

## **AAPA 2021 Communications Awards Port of Vancouver USA**

Classification: Videos  
Entry title: Port of Vancouver Virtual Tour

Video Link: <https://www.portvanusa.com/community/know-your-port/>  
5 minutes to view: 19:43 to 24:43

### **Project Summary:**



The Port of Vancouver USA's summer tour program is extremely popular with residents of the port district. Ten tours are offered each year with 40 participants each. Before each tour, External Affairs staff gives the group a PowerPoint presentation covering port history, operations and how cargo moves on the Columbia/Snake River System. This helps set the stage for what participants see on the bus portion of the tour.

COVID-19 forced the cancellation of the port's in-person tour program in 2020. To reach out to the nearly 400 people who had signed up (and bring the tour program to a larger audience), External Affairs instead recorded the PowerPoint portion of the tour in-studio and made it available on the port's website and YouTube channel.

### **1. Challenges and opportunities:**

#### **Challenges**

- Because much of our port is located behind areas secured by the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard, the only way for the public to see our marine terminals is through a port-conducted tour. Loss of the tours in 2020 meant 400 interested residents could not see the port in action. The challenge the port faced was how to showcase the port to those individuals who were motivated enough to sign up for a tour. To demonstrate that their interest in the port was important to us, we produced the virtual tour video and emailed all 400 individuals a direct link to the presentation.

- A secondary challenge was not being able to record a “drive through” tour of the port terminal. For security reasons, our operations team did not want a permanent video recording of our working terminal and berths. Instead, the video focused on the PowerPoint portion of the tour, which is presented before each bus tour. We hoped this might in fact serve as encouragement for people to sign up for the bus portion of the tour once COVID-19 restrictions had eased.

## **Opportunities**



- Port tours are typically conducted by the port’s Community Relations Manager, but by producing this video, we saw an opportunity to showcase other port executives who are not as well-known to the public. This included:
  - Alex Stroger, the port’s chief commercial officer (left) narrated the section on marine operations.
  - Mike Schiller, the port’s business development director (right) narrated the section on port tenants and commercial operations.
- We included two short previously produced videos: one showcasing the port as an economic engine in the community and a second video on the port’s environmental efforts. This allowed us to break up the speaking portions of the video.
- We recorded the video in the studio of a local audio/visual company that had pivoted to studio work to survive the loss of business during COVID-19.
- As many have discovered in moving to virtual formats, posting the video to our website and social channels allowed us to reach far beyond our local community. (See additional details under “outcomes and evaluation.”)
- The video also provided an excellent overview of the port that our marine and commercial divisions could share with potential customers.

## **2. Incorporation of mission:**

The Port of Vancouver's mission is articulated in our Strategic Plan: *To provide economic benefit to our community through leadership, stewardship and partnership in marine, industrial and waterfront development.* Part of our Strategic Plan focuses on community goals. The first of these community goals is to strengthen community outreach and communication.

The goal specifically states the port will:

- Increase opportunities to engage the community in mutual discussions and provide education about port activities, including port tours and the lecture series.
- Use a variety of mediums, including social media, to reach a wide and diverse audience about port programs and activities.

The video is in direct alignment with our mission and strategic goals because we were able to offer a virtual look at the port during COVID-19 and reach a much larger audience. The video itself presented a comprehensive look at port programs and activities, with a look to future initiatives as well.

## **3. Planning and programming components**

### **Goals or desired results**

The goals of this program included:

- Provide direct outreach to 400 individuals who had signed up for a port tour prior to the COVID-19 lockdown. We wanted these port district residents to know we appreciated their interest in the port and invite them to watch a virtual tour they could view safely from home.
- Showcase port executives that the public does not interact with frequently.
- Make the video available to a much wider audience than a typical port tour.

Primary audience: 400 individuals who had signed up for a port tour in 2020.

Secondary audiences: Ranging from port district residents to social media account followers, and even potential or current customers, the information presented in this video appealed to a wide audience.

