



2021 AAPA LIGHTHOUSE AWARDS – COMMUNICATIONS

*Classification #5: Directories/Handbooks*

## **embark! – 2020 New Teammates Digital ‘Welcome Aboard’ Passport for Internal Distribution**

# embark! – 2020 New Teammates

## Digital ‘Welcome Aboard’ Passport for Internal Distribution

### Summary

Although the Port of Long Beach has remained open and operating during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Port’s new downtown Civic Center Administration Building was closed to all but skeleton crews as pandemic safety guidelines sent the vast majority of Harbor Department employees home to telecommute. Constant interaction among Port teammates is the rule, not the exception, but during these extraordinary times, opportunities for most employees to meet in person are nonexistent.

During the pandemic, the Harbor Department has continued to hire new teammates, and there was no way the 58 new employees hired in 2020 could meet their new co-workers in person. Human Resources collaborated with the Communications and Community Relations Division to meet the challenge, and Embark!, a 20-page, digital, passport-themed booklet, designed using flipbook software and produced in-house with a limited budget, was distributed to all 500 Port employees, offering a fun and informative “welcome aboard” to the new members of the team.



Front cover of the new employee flipbook

# 7 Communication Challenges and Opportunities

The Port of Long Beach is the Port of Choice – the premier U.S. gateway for trans-Pacific trade and a trailblazer in innovative goods movement, safety, environmental stewardship and sustainability. As the second-busiest container seaport in the United States, the Port serves 175 shipping lines with connections to 217 seaports around the world, handles trade valued at \$200 billion annually and supports 2.6 million trade-related jobs across the nation, including more than 575,000 in Southern California. Goods moving through the Port of Long Beach reach every U.S. congressional district.

The Port of Long Beach prides itself on its top-notch customer service, state-of-the-art infrastructure and operational excellence, and in both 2019 and 2020 industry leaders named it “The Best West Coast Seaport in North America.” In 2020, the Port handled 8.1 million container units, the busiest year in its history. Founded in 1911 with a single municipal dock at the mouth of the Los Angeles River, today the Port encompasses 3,200 acres with 35 miles of waterfront, 10 piers, 80 berths and 70 gantry cranes.

More than 40 percent of seaborne cargo that enters the United States passes through the neighboring San Pedro Bay ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and the complex handles more containers per ship call than any other port complex in the world. The five-member Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners, appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the City Council, is responsible for setting policy for the Port of Long Beach and managing the City’s Harbor Department. Mario Cordero, a former Harbor Commissioner, then Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission under President Barack Obama, has served as Executive Director of the Port of Long Beach since 2017, leading 500 teammates who work together to make the Port “go”!

Following several years at an interim location during construction, in July 2019 the Port of Long Beach moved back downtown adjacent to the Port and Harbor into its new Administration Building at the sparkling new Long Beach Civic Center. Then, only eight months later in March 2020, the entire Civic Center was closed to



The Port of Long Beach

all but skeleton crews as COVID-19 sent the vast majority of City and Harbor Department workers home to telecommute. As of May 2021, the Port Administration Building is still off-limits to most employees. Harbor Department teammates working in the field, on the docks, at the Port Maintenance Facility or Security's Joint Command and Control Center are also following all COVID-19 safety guidelines.

Constant interaction among Port teammates is the rule, not the exception, but opportunities for most employees to meet in person are nonexistent, and the nature of telecommuting is such that the circle of teammates interacting with one another, even virtually, is somewhat restricted. Activities such as all-hands meetings, training and holiday celebrations are being conducted virtually.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Port has remained open and operating, playing a more important role than ever, delivering and receiving vital goods and serving the community. This means that the Harbor Department has continued to hire new teammates. In a COVID-19 landscape, there is no way these new employees can meet their new co-workers in person.

The challenge for the Communications and Community Relations team, in conjunction with the Human Resources Division, was to find a way to make these important introductions. The result was Embark! A digital boarding pass-style flip book publication designed to make those introductions in a fun and engaging way for new teammates hired during 2020.



Booklet on flipbook website

## 2 Complementing the Overall Mission

The Port of Long Beach strives to maintain a friendly and collegial atmosphere among its teammates, because much of the Port's work is complex and involves many stages. Different Port divisions must work together closely to achieve business goals. For instance, a construction project might involve the Port's Real Estate, Master Planning, Program Management, Construction Management, Project Controls, Maintenance and Communications divisions. And, of course, all Port projects eventually include the Finance Division.

Developing personal connections within and outside one's own division is critical to keeping workflows moving smoothly. Since personal introductions due to COVID-19 are currently limited to online meetings, the Embark! publication aimed to offset compartmentalization due to telecommuting while welcoming new teammates.



Back cover of the booklet

## 3 Planning and Programming Components

### Goal for the Embark! publication

Produce in-house a digital-only publication providing virtual introductions for the 58 Harbor Department teammates hired during 2020 who couldn't meet in person due to COVID-19 restrictions.

