

Meridian Group Submission for Public Relations Tactics: Annual Report

The Port of Virginia Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Report

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Port of Virginia plays a critical role in the lives of two-thirds of the nation's population. It is a catalyst for commerce in the Commonwealth of Virginia — creating jobs and moving incoming and outgoing cargo year-round. But how do you humanize cranes, ships, trains, barges and trucks? Our task on this project was to give a face to the port through its annual report.

Before hiring Meridian Group for creative direction and creative writing, The Port of Virginia kept this project in-house. Their leadership saw a need to engage an agency to take the annual report to another level. Our creative team began by developing a cargo box-shaped cover with a color and shape scheme to run throughout. Our focus for our imagery was “the people” of the port — both customers and end users, to include the general public.

Our public relations team took on the responsibility of telling the stories of The Port of Virginia, above and beyond the financial implications of the port in our region and on our economy. Fiscal responsibility is at the core of what they do, the customers they serve – from shipping companies to rail lines, trucking companies, farmers, furniture makers, storage and warehousing facilities, manufacturers and beyond — were the focus of this document. We conducted hours of interviews and filled the annual report with the stories of the people who do business with the port and those impacted by the cargo it handles daily. The interviewees include but are not limited to:

- George Adams, Lumber Liquidators, Inc. Director of International Transportation
- Eric Jehu, Expeditors Business Development Manager
- Jeremy Riddle, CrossGlobe Transport Ltd. General Manager
- George Berry, Owner-Operator and Motor Carrier
- Keith Helton, Givens Inc. Executive Vice President
- Todd Haymore, Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade
- Doug Grennan, The Scouler Company Director of North American Container Trade
- Bill Burket, Maritime Incident Response Team (MIRT) and Emergency Operations Director
- Captain Richard J. Wester, Coast Guard Sector Hampton Roads
- Rick Weddle, Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance President & CEO
- Bjoern Fischer, STIHL Inc. President
- Jennifer McDonald, Front Royal/Warren County Economic Development Authority Executive Director

Through story-telling, we shared the momentum the port is experiencing as a result of recent large investments by the Virginia General Assembly. The theme of momentum and the people making it happen are intertwined through the report from page to page. On the Horizon, Momentum Builders, Imports & Exports, Timeline, Versatility and Economic Impact — these pages give a face to an otherwise overlooked resource in our region.

By design, the book itself took on a shape and size different from anything The Port of Virginia had distributed in the past — similar to a coffee table book. It featured a centerfold image of the Norfolk International Terminals (NIT) for use as a pull-out poster and several two-page spreads heavy on imagery, light on copy. It is meant to be memorable. Due to its shape and size, the annual report was delivered by mail to 9,500 stakeholders, economic development leaders, customers and business leaders across the Commonwealth. In some instances, it was hand-delivered to select targeted audience members, like those serving in the General Assembly.