### **Measurable milestones**

- Deliver the video link by email to the 400 people who had signed up for a port tour in 2020.
- Use the port's Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram accounts to promote the video and make it available to an even wider audience.
- Distribute a news release to local media and key partners announcing the video's debut.

#### 4. Actions and communications outputs

By late fall 2020 we had cancelled every port tour scheduled for 2020. External Affairs staff felt this was a missed opportunity to connect with the 400 people who were motivated enough to sign up for a port tour. We began the process of developing a program that we could deliver by video.

- The decision was made to do a recorded video rather than a live Zoom presentation because:
  - We were not sure how many people had figured out Zoom technology.
  - We were concerned a live presentation would encounter technology issues that could derail the show; and
  - There were limits on how many could be on the Zoom call at one time.
- External Affairs began developing an extended tour PowerPoint program with a script for all speakers.
- We hired a local audio/visual (AV) company with a studio to help us. The AV company put the entire script on teleprompters to help each speaker. They provided all editing and post-production including inserting the two videos seamlessly into the program.

#### Timing

We did not want to launch the video during the busy holiday season. On Jan. 14, 2021, the video went live on our website and all social media platforms. We promoted it for a two week period on all social media.

#### Promotion

Promotion of the video consisted of the following:

- A MailChimp campaign was developed and sent to the following groups:
  - 400 who had signed up for port tours in 2020
  - 350 current neighborhood leaders obtained through the city of Vancouver
  - 900 individuals who have signed up to be notified of future port tours and lectures
- A media release was issued and picked up by the local paper, The Columbian.



- Social media posts with direct links to the video were created for the port's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts.

- These posts featured a 20-second “teaser” video (left), featuring our community relations manager, inviting people to view the video. Our top performing posts across all social platforms include video and this teaser was an effective way to entice people to click and view the full program.

## **Staffing**

The virtual tour video was coordinated by our Community Relations Manager who is primarily responsible for port tours. She coordinated the schedules of the port executives so everyone could be at the studio on the same day for taping. She also directed the work of the local AV company that performed the taping.

Other members of the External Affairs team provided support including managing all aspects of materials and visual assets, creating a social media campaign for the video launch, providing input, edits and feedback on video drafts, moving the project through the approval process and representing the project to senior leadership.

## **Budget and outsourcing:**

Since we were not able to conduct in-person tours during 2020, we redirected tour budget funds toward the production of this video. The total cost of the production was \$5,000, which paid for the services of the AV company. Port staff developed the script, PowerPoint slides, managed all visual assets and served as on-screen talent.

## **5. Evaluation methods and communications outcomes**

The virtual tour video had the following outcomes on social media:

### **Facebook:**

- 834 impressions
- 111 engagements

### **Twitter:**

- 546 impressions
- 35 engagements

### **LinkedIn:**

- 3,229 impressions
- 151 engagements

### **Instagram:**

- 425 impressions
- 79 engagements

### **YouTube:**

- 434 views

Overall, our organic social media posts for the tour video were seen over 5,000 times. LinkedIn performed especially well because the port's account is targeted to people in our industry—which was reflected in the post's high engagement rate. Encouraging employees to share this information was key and we forwarded all social media links to our staff. One employee in our IT department shared the video link on his LinkedIn account and had 330 views.

Our community relations manager's email was featured at the end of the program, and she received numerous emails from appreciative people who had viewed the video. One such email came from a Vancouver, Washington resident who had forwarded the link to his father in New Zealand and his brother who works in the shipping industry in Ukraine.

We continue to promote the virtual tour and most recently, it was featured in our May 2021 Community Report that is mailed to 95,000 residents of the port district. This resulted in 62 new people requesting to be added to our port tours notification list. We are extremely pleased with the virtual tour video and feel it was well received locally as well as regionally and even globally. Local resident Dana summed it up nicely:

*"Thank you for putting together the video presentation regarding the port! I was scheduled and looking forward to a port tour in 2020 so this was a wonderful alternative to that event! Thank you for making the effort to connect with the community during this time of social distance."*

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