



ACTIVATE, COMMUNICATE, EFFECTUATE

Stakeholders can contribute to system's public persona

It seems like lately there's an excess of repetitive and factually-inaccurate negative coverage of the maritime industry. If you're as frustrated as I am about this trend, do something about it. Get engaged in the debate, make your voice heard and do your part to help get the facts about the industry into the public domain.

With the existence of Marine Delivers (www.marinedelivers.com)—the industry's effort to better inform the public in both Canada and the U.S.—there is a way to help make your voice heard, individually and collectively. The industry should utilize every opportunity to educate the public on the benefits of marine transportation: economic contributions, environmental sustainability and continuous improvement. The economic impact message is a strong one in terms of the number of jobs supported and how the industry is the most efficient and cost-effective delivery network for commodities, thus helping keep prices for consumer goods stable.

At a minimum, the industry has a good story to tell concerning the environmental efficiency of the marine industry to transport goods, offering fuel efficiency, fewer emissions and congestion mitigation. It can publicize the facts and evidence about what the industry is doing to address other environmental issues such as ballast water. Quantifying best practices and continuous industry improvements in the areas of the environment, safety and energy utilization are also key industry advantages.

As stakeholders, you can contribute to the communications effort in your own way:

- Write or respond to an article or op-ed
- Challenge invalid assertions
- Be visible in your community
- Build coalitions—corporate, commodity-based, geographic, trade associations
- Publicize a 'good news' story—traffic up, new cargoes, infrastructure improvements

You can also take an active role by par-

ticipating in future public events and activities, such as 'port days' events, conferences and other opportunities to educate the general public. These are all avenues where maritime stakeholders can be visible, deliver a message, improve public understanding and generate an appreciation of the Great Lakes maritime industry. Gone are the days when "just keeping quiet and your head down" was

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an acceptable way of doing business.

On another front, the marine industry-led Green Marine (www.green-marine.org) initiative continues its efforts to identify and act on the environmental issues impacting the shipping industry. Earlier this year, the group released its second annual report listing the performance of shipowners and managers in voluntarily making environmental improvements. While the scoring process relies on self-evaluation, the results are verified by independent third parties for quality assurance utilizing supporting documentation and records. This U.S./Canadian partnership is achieving positive results as the regulatory compliance scores of its member companies are rising, with 2009 scores showing significant improvement over 2008. These results are made public to further demonstrate and

communicate the maritime industry's commitment to addressing a number of key environmental issues.

Next year, Green Marine will focus on member ports and terminals and their efforts to improve environmental performance in a number of areas, including reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and discharges of cargo residues. These good news stories about best practices and continuous improvement on the environmental front can help develop a greater awareness of the maritime industry's activities and benefits, and to further educate the public and the media.

Also underway is an important evaluation of the economic impact of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System. For the first time, in a single study, Canadian and U.S. benefits and impacts will be evaluated to give a comprehensive snapshot of our binational system. This economic impact study will serve to update Canadian and U.S. data regarding employment and tax revenue. Data will be provided at the regional level, by country (U.S./Canada) and by state and province. This study, scheduled for completion sometime early next year, will provide a great deal of critical, factual and verifiable information about the Seaway System and its users that can be widely utilized for educational purposes.

The more the industry works to inform the general public and backs up its messages with facts and data, the easier it will be for the industry to receive a fair hearing in the court of public opinion and among the media. ■

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