

## IAPH Communications Award Entry

### Port of San Diego

**Entry Title:** The Big Bay Website – thebigbay.com

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#### **Summary of project:**

The Port of San Diego's Big Bay website, thebigbay.com, was first launched in 2002 as a destination-marketing website that featured the points of interest, attractions, events and services on San Diego Bay. The site is intended to draw customers and visitors from San Diego and the nearby drive markets of Southern California and Arizona. It promotes hotel stays, tourist attractions, special events, restaurant specials and other activities that visitors may be interested in.

In 2009, several Port of San Diego tenant businesses along San Diego Bay experienced sharp declines in customers and revenue, due to the worldwide economic crisis. In an effort to assist our tenants and increase business, the Port worked with an outside marketing firm, MJE Marketing Services, to refresh the Big Bay website and to create a campaign to draw visitors to San Diego Bay, its attractions and businesses. The campaign was called "This is a Good Day" and highlighted the abundance of activities and places to visit on San Diego Bay. The Big Bay website served as the platform for the campaign, prominently featuring special offers from the tenant businesses.

The Big Bay website supports all print, broadcast, outdoors and publicity communications about San Diego Bay as a destination. It included a featured event and a special promotion referred to as a "Big Bay Gem" on the home page that called attention to fun things to see and do, as well as special cost-cutting coupon efforts. These are popular features that are updated weekly. The site takes advantage of Google Calendar technology to provide a continuously updated calendar of events. A "Pick Your Day," element was added in 2012, which allows site visitors to custom-plan their itinerary, by adding tenant locations and information on an interactive map. Users can print, share or e-mail their custom-built itinerary.

The website has been very successful in driving visitors to the waterfront. On average, the number of visits to the site is 10,000 per month. The "Pick Your Day" interactive map has constantly been among the top three visited pages since its inception. The site is ranked number one in Google searches for the terms "Big Bay" and "San Diego Bay," and as the site increasingly becomes linked throughout the Web, its keyword search rises.

## **The Big Bay Website Project/Case Study**

### **Customers – Direct and Indirect Customer Relationship Management**

#### **Creating a website to raise awareness of San Diego Bay and its attractions and to assist tenant businesses during an economic crisis**

The Big Bay website was created for the Port of San Diego's customers. The Port's direct customers for this project included tenant businesses. The indirect customers included residents of the San Diego region and visitors from outside of the region.

The Big Bay website is part of a cooperative marketing program between the Port of San Diego and its tenants along San Diego Bay. The website, along with print, television and radio advertising, raises awareness of San Diego Bay and its many attractions.

Staff from the Port's Marketing and Communications department worked with tenant businesses to create attractive ads and coupons to highlight promotions. The promotions were placed on thebigbay.com, as well as print, radio and television media.

The website gives our tenant businesses a venue to promote specials and allows the public to create personal itineraries for visiting San Diego Bay.

Port staff had regular meetings with tenants and conducted customer satisfaction surveys to determine the success of the website and its ability to promote the tenant businesses and San Diego Bay attractions.

In 2009, the website was revamped to include programs that would assist our tenant businesses with attracting new customers. The tenants offered discounts and specials, which were promoted on the website.

Challenges to the program included getting some of the tenants onboard. Although there was no cost for them to promote on the website, the tenants had to offer creative discounts during a period when business was slow. Ultimately, the tenants were able to see that the discounts resulted in bringing more customers to their businesses.

The website proved to be a valuable resource in strengthening partnerships with our tenants, especially during difficult economic times. It gave the tenants a way to promote their businesses at no cost to them. Tenants saw an increase in customers after their businesses were promoted on the Big Bay website. Customers were also happy because they were able to receive discounts to attractions and were able to plan itineraries on their own.

Port staff managed the relationship with our tenant customers and the public by ensuring that thebigbay.com was constantly updated with new and attractive offers, and by providing timely responses to customer inquiries on the website.