### Objectives

- Introduce new Harbor Department teammates in a fun, engaging, electronic publication that included photographs and some personal information;
- Help create a welcoming atmosphere for the new teammates;
- Emphasize the importance of all Port employees, brand new or long-term, especially during the difficult circumstances caused by COVID-19;

- Engage new teammates by asking them to contribute to the publication;
- Boost employee morale by bringing Port divisions together to share a few moments of camaraderie as they interacted to discuss and develop the publication;
- Produce the Embark! Publication entirely in-house, on time and within a limited out-of-pocket budget of \$500;
- Track viewership and response.

### Target Audience

- All 500 Harbor Department teammates – staff and executives, current and newly hired in 2020
- Board of Harbor Commissioners
- Family and friends of teammates

# 4 Actions Taken and Communication Outputs Used

## Overview

The Port of Long Beach Human Resources Division identified the need for an alternative way to introduce new employees to their teammates due to COVID-19 restrictions and collaborated with the Communications and Community Relations Division's graphics team to develop a concept for a digital publication to be distributed virtually to the Port's 500 teammates within a limited budget.

A boarding pass design theme was selected, reflecting the nautical theme of the Port of Long Beach and seen as a way of welcoming new teammates aboard.

A subscription to flipbook software, which can be utilized for future projects, was purchased and the "book" was designed in "passport" blue with white and turquoise accents. An optional musical accompaniment added to the viewing experience.

The 20-page flipbook (including covers) was organized with departmental headings, with the 58 new employees pictured on horizontal "First Class Teammate Ticket & Baggage Checks" stacked up to four on a page, depending the number of new teammates per headings. Headings and number of new teammates listed under each (totaling 58) included:

- Board of Harbor Commissioners (1)
- Executive Office (1)
- Commercial Operations (15)
- Human Resources (3)
- Finance & Administration (6)
- Engineering Bureau (28)
- Planning & Environmental Affairs (4)

Each "Ticket" includes the new teammate's photograph, name, title, division and hobbies. Under normal circumstances, the Communications and Community Relations Division is responsible for photographing new teammates at work, but, due

to COVID-19 restrictions, the Human Resources staff responsible for facilitating new employee orientation and onboarding asked each new hire to submit their own photo – taken at a location of their choice, usually not a Port setting – and share their hobbies to add a personal dimension to the publication. Limited copy was written for the covers and introductory page:

- Front cover copy:  
embark!  
2020 New Teammates  
(logo) Port of Long Beach, The Port of Choice
- Inside front cover copy:  
ONWARD!  
You are OUR CHOICE to join THE PORT OF CHOICE  
(logo) Port of Long Beach, The Port of Choice
- Back cover copy:  
WELCOME ABOARD, 2020 TEAMMATES!  
(logo) Port of Long Beach, The Port of Choice

## Distribution

Embark! Was distributed to all 500 Port teammates via email on Feb. 8, 2021, and then posted the same day to the Port's intranet and Dock Talk, the Port's virtual employee newsletter, where it remains available. Since the majority of the Port's teammates are telecommuting, it was decided to produce an exclusively electronic publication, and, rather than email a simple PDF, the flipbook software provided an interactive experience for viewers as they paged through the electronic book and could even turn on and enjoy the optional background music. Anyone who wished could download and print a copy at their remote location.

## Budget

Embark! was produced entirely by in-house staff, with input from the new employees, and the only out-of-pocket expense was \$299 for the flipbook software subscription, which can be utilized again for future projects.

# 5 Communications Outcomes and Evaluation Methods

All objectives for Embark! were achieved and the electronic flipbook publication was well received. The “passport” theme was fun and inviting, and each new teammate was spotlighted. Human Resources and Communications teamed up to complete the project on time and under budget, and most of the 58 new teammates being introduced participated by providing photos and hobbies; all but six provided photos and all but five listed their hobbies.

## Response

To date Embark! has received nearly 200 views, and remains available for viewing on the Port intranet.

