

MARAD National Marketing Campaign



Instill trust.
Inspire action.
Ignite potential.

Leaders in Marketing and Communications

Netchannels Marketing and Curley Company, leaders in Marketing and Communications, combine their expertise to deliver a full spectrum campaign, leveraging their Maritime Domain knowledge and expert skill set.



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Scope of Work	6
Geographic Focus	7
Audience Focus	8
Overarching Messaging Strategy	10
Multi-touch Outreach Strategy	11
Marketing Tools and Materials	13
Campaign Timeline	15
Team Structure	18
Evaluation and Metrics	19
Case Studies	20
Rough Order of Magnitude	20
Company Information	20

Introduction

The Challenge

The United States Merchant Marine and maritime industry are facing their most significant challenges since WWII, especially in recruiting and retaining skilled mariners. With a critical shortfall of nearly 2,000 qualified mariners needed to fully crew vessels during national emergencies, this shortage threatens both national security and supply chain stability amid global uncertainties. The pandemic has only worsened the situation, leading to increased retirements and mariners leaving for shore-based jobs, causing ships to sail short-handed and delaying operations.

While the maritime industry offers excellent pay and benefits, it struggles to attract and retain talent due to the unique demands of maritime careers, including long periods away from home. Unlike other transportation sectors, the maritime industry lacks visibility, making it difficult for many Americans to understand the vital role it plays in both the economy and national security.

Introduction

The Solution

To address this, the United States Maritime Administration (MARAD) urgently needs a comprehensive communications and marketing campaign with a partner who understands not just how to create and launch an awareness campaign, but also how to influence target audiences to choose a career in the maritime industry. The combined expertise of Netchannels Marketing and Curley Company will allow MARAD to realize its goal of recruiting, training, and retaining skilled workers in the shipbuilding industry and the United States Merchant Marine.

Some key elements of our campaign for MARAD include segmented marketing and communications programs to raise public awareness about the critical role of the maritime industry, promote maritime academies and training programs, highlight the rewarding career opportunities available and promote the value of the shipbuilding industry. Drawing inspiration from successful recruitment efforts by uniformed services, and blending with contemporary communications tactics, a strategic outreach campaign can create compelling messaging that resonates with potential mariners.

By leveraging targeted marketing and educational initiatives, the Merchant Marine can build a sustainable workforce for the future, ensuring the U.S. maintains a strong and capable merchant fleet and we are eager to bring our expertise to this important campaign.

Scope of Work

The U.S. Merchant Marine and maritime industries are facing significant recruitment and retention challenges. To address these issues and ensure a robust maritime workforce, a targeted marketing and communications campaign is essential. This proposal outlines a comprehensive, multiphase strategy aimed at raising awareness about the importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine, educating the public, and promoting career opportunities within the maritime and shipbuilding sectors. The campaign will target diverse audiences using a range of outreach methods and educational materials.



Geographic Focus

This targeted approach will ensure that outreach efforts are both efficient and impactful, effectively engaging diverse audiences and maximizing the campaign's reach. By focusing on strategic geographic locations and tailoring messaging to the specific needs and interests of each audience segment, the campaign will drive interest and participation in maritime careers, supporting the long-term growth and stability of the U.S. Merchant Marine and shipbuilding industries.

Geographic Areas of Focus

Coastal Regions with Major Ports: Target cities like New York, Los Angeles, Houston, Seattle, Norfolk, Savannah, and Miami, which are central to the maritime industry. These hubs are critical for recruitment due to their proximity to major ports and shipyards, offering abundant opportunities for maritime careers.

Inland Waterway Regions: Concentrate on cities along significant inland waterways, such as St. Louis, New Orleans, Great Lakes, and Pittsburgh. These locations play a vital role in inland shipping and commerce, making them strategic for outreach efforts related to maritime and shipbuilding careers.

Military Bases and Veteran Communities: Focus on areas with large military populations, such as San Diego, Norfolk, and Jacksonville. These locations have high concentrations of active-duty service members and veterans, making them ideal for recruiting individuals with transferable skills and discipline suited to maritime careers.