## **Background**

The Big Bay website was created in 2002 as part of a cooperative destination-marketing campaign between the Port of San Diego and its tenants along San Diego Bay. The website, thebigbay.com, features a calendar of events, tenant promotions and an interactive planner where visitors can plan out a custom itinerary and share it with others. It lists all of the marinas, museums, restaurants, hotels, shopping areas and parks.

## **Objective**

The Big Bay website markets San Diego Bay as a destination to drive visitors to enjoy San Diego Bay, its many attractions and businesses. It was created to raise awareness of San Diego Bay and to draw more customers from around the region and the drive markets of Southern California and Arizona.

## **Beneficiaries/Audience**

The beneficiaries of the website include Port of San Diego tenant businesses and the public. The tenant businesses have an opportunity to advertise and promote their businesses free of charge. The public benefits by obtaining coupons for discounts at popular attractions, restaurants, hotels and shops. Additionally, the public benefits by using the website as a tool to plan their day along San Diego Bay.

## **Methodologies**

To create the Big Bay website, the Port of San Diego's Marketing & Communications staff consulted with its tenants and its marketing firm, MJE Marketing Services, on ways to increase incremental revenue to the bayfront businesses in response to difficult economic times. The Big Bay website served as the heart of the "This is a Good Day" campaign, and reflected its brand and messaging. The website also prominently highlighted special offers and discounts from the tenants.

The Big Bay website supports all print, broadcast, outdoors and publicity communications about San Diego Bay as a destination. A featured event was added to the home page to call attention to fun things to see and do, as well as present special cost-cutting coupon offers. These features were updated weekly.

The website took advantage of Google Calendar technology to provide a continuously updated calendar of events. It also allowed a custom "build your day" interactive mapping function that allows visitors to create a personal day on the bay by clicking on and adding tenant location and information to their own custom-built itinerary which users can print, share or email on site.

The website is also user-friendly to tenant businesses, who are able to submit updates and special offers to include on the site. The web content database does not require content providers to know HTML coding to provide updates.

When first implemented, the website was promoted with advertising in the UT San Diego/North County Times, the Los Angeles Times, Cox Cable television and on other television stations.

It was also promoted at consumer promotion shows and tours for travel writers, and special event press releases were written about it and distributed to the media.

**Evaluation:**

To evaluate the success of the website, the Port of San Diego tracked website visitors. The visits fluctuated as new information and promotions were posted. The promotion of signature events in San Diego especially drove traffic to the website. On average, the number of visits to the site is 10,000 per month. The site is ranked number one in Google searches for the terms “Big Bay” and “San Diego Bay,” and as the site increasingly becomes linked throughout the Web, its keyword search rises. Since the site was refreshed in 2012 with the interactive map, it is realizing record visitor numbers and time spent on it. Port tenants have also reported increased revenue and patronage during the past year.



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DISCOVER THE BIG BAY®



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Screen shot of the Big Bay homepage.





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### Pick Your Day Along the Big Bay

Any day is a great day to Pick Your Day. When you want family fun, delicious dining, world-class hotels and awesome attractions, the Big Bay has it all. The natural beauty of San Diego's waterfront welcomes you with spectacular views, sparkling waters and romantic sunsets. Use this interactive map to Pick Your Day and customize it to your liking.

#### Pick Your Day

☐ Hotels
 ☐ Restaurants
 ☐ Attractions

[America's Cup Harbor](#)
[Chula Vista](#)
[Coronado](#)
[Embarcadero](#)
[Harbor Island](#)
[Imperial Beach](#)
[National City](#)
[Shelter Island](#)
[The Big Bay](#)



**Use this interactive map to Pick Your Day on The Big Bay.**

Click on any location and the type of activity you're looking for (hotels, restaurants, attractions) to see more information. Mix and match locations and activities to narrow down your search. When you've found what you're looking for, click "Add to my Day" to see it included in your itinerary below. Continue building your Day. When you're done, click one of the PDF, Print, or Email icons in the upper right corner to take your itinerary with you. Now go enjoy your day!

Screen shot of Big Bay website's interactive feature for trip planning.

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