



## COMMUNITY ESSENTIALS

Staff Profile Series



Submission for Best Marketing and  
Communications on the COVID-19  
Pandemic

Electronic Media



## Who was the target audience for this entry?

The target audiences for this website were Spokane Transit riders and employees, and the Spokane community as a whole.

## What was the situation/challenge that necessitated creating this entry?

In early April, fear and uncertainty over COVID-19 peaked in the Spokane region. The governor had classified public transit as an “essential” service, but many in the community questioned why buses were still running during a global pandemic.

We needed people to understand that public transit was an essential service, especially during a health emergency, and that safety measures were in place to protect transit users.

As an agency, we also needed our employees to give us more, because they were now being asked to do work that many now considered to be highly dangerous. Especially in the early days of the pandemic, many employees felt they were risking their lives by coming to work. Bus operators were seen as most at risk, but so were customer service representatives, transit officers, cleaners, and even administrative staff.

We wanted to reinforce the sense of pride our employees felt by publicly documenting and saluting them as heroes – ordinary people doing essential work in a time of crisis.







## What was the strategy/objective of this entry?

The goal of the series is to show that public transit is a safe and essential service, and that public transit employees are essential workers.

To do this, we decided to shine a spotlight on a different employee from across the agency each week. We would show what they did, why it was essential, and how their work changed during COVID-19.

We hoped that through these profiles, readers would also come to understand *who we are* as public transit workers. We named the series “Community Essentials” and it has been running for 39 weeks and counting without interruption.

Everything is done in-house by our team of four. The building block each week is a new profile on a different employee. We create a web page for each individual profile in a [special section](#) of our newly-created [coronavirus response website](#). The page has a profile article based on interviews with the subject, as well as their managers and colleagues.

We spend extra time on the photography in an attempt make the series stand out visually. The emphasis is on candid, on-the-job photos instead of staged portrait-style images.

We also make a video each week with the photos and highlighted sections from the article. Social media posts use photos and auto-play videos to draw people’s attention to links to the online articles.



Over the course of 39 profiles, we've subtly shifted the messaging to react to new developments with the virus or in community sentiment.

In the beginning, we focused on the essential nature of public transit. Later, we shifted to specific essential services Spokane Transit offers in response to the pandemic, like socially-distanced rides for senior citizens and food deliveries to people in quarantine.

We've also used profiles to showcase new safety measures on our vehicles, enhanced disinfecting procedures in our facilities and other ways we keep riders and employees safe.

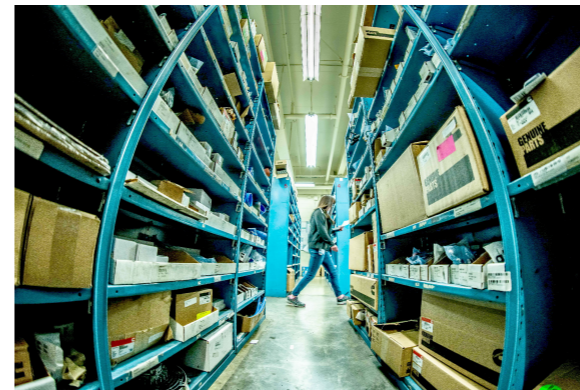
While the profiles pushed critical messages to the community, they also proved an invaluable tool for boosting employee morale. This has been an opportunity to shine a light on employees and departments whose contributions didn't always get the recognition they deserved.



*Coach Operator Justin Martinez finds a way to repay kindness after COVID-19 is declared a national emergency. [Read his story.](#)*



*Body Shop Technician Ron Scouton and his team work under pressure to design, build and install safety barriers for STA's fleet of 147 buses. [Read the story.](#)*



*STA's Purchasing Department gets creative to keep essential items like PPE and disinfectants stocked during the coronavirus pandemic. [Find out more.](#)*



*Paratransit Van Operator Brandi Pool finds herself lending a hand in unexpected ways during STA's coronavirus response. [Read her story here.](#)*



## What results/impact did this entry have?

Inside the agency, it took about a month – or, four profiles – to really feel the effects: a positive buzz around the series because ordinary employees were being recognized for their work in a new way.

We put the word out that we weren't looking for people to profile based on metrics like performance evaluations or managerial praise – we were focusing on showing the community how the everyday STA employee was essential in maintaining public transit during COVID-19.

In addition to many profiles of drivers, we profiled an IT staff member who spent sleepless nights at the start of the pandemic setting up new work-from-home systems, an HR employee who took a crash course to learn about new benefits for staff affected by COVID-19, a driver taking part in our meal-delivery partnership who previously delivered emergency aid in Africa, an executive assistant who helped set up videoconferencing systems so teams of executives could plan the agency's emergency response remotely – and many more.

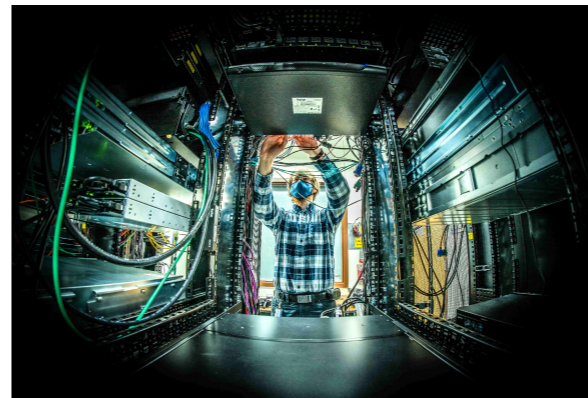
39 weeks and 39 profiles later, this series remains our most effective means of boosting employee morale, and of explaining to the community how and why public transit workers are essential.



*Capital Projects Manager Ryan Brodwater keeps essential transit projects moving forward, even during pandemic-related shutdowns. [Find out more.](#)*



*Coach Operator Charlene Gresham maintains a personal connection with riders as the national emergency continues. [Read her story here.](#)*



*Network Administrator Tim Elmer protects STA systems against new online threats arising in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak. [Read his story here.](#)*



*Customer Service Representative Lonnie Olson finds new ways to help STA riders during the coronavirus emergency. [Find out more.](#)*





**Please tell the judges why this entry was submitted and why it should win an AdWheel Award.**

The "Community Essentials" profile series has showcased public transit workers as complex people with diverse life experiences, who are maintaining public transit during a national emergency for the good of the community.

The budget was \$0. Every aspect, from writing to photography to design, has been done entirely in-house by our small team.

We are extremely proud of the public recognition we've helped make visible for our employees. We have consistently put out a new profile article, photos, video and social posts each week for nearly ten months without interruption because our essential workers deserve the recognition.



***Thank you for considering our team!***