Educational Hubs: Target areas near maritime academies (e.g., Kings Point, NY, CA, TX, ME, MI, MA) and regions with technical schools offering strong vocational programs. Building partnerships in these areas will facilitate direct outreach to students pursuing relevant fields of study.

Audience Focus

Potential Workers (Ages 18-45)

- ▶ **Young Adults (Ages 18-25):** Engage recent high school graduates, community college students, and university undergraduates who are exploring career options. Messaging will highlight the exciting opportunities, global travel, and competitive earning potential offered by maritime careers.
- ▶ **Skilled Tradespeople (Ages 26-45):** Target individuals with backgrounds in skilled trades, such as welding, mechanics, and electrical work, who are seeking stable, well-paying career paths. Emphasize how their existing skills align with maritime and shipbuilding needs, offering a seamless transition.
- ▶ **Unemployed or Underemployed Individuals:** Focus on those affected by economic downturns, highlighting the stability, job security, and comprehensive benefits available in maritime careers.



Educational Institutions and Students

- ▶ **Generation Z:** 11-17 Sea Scouts reach through social media
- ▶ **High Schools:** Collaborate with teachers, career counselors, and administrators to promote maritime careers through presentations, career days, and integration into STEM programs. Provide resources that help students and parents understand the long-term benefits of maritime professions.
- ▶ **Vocational and Technical Schools:** Partner with schools offering programs in mechanics, welding, electrical engineering, and other relevant trades. Example: Partner with [BOCES of NY State](#). Create clear pathways for students to transition into maritime careers, including apprenticeships and internships.
- ▶ **Community Colleges and Universities:** Develop partnerships to offer maritime-focused courses and degree programs. Support initiatives that incorporate real-world maritime experiences through internships and industry collaborations.



Veterans and Career Transition Seekers

- ▶ **Veterans and Active Duty Service Members:** Conduct targeted outreach to veterans looking for post-military careers that match their skills and values. Collaborate with military transition assistance programs, veterans’ organizations, and participate in job fairs at military bases to promote maritime opportunities.
- ▶ **Individuals Seeking Career Transitions:** Focus on professionals from fields such as hospitality, transportation, and manufacturing who are considering a career change. Highlight the transferability of their skills, the stability of maritime employment, and the attractive compensation and benefits packages.



General Public



Public Awareness Campaign: Launch initiatives to raise awareness among the general public about the Merchant Marine’s critical role in national security, supply chain stability, and economic resilience. Educating the public will foster broader community support and encourage interest in maritime careers, showcasing the Merchant Marine as a vital part of the country’s infrastructure and security.

Partners

We are looking to partner with organizations that can help spread the word and influence our target audiences to choose a maritime career. We propose to leverage these partnerships with communications materials and joint recruitment efforts.

Alumni of maritime academies

[USMMA Alumni Association](#)

[Maritime College Alumni Association](#)

[American Professional Mariner Association](#)

[MITAGS: Maritime Institute of Technology](#)

[Boy Scouts of America Sea Scouts](#)

[My Maritime Career](#)

Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering (NAME) such as [University of Michigan](#)

Labor Unions

[American Maritime Officers](#)

[International Organization of Master Mates & Pilots](#)

[Marine Engineer Beneficial Association](#)

[Seafarers International Union](#)

Overarching Messaging Strategy

The campaign will develop a strong brand identity and theme that resonates across all target audiences, emphasizing the pride, adventure, and career benefits offered by maritime professions. Key messaging points could include:

National Security and Disaster Relief

Highlighting the critical role of the Merchant Marine in national security, disaster response, and humanitarian missions.

Global Trade

Emphasizing that more than 80% of global trade by volume travels by ship, showcasing the vital role of mariners in the global economy.

Travel and Adventure

Promoting the opportunity to travel the world, experience diverse cultures, and work on various commercial and military vessels.

Education and Career Growth

Marketing the maritime academies as affordable higher education options with strong job placement rates. Highlight the paths to earning a Bachelor of Science degree, becoming a Merchant Marine Officer, and obtaining Coast Guard licenses.

Career Versatility

Illustrating the diverse career opportunities that maritime training opens up, including roles in logistics, port operations, engineering, environmental studies, and more.

