

2013 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 XXX _____ |
| 3. Advertisements – Series _____ | 10. Promotional/Advocacy Material _____ |
| 4. Annual Reports _____ | 11. Social/Web-Based Media _____ |
| 5. Audio-Only Presentations _____ | 12. Special Events _____ |
| 6. Directories/Handbooks _____ | 13. Videos _____ |
| 7. Miscellaneous _____ | 14. Visual-Only Presentations _____ |
| | 15. Websites _____ |

<input type="checkbox"/> CATEGORY 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CATEGORY 2
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Entry Title: The Port of Cleveland eNewsletter _____

Port Name: The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority _____

Port Address: 1375 E. 9th Street, Suite 2300, Cleveland Ohio 44114 _____

Contact Name/Title: Sandra Livingston, Vice President of External Affairs _____

Telephone: 216-377-1341 _____ Email Address: Sandra.Livingston@portofcleveland.com _____

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

Name: Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority _____

Being as precise as possible, attach a separate entry statement, in English, that includes a descriptive summary of your entry and lists answers to each of the following four key questions:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. What are/were the specific communications challenges or opportunities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe in specific & measurable terms the situation leading up to creation of this entry. - Analyze the major internal and external factors needing to be addressed. <p>2. What were your communications planning and programming components?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe your overall goals (desired results). - Describe your objectives (identify specific, measurable milestones needed to reach your goals). - Identify your target publics (list primary, secondary and tertiary audiences in order of importance). | <p>3. What actions were taken and what communication outputs were used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain your strategies (e.g., identify media, timing & venue choices requiring tactics to complete). - Specify your tactics (actions used to carry out your strategies). - Map out your implementation plan (include timelines, staffing and budget). <p>4. What were your your evaluation methods and communications outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe formal or informal surveys, or anecdotal audience feedback, used to evaluate success. - Determine communications outcomes by assessing changed opinions, behaviors and attitudes. |
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The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority

2013 AAPA Communications Awards

Category: Periodicals

Title: Port of Cleveland eNewsletter

<http://www.portofcleveland.com/category/newsletter/december-2012/>

<http://www.portofcleveland.com/category/newsletter/february-2013/>

<http://www.portofcleveland.com/media-center/newsletter/>



Excerpt from the Port's eNewsletter, which began publication in September, 2012

Challenges and Opportunities

In recent years the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority has stepped up with new, targeted and innovative initiatives to maximize its benefit to the community – and with this historic pivot has come a more energized and strategic approach to communications, public outreach, and community engagement.

The Port does face communications challenges. While it has strong working relationships with private and public stakeholders, the general public is far less familiar with the Port, its value to the community, and its re-invigorated approach.

This lack of knowledge results in part from two facts: first, the general public typically does not experience the Port directly or frequently; and second, many people are not aware that the Port connects with people in important ways that are not obvious.

This knowledge gap also stems from and is compounded by other factors. The Port previously went through a difficult period marked by instability and an overly ambitious plan (that has since been

rejected) to move its maritime facilities. The Port also has received some negative media coverage and suffers from misconceptions.

Opportunities to address these challenges arose in June 2010 with the hiring of a new President/CEO. Since that time, the Port has produced a series of solid accomplishments and moved forward on unprecedented initiatives. The process has been strategic, methodical, and measurable, and communications and outreach have been a significant part of this new era for the Port.

In the fall of 2011, the Port adopted a new Strategic Action Plan, Vision, and Mission. Simply put, the Port is focused on job growth, economic vitality, and vibrant waterfronts. Key messaging focuses on the mission, the mindset, and the work. By way of background, the Port is a public agency that receives funding from a countywide property tax voted on by residents, placing an even higher duty on the Port to inform the public about the use and benefits of its tax dollars, and making education and meaningful dialogue even more important.

The Port targets three key areas to enhance the region:

- **Maritime:** The Port is a leading international gateway for waterborne trade on the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway System, connecting regional companies to the global economy
- **Development Finance:** The Port helps enterprises – from businesses to hospitals to arts institutions – connect to the financing they need to expand and invest in new facilities
- **Environment & Infrastructure:** The Port has taken on an expanded role as a steward of Cleveland Harbor, which includes the downtown Lake Erie shoreline and the Cuyahoga River ship channel. The Port has launched environmental and infrastructure programs to safeguard the channel, and has opened the 88-acre Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve to enhance the public's connection to the waterfront.

