the roles and responsibilities of various departments.

## **1) What are/were the entry's specific communications challenges or opportunities?**

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The Faces of the Port campaign, launched on the Port of Montreal's social media between February 2019 and January 2021, meets a wish to humanize the face of the Port of Montreal.

This is because Montrealers often perceive the Port of Montreal as closed and not very accessible. The Port covers 26 kilometres along the island's waterfront. However, the public is largely unaware of port activities and issues.

This lack of information kept appearing in the awareness surveys that the Montreal Port Authority (MPA) conducts every two years with the independent polling firm Léger-Marketing among its various publics, notably the segments living near Port facilities as well as Montrealers as a whole. A survey conducted in 2017 found that 86% of Montrealers were little or not at all informed about the Port's activities and issues.

In addition, the Port of Montreal is often confused with the Old Port recreational site. After its long history in the core of the city, in the late 1970s the MPA sold its oldest facilities. The Old Port was redeveloped as an urban space, open to tourism and recreation. Port activities continued in locations that are closed to the public, and many citizens are unaware of Montreal vibrant port activity. The detailed history of the Port of Montreal is detailed here: [Timeline](#).

The 26 kilometres that separate Port facilities from adjacent neighbourhoods are fenced off from the public space. Access to Port facilities is limited and reserved for pass holders. As a result, the public has very little contact with the Port, its people and its concerns. The proximity of Port facilities to residential neighbourhoods also means that many of our neighbours are bothered by the noise of Port operations. For them, the Port is defined first and foremost by its machinery, cranes unloading ships, back-up alarms and the noise of containers and trucks.

The human presence behind all of this is woefully absent, and the general public's image of the Port is often reduced to the machinery, with no knowledge of the diversity of port occupations underlying all operations. We also know that port trades are suffering from a labour shortage. Quebec's marine industry accounts for close to 16,000 direct jobs and approximately 8,000 indirect jobs. However, over the next three years it will need to fill some 4,000 new positions.

In-house, MPA employees hold a wide range of jobs. As a result, employees in the rail sector, shipping operations and infrastructure management do not often rub shoulders with their colleagues in other departments, such as finance, communications and IT. This separateness can contribute to employee disengagement. An internal survey of our employees showed that employee engagement was down. In 2017, only 37% of MPA employees said they were fully engaged in their workplaces. Boosting engagement rates, fostering a sense of belonging and instilling pride as part of the team were major considerations for the MPA as it implemented the Faces of the Port campaign.

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

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Social responsibility is one of the core values at the Port of Montreal, so building harmonious relationships while maintaining and strengthening dialogue with the Port's neighbours and citizens are priorities for us.

One of our main communications objectives is to enhance public awareness of the Port and raise its visibility. The Port of Montreal wants to position itself as a key player in Montreal life and create a bond with its communities. To achieve this objective, it is vital to work on its brand image to make it more human in the eyes of the general public. Over the past decade, the Port of Montreal has taken several steps to reconnect with its citizens, to raise awareness of the city's port heritage, and to demystify its activities in public perception. For other examples, our report can be viewed here: [Community relations report](#). This is a long-term project. With this in mind, the idea for the Faces of the Port portrait series came about as a result of brainstorming sessions in the fall of 2018 on ways to bring our image to life.

Social media is the MPA's preferred vehicle for communicating directly with the general public. We have approximately 45,000 followers across all platforms. Our Facebook platform, a priority point of contact with the general public, has over 16,000 followers. By introducing our employees to our social media followers—the vast majority of whom are residents of Greater Montreal—we are raising awareness of the Port and promoting its image as a good corporate citizen, while residents learn more about their port and the role it plays in their daily lives.

Faces of the Port is also a tool for our employees to get to know their colleagues and other departments at the Port and to better understand the roles and responsibilities of other departments.

### **3) What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?**

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The project planning began in November 2018. The MPA Communications Department spearheaded the planning, creation, editing and publication of the profiles.

A total of 21 employees were selected to be Faces of the Port and represent the MPA to the public. We carefully selected the employees for a good cross-section of ages, seniority, and rank levels, and to present as many different departments as possible. An equal number of men and women were profiled.

Hélène Mailhot, Communications Officer at the MPA, contacted the employees to be profiled and conducted interviews with them, including a series of questions about their jobs, their daily lives and what makes them unique. The interview questions were structured to let readers learn more about the employee's specific role at the Port and the particular responsibilities they may have. Including information about the employee's personal life adds even more of a human touch to the story and lets employees get to know their colleagues even better.

The stories were written in French and translated into English by a freelance translator.

We hired a professional photographer for the project, as photos are a key component of the stories. The photo shoots with a professional photographer were planned well in advance, usually with multiple shoots on the same day and at the same location.

In February 2019, we started launching the profiles of MPA employees on various social media platforms. Profiles were posted almost monthly, and the last profile was posted in January 2021.