Quality of Life

Acknowledging the unique lifestyle of maritime professionals, emphasizing the long stretches at sea followed by extended time on land with family, and the fulfillment of contributing to essential global and humanitarian efforts.

Competitive Pay and Benefits

Showcasing the competitive salaries and comprehensive benefits packages, including health insurance, retirement plans, and generous vacation time. Emphasize support for education and professional development as key advantages of a maritime career.

Multi-touch Outreach Strategy

To reach the target audiences effectively, a comprehensive set of outreach methods will be employed, combining both digital and traditional channels of communication to maximize impact.

Digital Marketing

- ▶ **Targeted Social Media Campaigns:** Leverage platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok to reach younger demographics and individuals considering career transitions. Utilize platform-specific targeting features to tailor ads based on interests, demographics, and location.
- ▶ **Geo-Targeted Search Engine Advertising:** Use Google Ads and other search engines to reach users in key geographic areas, including coastal regions, military bases, and inland waterway hubs. This will drive traffic to campaign landing pages and informational portals.
- ▶ **Email Marketing:** Implement targeted email campaigns focused on veterans and job seekers. Use platforms like LinkedIn, Indeed, and military-specific job boards to distribute information about maritime career opportunities and benefits.



Traditional Media

- ▶ **Broadcast Advertising:** Run strategically timed radio and television ads in regions with high concentrations of our target demographics. Focus on channels with strong followings among young adults, veterans, and maritime professionals.
- ▶ **Print Advertising:** Place ads in local newspapers, trade magazines, and industry publications related to the maritime and shipbuilding sectors. Highlight the career benefits and educational opportunities available.
- ▶ **Public Service Announcements (PSAs):** Develop and air PSAs on local TV stations and radio networks, emphasizing the critical role of the Merchant Marine in national security, disaster relief, and global trade.



Educational Partnerships

- ▶ **School and College Collaborations:** Partner with high schools, community colleges, universities, and vocational schools to integrate maritime career information into their career counseling and educational programs. Organize maritime career days, workshops, and guest lectures featuring industry professionals.
- ▶ **Educational Materials:** Provide schools and colleges with brochures, videos, and other resources that outline career paths in the maritime industry, available training programs, and the long-term benefits of these careers.
- ▶ **Associations:** We will closely partner with associations to educate and reach our audience. Examples include the [American School Counselor Association](#) (national) and [Western New York High School Counselor Associations](#) (state).

Veterans Outreach

- ▶ **Collaboration with Veterans' Organizations:** Work closely with veterans' groups, military transition assistance programs, and veterans' affairs offices to promote maritime career opportunities. Host informational sessions, job fairs, and workshops specifically tailored for veterans at military bases and veteran centers.
- ▶ **Veteran-Focused Content:** Develop marketing content tailored to veterans, emphasizing the seamless transition from military to maritime roles and the support programs available, such as the Military to Mariner initiative.

Community Engagement

- ▶ **Open Houses and Expos:** Organize open houses at ports, shipyards, and maritime academies to provide hands-on experiences. These events will allow potential recruits to interact with current maritime professionals and explore career opportunities.
- ▶ **Career Expos and Community Events:** Participate in local job fairs, community events, and maritime career expos. Partner with local chambers of commerce, civic organizations, and government officials to support and amplify the campaign.
- ▶ **Local Community Outreach:** Engage with community leaders and influencers to advocate for the importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine and promote career opportunities.

Public Relations and Media Outreach

- ▶ **Editorial Campaigns:** Publish editorial pieces, op-eds, and feature articles in major newspapers, maritime magazines, and online publications. These pieces will emphasize the strategic importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine, the need for skilled mariners, and the rewarding career paths available in the industry.
- ▶ **Informative Newsletters:** Distribute informative content through newsletters affiliated with maritime academies, veterans' organizations, and industry groups to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.
- ▶ **Media Relations:** Build relationships with journalists and media outlets to secure coverage of the U.S. Merchant Marine's role in national security and economic stability.

Marketing Tools and Materials

To effectively execute the marketing strategy and engage target audiences, a diverse array of marketing tools and materials will be utilized.