The Strategic Action Plan identified communicating for “transparency, public engagement, and accountability” as one of its seven strategic policies. In 2012, the Port developed a Strategic Communications Plan that included a series of actions centered on key messaging, education, outreach, and engagement.

During the latter part of 2012, the Port moved forward with an integrated communications strategy that includes the following online initiatives:

- Launching a redesigned and rewritten website
- Developing an electronic newsletter disseminated via email and the Port's website
- Distributing periodic President/CEO stakeholder letters shared via email and posted on the website
- Strengthening the Port's presence and engagement on Facebook and Twitter
- Partnering with The Civic Commons (<http://theciviccommons.com/portofcleveland>), a social media site designed for civic and civil dialogue.

The Port is also measuring the success of its outreach efforts through ongoing analysis of feedback and statistics.

The eNewsletter gives the Port the opportunity to reach out to a diverse and growing online audience with stories about the Port and its partners that are engaging, informative, and humanizing. The impact can be measured by audience growth, survey results, and individual comments/responses.

Planning and Programming:

The overarching goal of the eNewsletter is three-fold: To educate, inform, and engage a growing audience about the Port and the value it provides; to strengthen the public trust in the Port by highlighting not only the organization's accomplishments, but also its approach, which is strategic,

collaborative, business-oriented, and civic-minded, and; to showcase the work of stakeholders who work with the Port in Cleveland Harbor and around the community.

To reach these goals, the Port has specific eNewsletter objectives, including:

- Producing stories that highlight the breadth of the Port's work, the organization's successes, and the work of Port stakeholders/partners
- Directly engaging the President/CEO with a regular column that both exposes readers to his views and thinking, and invites readers to contact him directly. He is the public face of the organization and a key to its branding efforts.
- Using the eNewsletter to invite direct and two-way communications with a wide range of audiences
- Growing the eNewsletter distribution list
- Generating content that can be pitched to media outlets for even greater dissemination
- Connecting the eNewsletter content with social media and the website to create a synergy among all the Port's communications vehicles.

Target audiences:

- Members of the general public
- Stakeholders in the Port's three focus areas
- Non-profit organizations (general community, civic organizations, environmental organizations, recreational organizations, economic development organizations)
- Government (local, state, and federal officials & agencies)
- Local, state, and national media outlets and trade publications
- Internal stakeholders (board, staff, terminal operators, terminal workers)

Actions and Communications Outputs:

The Port launched the eNewsletter in September, 2012 to tell its story directly to the general public and a wide range of stakeholders. Both negative and sparse media coverage, as well as general misconceptions about the organization, heightened the need for direct and informative communications.

The Port's strategic communications goals led it to develop a general-audience newsletter that showcases the full range of its work and the benefits it provides to the community. That way the public can see the breadth and depth of the Port's work, while stakeholders engaged with the Port in one facet of its work can learn about initiatives in other areas. The Port also sees the eNewsletter as an opportunity to highlight the maritime industry, a community that isn't frequently covered by the local media. Finally, the Port also decided to produce its newsletter exclusively as an electronic communications vehicle to enhance its online outreach and engagement while also matching its goal for "green" business practices.

The Port worked with a design firm to create a newsletter that shares the same graphic look as the Port's website (which was redesigned in 2012).

The Port also worked with a strategic communications consulting firm to develop the eNewsletter's underlying messaging, structure, and content. (The same firm works with the Port on social media, which helps foster a synergy between online modes of communications).

The Port/consulting firm team developed four standing eNewsletter features: the President/CEO column and story sections based on the Port's three areas of work:

- **On the Docks** to highlight the Port's maritime work and waterborne freight transportation more generally

- **Along the Water** to focus on the Port's environmental/infrastructure work as well as companies with operations along the Cuyahoga River
- **In the Community** to highlight the Port's work on land from development finance to managing the Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve.

Each of these three sections features stories that highlight the business/community benefits provided by the Port or its stakeholders. For example, "On the Docks" had a three-part series that began with the arrival of iron ore at a Port facility, then followed the ore upriver, where it was transformed into steel, and finished up at local companies using that steel to produce consumer and industrial products.

