

AAPA 2018 Communication Award Program

Entry title: Port of Vancouver USA Community Report

Entry classification: Periodicals

Summary

The Port of Vancouver USA has been producing and distributing a biannual Community Report newsletter for at least 20 years. The newsletter is printed and mailed to all property owners in the port district to inform and engage residents and taxpayers so they get a sense of the value they receive from the port and hear about mission-driven policies and activities, including marine and industrial development, jobs, environmental stewardship, and industry and community leadership. The port has also published the Community Report online since 2015.



The image shows the cover of the 'Community Report' newsletter. The title 'Community Report' is in a large, white, serif font on a blue background. Below it, in smaller white text, is 'A NEWS UPDATE FROM THE' followed by the Port of Vancouver USA logo (a red and white stylized 'V') and 'Port of Vancouver USA' in white, and 'FEBRUARY 2018' in yellow. Below the title is a white diagonal hatched line. On the left side, there is a portrait of Julianna Marler, CEO/Executive Director, with her name and title in black text. Below the portrait is the headline 'DELIVERING ON JOBS, QUALITY OF LIFE' in bold black text. To the right of the portrait is an aerial photograph of a large industrial facility, likely a port or refinery, situated along a river or coastline. Below the photograph is the headline 'COMMISSION GIVES VANCOUVER ENERGY NOTICE OF MARCH 31 DEADLINE' in bold black text. At the bottom of the cover, there is a small block of text: 'The Port of Vancouver Board of Commissioners voted 3-0 on Jan. 9 to provide' followed by a line break and 'needed for the proposed crude oil transload facility to be built and operated at the port and'.

1. Challenges and opportunities

The Port of Vancouver faces the same challenge as many other ports across the world: general lack of awareness about what the port does and why it matters to the community. The Community Report offers a variety of information about the port's marine, industrial, environmental and community initiatives and programs in a storytelling format. Once a year, the newsletter also features an infographic with key numbers that bring economic and stewardship information into sharper focus.

Though the port has a robust community outreach program that reaches hundreds of people each year, most port district residents/taxpayers never attend a port-related meeting or event. The Community Report offers a way for them to see the value they receive for their tax dollars and learn about the port's functions.

While the port was undergoing the process to site a controversial project (from 2013 to 2018), the Community Report also provided a vehicle for additional transparency, especially for that majority who never attend port meetings or engage in other ways. Even when project-related information wasn't "good" news, we featured the project prominently when there was a timely and critical message that needed to be delivered to citizens.

The Community Report has evolved over the years as the port's brand and people's consumption of information has evolved. The look today is cleaner and incorporates more images, caption stories and infographics than previous versions. We continue to mail a printed copy to more than 80,000 port district property owners and began publishing an interactive .pdf version online in 2015.

The Community Report reaches every single port district property owner, even if they don't live in the port district (e.g. landlords). It may be the only touch from the port some people ever receive, so we strive to make sure this is a flagship piece: attractive, well-branded and full of useful, interesting information.

2. Incorporation of mission

The port's mission is to provide economic benefit to our community through leadership, stewardship and partnership in marine, industrial and waterfront development. Through the Community Report, we share stories, images and other information that shows how we are providing opportunity for businesses, supporting job creation and growth, adding to local livability and providing accountable benefit to the entire region.

3. Planning and programming components

Our goals with the Community Report include ensuring we are transparent and accountable to our citizens, helping our audiences see how the economic development we spur directly benefits them and raising general awareness and support for the port and its programs.

Our objectives include providing content that drives economic development home for the average person; sharing information about leadership/stewardship/partnership; pulling back the curtain a bit so people feel they understand why the port does what it does; providing compelling information that makes people want to read in an era of short attention spans; sharing information that's outside the normal way of thinking about ports and public agencies, and; providing information on opportunities to engage with the port.

The port's primary audience is property owners/taxpayers to the port. The secondary audience includes the public and key stakeholders such as partner organizations, elected officials and local businesses.

4. Actions and communication outputs

Strategies

The Port of Vancouver's Community Report is created every six months with a focus on content that conveys what we need our citizens to hear (based on transparency or mission-based needs) as well as what they are interested in hearing. This helps ensure content is both informative and engaging. We also provide information about major changes/projects that could impact citizens and/or the community, and try to include content that addresses each part of our mission: leadership, stewardship and partnership.

Tactics

We analyze our annual community survey to understand what's important to people and areas that need more promotion. We look back at existing content from the previous six months and identify the most newsworthy items as well as any gaps that need filled, and we look ahead to when the Community Report will publish to ensure we're covering that news, as well. Once we have a content plan, we solicit input from our leadership teams to ensure no topic goes undiscussed and to assist with internal buy-in.

Implementation

The External Affairs team develops a six-week plan that includes time to hear from leadership, create/hone content, design, edit, print and mail the Community Report. All content creation and editing is performed by the External Affairs team; graphic design, printing and mailing is outsourced.

Each biannual Community Report costs approximately \$22,000 to design, print and mail to more than 80,000 port district property owners.

We measure success through comments received from citizens, staff, commissioners and other stakeholders; website hits on the online version, and; feedback on the newsletter and general port awareness via our annual community survey.

5. Communications outcomes and evaluation methods

Annual community surveys continue to show increased awareness of the port. Our 2018 survey of 600 port district residents showed that 56 percent of those surveyed were familiar with the Port of Vancouver, compared to 52 percent in 2017 and 41 percent in 2016.

The Community Report is consistently one of the most asked-for pieces by staff and citizens. We print a few hundred extra copies for each edition so we have plenty to hand out to elected officials, citizens, partners and others we wish to keep informed and aware of our activities. The summer 2017 edition was so popular that we ran out of newsprint copies and had to print more on printer paper!

"The Community Report is one of the best overall communications pieces the port produces," said retired Port of Vancouver commissioner Brian Wolfe. "It's a great-looking piece that goes to everyone in the district, and it opens a window to the critical diversity of economic development, which is the Port of Vancouver's forté. This enables taxpayers to see what the port is doing with their money and why it matters to the entire community."

“The Port of Vancouver’s Community Report is a valuable communications tool, not only for the citizens of the port district but also for elected officials,” said Rep. Paul Harris, who represents Washington state’s 17th Legislative District. “It gives us a clear picture of what the port’s been up to, the issues and projects of the day, and how we can interact and be part of the important work that happens at the Port of Vancouver.”

Supporting documents

- Winter 2016: https://www.portvanusa.com/assets/POV-Winter-Community-Newsletter_2016.pdf
- Summer 2017: https://www.portvanusa.com/assets/PORT_summer-community-newsletter-2017_Web.pdf
- February 2018: <https://www.portvanusa.com/assets/February-2018-Community-Newsletter.pdf>