Alumni Referral Program

Objective: Leverage the experiences and professional networks of maritime academy alumni.

Implementation: Alumni will act as mentors and ambassadors, sharing their personal career stories and influencing potential recruits to choose a career in the maritime industry.

Brochures and Flyers

Objective: Provide detailed, accessible information about maritime careers, training programs, and benefits.

Distribution: Distribute at schools, career fairs, veterans' centers, and community events, ensuring that materials are visually appealing and informative.

Videos

Objective: Create engaging content that showcases personal success stories, day-in-the-life experiences, and testimonials from industry professionals.

Platforms: Share on digital platforms, social media, partners' websites, and during public presentations to capture diverse audience interests.

Banner Ads

Objective: Drive traffic to an informational online portal.

Execution: Place banner ads on websites frequented by target demographics, including job boards, educational sites, and community forums.

Event-in-a-Box

Objective: Facilitate local outreach efforts.

Contents: Portable kits containing promotional materials, informational displays, and branded giveaways for use at job fairs and industry events.

Recruitment Centers in Malls

Objective: Engage with potential recruits in high-traffic areas.

Setup: Information kiosks in shopping centers to provide instant access to career information and application resources.

Online Portal

Objective: Serve as a centralized hub for maritime career information.

Features: User-friendly interface with comprehensive details on careers, training programs, job listings, application resources, and interactive tools such as career quizzes. Links back to partners' websites such as maritime academies.

Buddy Program

Objective: Connect potential recruits with current maritime professionals.

Implementation: Pair individuals with mentors for personalized discussions about career opportunities and experiences in the maritime industry.

Ad Campaigns

Objective: Boost awareness and interest.

Execution: Run targeted print and digital ad campaigns in regional newspapers, trade magazines, educational journals, and online platforms.

Swag and Promotional Items

Objective: Build community and brand recognition.

Items: Distribute branded T-shirts, hats, tote bags, and key chains at events to enhance campaign visibility and foster a sense of belonging.

QR Codes

Objective: Offer instant access to information bridging the gap between print and digital appealing to the younger generation.

Usage: Include QR codes on promotional materials, linking to the online portal and application resources.

Posters and Signage

Objective: Increase visibility and engagement.

Display Locations: Schools, career centers, military bases, and community centers featuring impactful imagery, statistics, and calls to action.

Editorials and Articles

Objective: Raise awareness and educate the public.

Publication: Publish informative articles and opinion pieces in maritime and general publications highlighting the strategic importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine and career benefits.

Infographics

Purpose: Visually communicate the U.S. Merchant Marine's role, maritime logistics importance, and career benefits.

Usage: Share on digital marketing channels, educational settings, and include in print materials for easy comprehension.

Campaign Timeline

PHASE 1

Preparation and initial development of the strategy and creation of marketing assets (0-4 Months)

Task	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
Research and Target Identification	Active	Active		
Messaging and Communication Plan		Active		
Alumni Referral Program Setup			Active	Active
Development of Core Marketing Assets	Active	Active	Active	Active
Online Portal and Landing Pages		Active	Active	Active
Development of Advertising Materials	Active	Active	Active	Active

Research and Target Identification (6 weeks)

Identify key target audiences and communication channels.

Messaging and Communication Plan (4 weeks)

Develop and finalize the core messaging and communication strategy.

Alumni Referral Program Setup (4 weeks)

Launch and organize the alumni referral program.

Development of Core Marketing Assets (13 weeks)

Create essential marketing materials, including brochures, videos, and banner ads.

Online Portal and Landing Pages (10 weeks)

Develop and launch the online portal and associated landing pages.

Ongoing Development of Advertising Materials

Continue creating and updating brochures, videos, banner ads, and promotional items.

PHASE 2
Implementation and Engagement
(5-18 Months)

Task	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Recruitment and Training of Field Staff						
Buddy Program						
Field Events						
Development of Advertising Materials						

Recruitment and Training of Field Staff
(4 months)

Recruit and train staff for field operations and events.

Buddy Program
(Ongoing)

Launch and maintain the Buddy Program to connect potential recruits with maritime professionals.

