**Georgia Ports Authority Interactive Virtual Tour -** <https://gaports.com/virtual-tour-port-of-savannah/>

**SUMMARY:** Georgia Ports’ facilities house the nation’s third busiest container gateway and second busiest gateway in the nation for auto and machinery cargo. Before the COVID-19 pandemic hundreds of people each year including customers, legislators and students toured Georgia Ports facilities in three different locations across the state. COVID-19 forced Georgia Ports to launch a new tool to showcase its facilities to those same audiences safely.

 **1. What are/were the entry’s specific communications challenges or opportunities?**

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Georgia Ports to communicate with customers and stakeholders in new ways. This tour was needed to bridge the gap left when in-person tours were halted.

**2. How does the communication used in this entry map back to the organization’s overall mission?**

The mission of the Georgia Ports Authority is to empower entrepreneurs, strengthen industries, sustain communities, and fortify families by relentlessly striving to accelerate global commerce. Georgia Ports Virtual Tour is one of many tools geared toward both the community as well as customers, with an eye toward winning new business. Customers can familiarize themselves with GPA facilities without ever entering a port helping to build business in Georgia.

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

**OVERALL GOAL:** To share valuable information virtually about Georgia Ports Facilities with target audiences including port customers, elected officials, and students that hundreds used to receive in-person each year. The COVID-19 pandemic forced Georgia Ports to communicate with customers and stakeholders virtually. This tour was needed to bridge the gap left when in-person tours were halted.

**OBJECTIVES:**

• Surpass 1,000 views on launch day

• Increase GaPorts.com web traffic by 20%

• Provide sales agents with an effective virtual marketing tool

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

The GPA communications team coordinated with an outside production firm to create this interactive virtual tour. Shooting the material for this project was completed over several months and consisted of four separate shoots across the state of Georgia.

The web-based immersive tour experience is responsively designed for all platforms including desktop and mobile and directed by the user. The 360-degree aerial and ground panoramas were combined with imbedded video, photos, slideshows, and information for the user to navigate through using their own preferences.

Because the tour is designed for use by several different audiences, the editing and approval process included executive, trade development, and operations departments along with corporate communications. The groups worked together to make sure that the tour was accurate as well as useful for each department.

GPA’s interactive virtual tour is editable by GPA staff and can be updated with new information and photos at any time, a key feature because the terminals change very quickly. Training was offered to users including the sales team to make it as easy as possible to use with customers. The total cost of the production was $21,799.

**RESULTS:**

**Objective:** Surpass 1,000 views on launch day

**Result:** The tour garnered 1,300 views in the first 24 hours after launch on Feb. 11.

**Objective:** Increase GaPorts.com web traffic by 20%

**Result:** Since the website was brand new this time last year, we don’t have overall year-over-year data, but when comparing the month that the virtual tour launched vs. the previous month pageviews were up 34% (147,610 vs 109,859). The tour prompted about 2,750 new user interactions, or clicks, in the first month. Viewers spent about 2 minutes and 30 seconds on each page of the tour they visited. That is about 10 seconds more than Gaports.com overall.

**Objective:** Provide sales agents with an effective virtual marketing tool

**Result:** David Porter, GPA regional sales manager, said the Georgia Ports interactive virtual tour gives current and potential customers a clear overview of Georgia Ports facilities and is a valuable sales tool. Porter said it provides visual evidence of the massive investment the GPA is making to ensure we continue to provide world-class service, even as we take on new business. GPA received positive feedback from many users including this:

“I absolutely loved the virtual tour of the Ports... So exciting to see what is transpiring – keep up the great work!” – Laura Glenn, Director of Investment Advisory Services for Public Trust Advisors