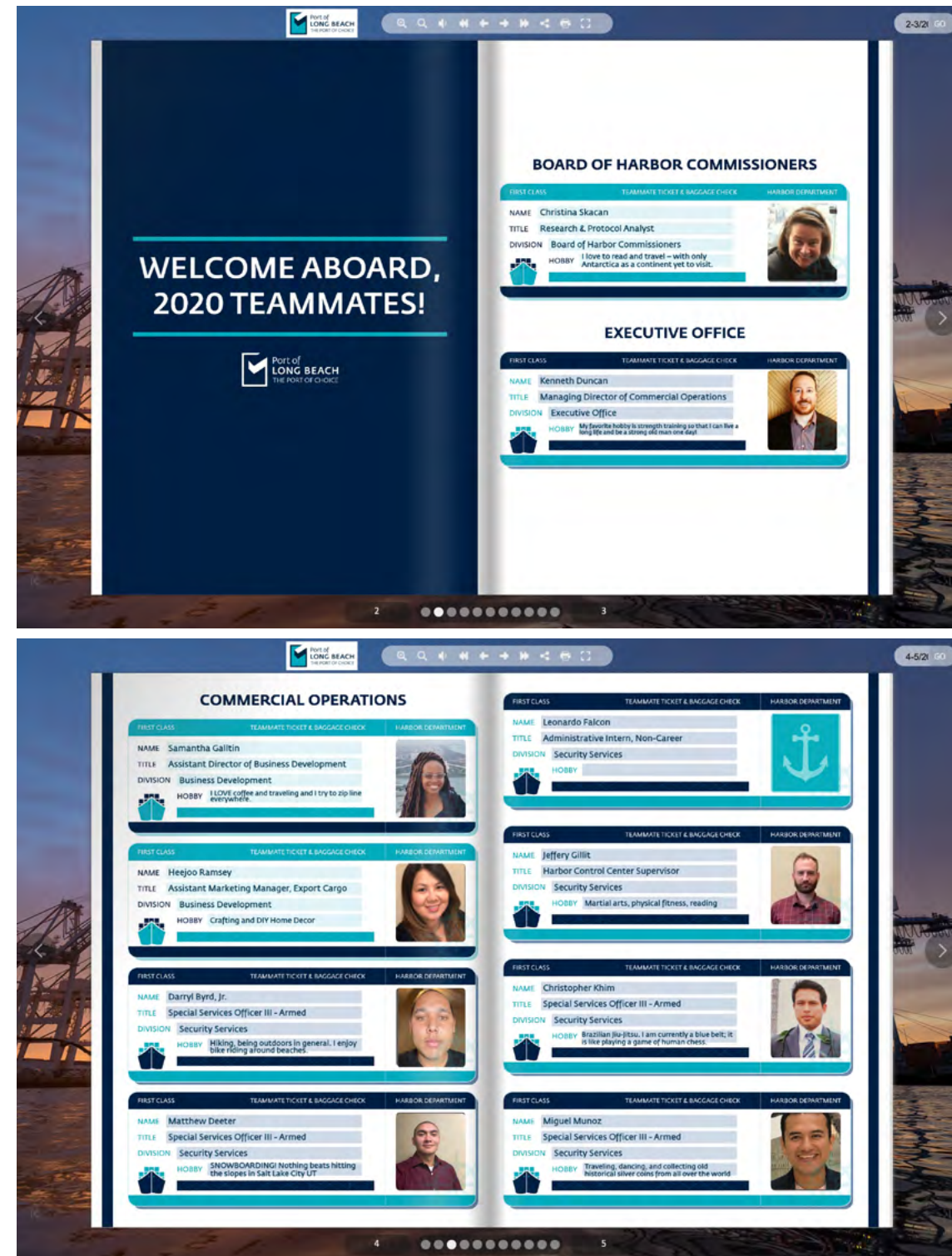
## Comments

- “This is SO great! Great way to help us connect with the new members of the team. Nice work!”  
Heather Tomley, Managing Director of Environmental Planning, Port of Long Beach
- “Loved the communication – great job!”  
Kymerly Clay, Leave Management Administrator, Port of Long Beach

- “WOW! That was great. I really enjoyed looking at the pictures and reading snippets about our Teammates. Great and creative idea. Thank you.”  
Kezia Daniels, Executive Assistant, Port of Long Beach
- “I really enjoyed the Boarding Passes featuring our new teammates. Great job!”  
Mari Takahashi, Assistant Director of Real Estate, Port of Long Beach
- “What a cool way to introduce our newest teammates. Thank you to everyone involved in the flip book!”  
Daniel Depew, Security Systems Operator, Port of Long Beach
- “It came out really nice. Great job!”  
JaNay McCray, Payroll Personnel Assistant, Port of Long Beach

## Links

Embark! flipbook – <https://online.fliphtml5.com/gcpyv/fsec/#p=1>



Inside pages of the flipbook

## Additional Comments

*One of the things I like best about working at the Port of Long Beach is interacting with all the talented people who work here. I've missed that during the pandemic. This was a great idea. Good job!*

*-Mario Cordero,  
Executive Director, Port of Long Beach*

*You guys did a great job here! I really love this!!!! I would love for this to turn into a port yearbook. I've always felt that having a place to see folks' faces is a good way to get to know your teammates and can be productive for the organization. I still don't know everyone and it will be 7 years in April since I arrived to the Port. Also, great approach to engagement, inclusion and more than anything, it gives folks a sense of belonging! Good job!*

*-Carleen N. Gonzalez,  
Security Administration Coordinator, Port of Long Beach*

*Besides getting a look at all our new employees, the thing I enjoyed most was reading about all their hobbies. Physical fitness enthusiasts, snowboarders, bakers and bagel-makers, collectors, crafters, hikers, brewers, gardeners, dancers – and who knew there were so many musicians! What fun.*

*-Kerry Gerot,  
Director, Communications and Community Relations,  
Port of Long Beach*

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