The Port's Vice President for External Affairs (VPEA) is the primary staff member involved in each edition from start to finish. The Port works with the consulting firm to develop story ideas. The firm conducts the interviews and writes the stories, which are edited by the Port's VPEA. In most cases, the firm either shoots pictures for the stories or obtains them from story subjects. Photos are typically linked to individual newsletter stories – giving audiences the opportunity to see work, vistas, and vantage points they might not otherwise see.

The eNewsletter is sent out in an email blast with only the first paragraph of each story contained in the email. Readers can click through to the full story, which is posted on the website. This provides another opportunity to drive readers to the website with integrated communications.

The Port seeks to expand the audience in several ways. The stories and column in each eNewsletter are called out individually on the Port's Twitter and Facebook, and links to the items are provided. Both Port staff and the consulting firm also reach out to Port stakeholders – from elected officials to the chiefs of key companies and non-profits – to encourage them to forward the eNewsletter to their contacts or use their social media pages to call out stories most relevant to their audiences.

In addition, in speeches and other communications, the Port President/CEO and staff encourage people to visit the Port's website and sign-up for the eNewsletter. Finally, Port staff members regularly update the database as they develop more contacts.

The eNewsletter began as a monthly publication. After three issues, the Port and consultant decided to move to an every-other-month schedule to allow more time for story development. There have been six issues since September.

The cost to design/format the eNewsletter was \$1,700; the consulting firm is on a \$1,625 monthly retainer to produce the eNewsletter.

Evaluation methods and communications outcomes

In evaluating the success of the eNewsletter, the Port of Cleveland issued an online survey seeking input on the quality of the stories and whether the content was informative and had influenced the opinions of readers on the work and value of the Port. The organization also receives story feedback from individuals.

More than 100 people responded to the Port's online survey about the eNewsletter. Just over 95 percent found value in the content; nearly 92 percent learned something about the Port and its work, with 37 percent reporting they had learned quite a bit; 85 percent reported they had a more favorable view of the Port; and, about 60 percent shared stories with others, the vast majority by email.

A few of the comments provided as part of the online survey included the following:

- "This way of keeping the public informed is to your advantage. I enjoy hearing about what is going on. I am also educated by the pictures that accompany the newsletter. Keeping it short and educational makes me care for the work of the port."
- "well written, concise and digestible."
- "This is a great way to keep all informed."

- “like the format, interesting info presented.”
- “The newsletter is always well written concise, and a great way to disseminate information about the Port activities. It certainly increased my knowledge of the role the Port plays in regional economic development.”

The Port’s distribution base for the eNewsletter has grown by more than 15 percent to 1,150 since last fall.

Data also shows that open rates tend to exceed the average open rate of about 24 percent for government agencies. December for example was nearly 31 percent and February was more than 34 percent.

The Port has also worked to strategically expand the audience by calling out stories on its Twitter and Facebook pages. The stories have proven to be popular clicked-on links — indeed they are often the most clicked on items.

Not only does this encourage the social media audience to engage with the stories, it also takes readers to the website, where they can sign up for the eNewsletter, and discover more in depth information on the Port’s work.

Stories are written to be engaging to both the public and to media outlets. The Port has twice successfully pitched stories to an online publication called Fresh Water Cleveland, a weekly that focuses on innovative ideas, people, and organizations. Fresh Water “re-printed” the stories, giving byline credit to the Port, which is also a Fresh Water sponsor and benefits from having its logo on several landing pages. Fresh Water’s readership is large – 118,652 page views in the fourth quarter of 2012 – and as a result, the Port was able to disseminate its content and messaging to a wider audience. The editorial decision by Fresh Water to run the stories also speaks to the quality of the eNewsletter content.

After Fresh Water re-printed a story about a local fish company located on the river, one owner wrote the Port with his thanks and noted, “We have gotten calls and texts all day.” Crain’s Cleveland Business also subsequently wrote a story about the company and its growth.

And separately, the local NBC affiliate produced and ran a story about a Port initiative after reading about it in the eNewsletter.

The Port believes the eNewsletter has been a success that is helping it accomplish its strategic goals and communications objectives. The eNewsletter gives the Port the opportunity to engage with a growing audience, provide valued information, offer another avenue for feedback, create more favorable impressions of the Port, and highlight the work of stakeholders working in Cleveland Harbor and around the community.