

2012 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION ENTRY FORM

(Please copy and complete this form for each entry)

Check only ONE entry classification below:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. AAPA Awareness Initiative Messaging _____ | 8. Overall Campaign _____ |
| 2. Advertisements – Single _____ | 9. Periodicals _____ |
| 3. Advertisements – Series _____ | 10. Promotional/Advocacy Material _____ |
| 4. Annual Reports _____ | 11. Social/Web-Based Media <u>X</u> |
| 5. Audio-Only Presentations _____ | 12. Special Events _____ |
| 6. Directories/Handbooks _____ | 13. Videos _____ |
| 7. Miscellaneous _____ | 14. Visual-Only Presentations _____ |
| | 15. Websites _____ |

☐ CATEGORY 1

☐ CATEGORY 2

Entry Title Talk directly to your people: Port of Tacoma's Facebook & Twitter social media channels

Port Name Port of Tacoma

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Please indicate precisely how your port's name should be listed on any award(s) it may win:

Name Port of Tacoma

Being as precise as possible, please attach a separate entry statement, in English, that:

- **Defines the Communications Challenge or Opportunity**
 - Situation Analysis (*assess major internal and external factors*)
 - Problem Statement (*briefly describe in specific & measurable terms*)
- **Summarizes Planning and Programming**
 - Goals (*summarize desired outcome or end result*)
 - Target Publics (*be specific; list primary and secondary audiences if appropriate*)
 - Objectives (*identify specific and measurable milestones needed to reach goal*)
- **Identifies Actions Taken and Communication Outputs**
 - Strategies (*identify media choices, etc., that require tactics to complete*)
 - Tactics (*specify actions used to carry out strategies*)
 - Implementation Plan (*include timelines, staffing and budget*)
- **Summarizes Evaluation Methods and Communications Outcomes**
 - Evaluation Methods (*describe either formal surveys or anecdotal audience feedback used*)
 - Communications Outcomes (*isolate PR impacts to assess changed opinions, attitudes, behaviors*)

Talk directly to your people

Port of Tacoma's Facebook & Twitter social media channels

Communications Challenge or Opportunity

Owned by the citizens of Pierce County, the Port of Tacoma has historically relied on local news media and printed materials to share our story with our community and business partners. In the past five years, with the proliferation of social media and the fragmentation of traditional news media, how people receive information has changed dramatically.

This fundamental shift meant having to rethink our communications strategy completely, to engage more frequently in more places to reach more people.

The "gate keepers" of old – the editors, producers and publishers of news – have been joined by bloggers, tweeters, "citizen journalists" and friends sharing information in online forums. Social media channels had opened up new avenues for interaction, sharing and connecting on the Web.

These were the places our audiences were going to communicate and share. By not having a presence in the social channels, we were missing out on the conversation.

We had already added e-newsletters and a website subscription service to more fully engage our audiences through electronic channels. In the fall of 2009, we made the strategic decision to join two of the fastest growing social channels, Facebook and Twitter.

Planning and Programming

The goals of our social media program are to:

- Increase awareness of the Port of Tacoma and its economic benefits by reaching a broader audience
- Drive traffic to our website and establish the site as a central source of information
- Continue to improve openness and increase trust in the organization

Our primary audiences include the Pierce County community, particularly voting-aged citizens; local, state and federal elected officials; and current and potential customers and business partners, such as beneficial cargo owners, tenants and logistics providers.

Our primary objectives are to consistently grow our social communities and see increased engagement with our audiences.

Actions Taken and Communication Outputs

The communication department's strategies in using social media include:

- Engage with audiences in two-way conversations that we may not have been reaching otherwise
- Consistently post timely content tailored for the unique audience on each social channel
- Add value to the social conversation and demonstrate pride in our community
- Increase openness and trust by responding in a timely manner to questions and comments posted to our social channels

One communications staff member manages all our social channels, which has allowed us to develop our social "voice" and maintain it consistently across the platforms. Postings to our Facebook and Twitter pages have a friendly, informal tone and cover a variety of topics, from Port news items and photos of interesting cargo to highlighting community events or our customers' successes.

While similar information may appear on both our Facebook Fan Page and Twitter Timeline, each posting is tailored to resonate with that medium's audience. For example, we may post a link to our community e-newsletter to both Facebook and Twitter. While the teaser encouraging users click on the link in a Twitter posting calls out the most newsworthy item, the Facebook post may highlight a community connection.

Both platforms are valuable tools to push out timely information as events unfold. This past January, extreme winter weather cloaked most of western Washington in nearly a foot of snow and a thick layer of ice, leading several Port terminals to close for a day or more. We posted regular updates on the status of our terminals to our website and pushed out links to the webpage on Twitter and Facebook.

In social media, users self-select to "like" your page or follow your tweets. Our fans and followers are interested in the Port and what we do, and they use the sites to ask questions about cargo they've seen on our docks or our operations. They've also used the forums to share criticisms or applaud our actions.

Our social channels:



Facebook Fan Page (www.facebook.com/portoftacoma)

Our fanbase includes Pierce County citizens, local elected officials and local organizations/companies. Along with links to Port news, cargo statistics and videos, we create Facebook Events and Facebook Ads to promote Port-sponsored community events and share photos of interesting cargo, Port operations and our employees volunteering. We demonstrate pride in being part of Pierce County by highlighting local news, events and people.



Twitter (www.twitter.com/portoftacoma)

The brief, rapid-fire nature of Twitter has made it ideal for communicating with our business and industry partners, transportation organizations, reporters and legislators. We post to Twitter several times a day, striking a balance between posting our own tweets and re-tweeting content posted by our followers. We've used a Twitter hashtag the past two years to tweet our annual breakfast event, giving our followers who are unable to attend access to the information.

NOTE: *We are unable to share the username and passwords for our social media sites because we would violate the Port of Tacoma's password management policy.*

Evaluation Methods and Communication Outcomes

Overwhelmingly, the response to our social sites has been positive. Our communities regularly interact with the content we post, in the forms of retweets and Facebook comments and likes. Best of all, our fans and followers are using the social channels to interact with us, asking questions and providing feedback.

One way to measure success is by monitoring the number of people following your updates. Early on, we chose to allow our communities to grow organically, with little to no official marketing. Despite this, we've seen our numbers grow consistently. Our communities include our primary audiences and people we weren't reaching otherwise:

Facebook: As of April 2012, the Port's Facebook Fan Page had 756 "likes," up from 390 in October 2010. Ninety percent live in the United States, with 36 percent calling Tacoma, Wash., home. Nearly 75 percent of our fans are between the ages of 25 and 54, which is the voting-age public we're aiming to reach.

Twitter: As of April 2012, the Port's Twitter account had 2,161 followers, up from 757 in October 2010. Our followers include local government agencies and businesses, elected officials, logistics service providers and truckers.

Additionally, we've found the social channels help drive traffic to our website, www.portoftacoma.com. While the 1,215 visits and 2,382 page views referred from Twitter and Facebook are a small percentage of the 173,294 visits and more than 515,000 page views last year, the numbers are growing year over year. The previous year, Facebook and Twitter accounted for 718 visits and 2,305 page views. The majority of these visits are likely from people we were not reaching before joining the social conversation.