



**VIRGINIA PORT AUTHORITY**  
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## **AAPA Communications Awards Submission**

### **Category: Periodicals**

**Summary of Entry:** An internal company e-newsletter, *Open Channels* is written by colleagues of The Port of Virginia for the colleagues of The Port of Virginia. Newsletters contain articles, images, videos and more that are of interest to port colleagues. *Open Channels* embodies one of the many efforts the port is undertaking to instill and spread our core values (fortitude, accessibility, mindfulness, innovation, sustainability, and helpfulness) in our colleagues.

### **1. What are/were the entry's specific communications challenges or opportunities?**

Now, in its second year of production, we created our internal newsletter as a way to:

- further instill our core values
- Recognize colleagues for “living the values,”
- provide performance and safety metrics
- educate colleagues about aspects of the business with which they may be unfamiliar

### **2. How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization's overall mission?**

The Port of Virginia's mission is as follows:

*Guided by our company values, The Port of Virginia will achieve our shared vision of operational excellence, fiscal responsibility, and sustainable growth. Above all, we will remain responsible members of the communities we serve, a valuable resource to our customers, an excellent place to work, and an economic engine for the region.*

Open Channels helps create positive work environment by properly explaining our values to new colleagues, as well as providing examples of how to “live the values.” Additionally, it helps encourage operational excellence via our performance metrics section. Lastly, the volunteer council section helps demonstrate camaraderie and helps reinforce our positive work environment.

**3. What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?**

The goal of this piece was to provide a quarterly “touchpoint” for colleagues that aided in the furthering of our core values within our colleagues. We established an editorial calendar for the fiscal year: setting content deadlines, establishing themes for each issue and reaching out to “guest columnists” from other areas of the port to contribute to the newsletter.

**4. What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?**

We established an editorial calendar for the next 4 issues: setting content deadlines, establishing themes for each issue and reaching out to “guest columnists” from other areas of the port to contribute to the newsletter.

We also established a dedicated email address (openchannels@portofvirginia.com) that we provided to colleagues to use when submitting fellow colleagues for our “living the values” section of the newsletter. Many of our colleagues work at desks, but a large portion of our colleagues work “non-desk” jobs (e.g. crane maintenance, facilities maintenance, etc.), so we created a newsletter that could easily be read online, or printed out and placed in common areas where our maintenance colleagues could easily read the newsletter.

Our Director of Internal and Partner Communications acts as “editor in chief” for the newsletter and does much of the writing. Additionally, he regularly reaches out to other departments (e.g. Health & Safety, Process Excellence, etc.) for contributions to help educate our colleagues on important aspects of our business.

**5. What were the communications outcomes from this entry and what evaluation methods were used to assess them?**

We continue to survey our readers on a bi-annual basis via SurveyMonkey. We ask our colleagues questions including:

- i. What is your favorite section (we have them rank each section)
- ii. How do you view the newsletter (on a screen or printed)
- iii. What sections would you like to see that we currently do not offer?

Last year, we learned through the survey that 96% of our colleagues view the newsletter on a computer. This trend continues into our second year of production. This allows us to offer more rich content in the newsletter, including links to videos, image slideshows and hyperlinks to emails, SharePoint sites and online reports like our Sustainability Report.

Our “Living the Values” continues to be the most-read section of the newsletter. In fact, this section regularly features 6-8 colleagues – up from three in the first two issues.

Additionally, we now have port colleagues submitting articles on a regular basis to share news from their respective departments with the rest of the port. In fact, our Sustainability Department wrote nearly every aspect of the June 2017 issue, as the theme was “sustainability.”