



# 2017 AAPA COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS

## Periodicals

### PORT OF BALTIMORE MAGAZINE

#### Summary

The Maryland Port Administration publishes a bimonthly magazine titled the *Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore* that features information about the port and topics that are important to its stakeholders. The magazine is a method to promote everything going on at the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore, as well as publish the port's voice on varying issues of importance that affect it. The three selected issues are a taste of the type of content the magazine showcases from "The Newly Expanded Panama Canal" issue localizing the impact of the Panama Canal's expansion on the Port of Baltimore, to an issue close to home in the "Remembering Helen Delich Bentley: Mother of the Port of Baltimore" edition, to the "Pushing for a New Era" issue featuring a hot topic on making the port more competitive with others on the East Coast.

#### 1. Communication Challenges and Opportunities

As a state agency, the MPA faces challenges such as budget constraints and multiple levels of communication. The MPA leverages these challenges as opportunities to benefit its stakeholders. The MPA reports to the Maryland Department of Transportation, as well as the Governor of Maryland's Office. The MPA is responsible for promoting and communicating on behalf of all public and private marine terminals located at the Port of Baltimore. While there are dozens of terminals at the port, the MPA only has direct control over six public marine terminals. The MPA advertises and promotes all the private and public terminals as the "Port of Baltimore."

MPA has limited resources so it contracts the magazine's production out because creating an entire publication takes significant time and a lot of manpower. The magazine presents a medium to publish information and stories about the port's successes in a different format than other types of tools. Articles present the opportunity to explain an issue or subject more in-depth whereas a print advertisement may not allow for a story on how the state supports critical infrastructure upgrades that would make the port more competitive, as is an example in the selected magazine "Pushing for a New Era." This issue gave the port the opportunity to present the governor of Maryland's full support of the expansion of the Howard Street Tunnel, a project that would double the amount of cargo that leaves the port on one of the railroads and to present the advantages and economic benefit to Maryland.

A challenge for the port is that some topics may have misinformation surrounding them and the Port of Baltimore magazine is an opportunity to present the facts. For example, the expansion of the Howard Street Tunnel for years was estimated to cost \$1 billion to \$3 billion. But the magazine informed stakeholders that a new technique for the construction would drastically decrease the cost. The article in this issue also lays out how much the state has committed to the project and how the remainder of the balance would be accounted for.



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Throughout the rest of the magazine there are tidbits and articles on things happening at the port or related to the port that may not get picked up by trade publications but the audience for the magazine wants to know. It also is an opportunity for the MPA to showcase an event or topic that the media is unable to cover or because others outside of the port don't have access to it.

The MPA Communications Department works with the contracted company that publishes the magazine on what should be published and on the branding of the Port of Baltimore. The department also collaborates and communicates with multiple other departments within the MPA and other state agencies for everything it produces. In order for the Port of Baltimore's brand to remain consistent, the Communications Department coordinates with MPA's Planning, Marketing and Sales Department, as well as with MPA's executive director and the Maryland Department of Transportation.

MDOT is MPA's parent agency and because of the relationship the port can disseminate messaging about its activities beyond the maritime industry to a broader audience of transportation officials and representatives. This applies to job postings, social media, advertising and more. The MPA also has "sibling" agencies under MDOT that can be used as resources and references to learn what has worked for them. While coordination may be challenging with more departments involved, the MPA is well organized and uses the involvement of others to its advantage.

Fiscally, advertising and marketing is more challenging because a state agency has limited funds. However, the port creates opportunities despite the restraint for funding. The MPA and Ports America Chesapeake created a private-public partnership that enables the port to handle some of the largest container vessels in the world. Thanks to the partnership the Port of Baltimore now has a 50-foot deep berth, along with four Neo-Panamax cranes. These upgrades were completed in preparation for the Panama Canal expansion in 2016.

The MPA Communications Department advertises the capabilities of its port to showcase why cargo handlers and shipping lines should bring business to Maryland. Due to the investment made by MPA and Ports America, 127,000 jobs in Maryland are linked to port activities, with 13,600 direct jobs. The port is a major economic generator for the state, with \$3 billion in personal wages and salaries and \$300 million in state and local tax revenue. And each year the port is handling more containers. In 2016, the port set its record for number of containers handled, which was at 538,567 for the year. In 2015, the port had set a record of 523,848 containers handled there, which was up eight percent from the previous year.

With the ever-changing demands of the shipping industry, it is important that the MPA is sending the message that it is keeping up with the changes and is a great place to bring business. The magazine is a regular publication that is used as an outlet to show this.



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### 2. Complementing the Overall Mission

The Maryland Port Administration has a mission to stimulate the flow of waterborne commerce through the State of Maryland in a manner that provides economic benefit to the citizens of the state. The port strives to capitalize on business opportunities. It provides, manages and promotes competitive, secure, state-of-the-art terminals capable of efficiently handling diverse cargoes and leverages mutually supporting public and private sectors. It also acts as a good steward of Maryland's natural environment.

The MPA wants to make sure customers are aware of the progression of the Port of Baltimore's facilities, as well as all the initiatives it undertakes. The magazine is a way to present a breadth of information on a regular basis and is a go-to for stakeholders at the Port of Baltimore to get news on the port. The port complements the magazine by also pushing out the most recent information on social media, advertising in trade publications, updating its website and evaluating its branding on a regular basis.

### 3. Planning and Programming Components

The primary audience for the magazine includes current and prospective international maritime shipping customers, cargo owners, ocean carriers, logistics/transportation companies and labor.

The goals of the magazine are to:

- Inform current and potential port customers of the Port of Baltimore's many successes and things to come
- Prompt sales leads through the publication of the port's phone number, website and Twitter, where readers can speak with sales staff
- Complement other advertising and marketing initiatives
- Promote the port's upgrades, stakeholders, initiatives and successes

### 4. Actions Taken and Communication Outputs Used

The MPA outsources the production of the magazine to Today Media Communications. They handle the ad placement and assigning writers to articles. Today Media Communications has a chairman, president, general manager, advertising director, editor, art director, graphic designer, staff photographer and two staff writers. But the MPA creates the ideas for content and how it would like for the magazine to look. The MPA also provides the interviews, information and photos, and whatever else the company needs to produce the publication.

The publication comes out every two months and is distributed at the MPA headquarters, the Port of Baltimore terminals, as well as on the MPA employee intranet and on the web in an electronic form. People can also fill out a form online to subscribe to the magazine and have it mailed to them.



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Other issues of the Port of Baltimore from the past two years include “Maersk: Shipping Giant Unveils three container services” (May/June 2015); “14,000 TEU Ship Ready... TODAY!” (July/August 2015); “No. 1 Port for Autos Again” (September/October 2015); “30 Years: The New Deal, Port, WWL Extend Agreement to 2045” (November/December 2015); “Port Report 2015: Growing Our Market” (January/February 2016); “Maryland’s Economic Engine Becomes An Environmental Leader” (March/April 2016); “History Made in Maryland: Evergreen Supersized Container Ship Arrives from Newly Expanded Panama Canal” (July/August 2016); “Tradition of Excellence: Baltimore Named Most Efficient U.S. Port AGAIN” (January/February 2017); and “Working in HARMONY: Partnership between Public & Private Terminals Boosts Business in the State” (March/April 2017).

### **5. Communication Outcomes and Communication Methods**

Customers at the Port of Baltimore really enjoy when they are featured in the magazine and comment on how they look forward to the next publication. The employees look forward to seeing it when it comes out. Some MPA employees come to the Communications Department when they see that it has been published online in hopes of getting a hard copy to read. The department receives a lot of positive comments about different features in the magazine.