The project budget was met and included \$5,230 for the photographer for the photo shoots and \$400 per Facebook post, for a total of \$13,030.

The primary audience for Faces of the Port is the residents of Greater Montreal, including the 16,000 households within 300 metres of the Port that we identified as being most affected by Port activity. Through our social media interactions, as a partner in projects to improve quality of life, economic development and environmental protection in neighbouring communities, and through the meetings we hold keep neighbours informed about our projects, we know that residents are always seeking more information about the Port.

The secondary audience is our personnel, as Faces of the Port provides an opportunity for our employees who work in different parts of the Port to connect and learn more about their colleagues and the various departments in which they work.

Our strategy for the campaign is detailed here: [Faces of the Port Strategy](#).

#### **4) What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?**

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To reach as many people as possible, we posted the profiles on our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) platforms (some 29,500 followers) and created direct links to the [website](#). We invited readers to share and “Like” the profiles and post comments or ask questions. We created the hashtag #FacesofthePort where all the profiles are available.

To illustrate the diversity of profiles and job occupations at the MPA, we brought together:

- [An environmental consultant](#) to shine light on the MPA’s concern and thoroughness in environmental matters
- [The head of community relations](#), whose role is to ensure harmonious cohabitation with citizens
- [A service boat operator](#) and the [Port’s Deputy Harbour Master](#) to showcase the appeal of maritime careers; the latter was one of the campaign’s biggest successes on LinkedIn.
- [The head of labour relations](#) to highlight our concern for employees and to humanize recruitment at the MPA
- [A road engineer](#) and the [Technical Director of the Contrecoeur project](#) to put faces to the Port’s major infrastructure projects, often little known by the public
- Employees from the [Finance](#), [Accounting](#) and [Strategic Analysis](#) departments to show the immense financial work behind port activities
- [A fire prevention inspector](#) to provide insight into terminal safety requirements

- [A locomotive operator](#) to highlight the challenges of intermodality at the Port of Montreal,
- [A programmer-analyst](#) to discuss the organizations' technological and computer challenges
- [The Grand Quay coordinator](#) to discuss the event component of our cruise terminal and the public spaces that are now available there
- [The Marketing and Cruise Director](#) to include the Port of Montreal's tourism component
- The [MPA's CEO](#) to show the human face of senior management

Each Facebook post was sponsored for \$400.

The complete Faces of the Port Instagram stories can be viewed in this link: [Faces of the Port—Instagram stories](#)

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

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The Faces of the Port campaign succeeded in giving the Port a more human dimension in the eyes of the public. We are thrilled that so many people got to know our employees and, in turn, learn more about the Port. Two of the comments we received on Facebook were, "Thank you for bringing the human dimension to your projects" and "Kudos to you and your professionalism." We are also pleased that these profiles continue to engage and motivate our employees. Many appreciate an initiative that lets them learn more about their colleagues and the roles of other departments. Some say they have been touched by the recognition the profile has given them. Others have expressed interest in being selected for a profile. For a glimpse of the Facebook comments received, click here (mostly in French): [Facebook Comments](#).

At the end of the campaign, the profiles were viewed 12,741 times on the website.

These were the results on Facebook:

- Number of followers reached: 674,211
- Number of engagements: 34,426
- Number of clicks: 30,000
- Positive reactions: 3,359
- Comments: 817
- Shares: 235

These were the most successful posts on Facebook:

- Jean-François Cadieux (3,840 engagements, 3,569 clicks and 219 Likes)
- Sébastien Boulianne (3,570 engagements, 3,285 clicks and 226 Likes)
- Julie Dubé (4,634 engagements, 4,374 clicks and 174 Likes)
- Hélène Mailhot (3,360 engagements, 3,091 clicks and 193 Likes)

To view the full report, click here: [Facebook reach—report](#)

These were the most successful posts on LinkedIn: Julie Dubé (163 engagements) – 5.19% engagement rate <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6717798962348331008>

Jean-Nicolas Thibodeau (156 engagements) – 4.99% engagement rate <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6744677490251452416>

Hélène Mailhot (144 engagements) – 4.29% engagement rate <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6754414069014507520>

We are conducting a Léger-Marketing survey among the public to document the changing perception of the Port of Montreal. At the end of our 2017-2019 communications plan, including the Face of the Port campaign that ran throughout 2019 (and continued into 2020), the 2019 survey result showed greater recognition from the “neighbouring” public for transparent communication (17% increase among neighbours between 2017 and 2019) to significant involvement in the community (18% increase among neighbours between 2017 and 2019) on the part of the MPA. In addition, the reputation score rose from 40 to 44 (% good opinion—% bad opinion) between 2017 and 2019 for Montrealers. The awareness score increased from 89% to 92% for this same audience between 2017 and 2019.



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