Field Events
(Ongoing)

Host and participate in field events, including job fairs and open houses.

Development of Advertising Materials
(Ongoing)

Continue producing and distributing marketing materials as needed. Examples: printing of materials for distribution and media buying across geographies and target audiences

PHASE 3

Sustained Outreach and Evaluation (19-24 Months)

Task	Q7	Q8
Campaign Execution		
Reporting and Assessment		
Adjustment and Calibration		
Sustained Presence		

Campaign Execution (Ongoing)

Implement and maintain campaign activities based on a calendar of events.

Reporting and Assessment (Ongoing)

Provide regular updates to stakeholders and evaluate campaign success.

Adjustment and Calibration (Ongoing)

Adjust strategies and messaging based on performance metrics and feedback.

Sustained Presence (Ongoing)

Continue digital and traditional advertising, educational partnerships, and community outreach.

Team Structure

The team structure is designed to ensure efficient execution of all campaign aspects, from strategy and content creation to media management and outreach.

Project Management

Campaign Director: Oversees the entire campaign, ensuring timelines, budgets, and stakeholder communication.

Project Manager: Handles day-to-day operations, scheduling, and task management.

Strategy and Research

Strategic Communications Lead: Develops the communication strategy, identifies target audiences, and refines messaging.

Market Research Analyst: Conducts research on target demographics, communication channels, and market trends.

Creative and Content Development

Creative Director: Oversees creative assets, including branding and campaign aesthetics.

Content Writers: Develop content for brochures, flyers, newsletters, websites, and social media.

Video Production Specialist: Creates video content featuring success stories, day-in-the-life features, and testimonials.

Graphic Designers: Design brochures, flyers, posters, banners, and infographics.

Digital and Traditional Media

Digital Marketing Manager: Manages digital advertising, social media campaigns, and online engagement.

Social Media Strategist: Develops and implements social media strategies across platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and X.

Public Relations Specialist: Handles media relations, PSAs, and press releases. Builds media relationships for positive coverage.

Advertising Coordinator: Manages placement and tracking of print and digital ads.

Outreach and Partnerships

Outreach Coordinator: Manages partnerships with educational institutions, veterans' organizations, and coordinates events.

Alumni Relations Manager: Oversees the Alumni Referral Program and engages with alumni for recruitment and mentorship.

Veterans Outreach Specialist: Develops strategies to connect with veterans and active duty service members, and coordinates with veterans' organizations.

Event Management

Event Planner: Organizes field events, career fairs, and expos.

Logistics Coordinator: Manages event logistics, setup, and on-site support.

Administrative and Support

Administrative Assistant: Provides support, handles scheduling, and maintains documentation.

Data Analyst: Monitors campaign metrics, analyzes data, and provides insights for adjustments.

Evaluation and Reporting

Campaign Analyst: Evaluates campaign effectiveness, prepares reports, and provides recommendations for improvement.

Evaluation and Metrics

To ensure the campaign's success and optimize strategies, we will implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Track digital engagement metrics, including website traffic, click-through rates, social media interactions (likes, shares, comments), and email campaign responses. Monitor event attendance and inquiries generated through outreach efforts.

Surveys and Feedback

Conduct surveys at events, through the website, and via social media to gather feedback on the campaign's effectiveness and message clarity. Use feedback to adjust and improve strategies.

Recruitment Data

Collaborate with maritime academies, training institutions, and employers to track enrollment and hiring trends. Compare data before, during, and after the campaign to measure impact.

Case Studies

[Illumio – Integrated Marketing Campaign](#)

[Communications – PR Case Studies](#)

[USA Maritime Case study](#)

Rough Order of Magnitude

We propose a multi-year campaign, spanning 3 to 5 years, which could be implemented as either a pilot program or a full-scale, multi-market initiative.

The estimated cost for Phase 1, which includes research, strategy development, and the production of marketing assets, is \$1.7 million. The budget for Phase 2 will be determined based on the outcomes and agreements from Phase 1, with costs varying depending on factors such as market selection, audience segmentation, geographic scope, campaign intensity, and content creation strategies approved by MARAD.

[Detailed Budget](#)

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