



2018 AAPA Communications Awards
Entry Classification: Special Events
Title: Port of Grays Harbor Business Report

Summary

The Port of Grays Harbor's Business Report is an annual event designed to showcase the results and highlights of the prior year, along with the expectations for the coming year for our customers, elected officials, community and business leaders, and industry partners. The Business Report, held every February, is now in its 5th year and has become the Port's signature event. Customers from across the country come to hear results, network with local business and community leaders, and share their insight. The theme of the event is also carried out in communications throughout the year including the annual results brochure, posters and outreach presentations.



Port of Grays Harbor

On Washington's Pacific Coast

1. Challenge & Opportunity

On the evening of the second Tuesday of every February since 1985, Port customers, industry partners, elected officials, and community and business leaders have been gathering for the Grays Harbor Shipping Club's Annual Crab Feed. Port customers from around the country look forward to the all-you-can-eat, fresh, Westport Marina-caught crab and turn out in droves, bringing the event to sell-out capacity every year. While the Port is a proud member of the Grays Harbor Shipping Club, the event was not the appropriate setting to share our business results.

Over the past decade, as our customer base has grown and diversified, we recognized the opportunity to capitalize on having such a large group of our out-of-area customers in Grays Harbor to share critical business information and gain their perspective and insights about the year ahead. On February 12, 2014, the Wednesday morning following the Shipping Club Crab Feed, the inaugural Port of Grays Harbor Business Report was held. After networking and breakfast served by a popular, local caterer, more than 120 customers, tenants, industry partners, elected officials, and business and community leaders heard from Port Commissioners and staff as they highlighted the previous year's accomplishments and discussed the opportunities to come in 2014.

Celebrating its 5th year in 2018, the Business Report has evolved to include an important and interactive audience discussion in which port customers and tenants from our diverse lines of business are able to share and elaborate on their successes and the challenges they face in growing their businesses. Both our customers, and our community and business leaders gain valuable firsthand insight to the various aspects of the business climate in Grays Harbor along with a better understanding of the policies needed to encourage economic growth and sustainability.



Port of Grays Harbor Commissioners and staff pose for a photo with representatives from AGP, the Port's largest customer, who have been attending the Shipping Club Crab Feed for more than 15 years, and the Business Report for 5 years.

2. Port of Grays Harbor Mission

The Port of Grays Harbor’s mission is to best utilize our resources to facilitate, enhance and stimulate international trade, economic development and tourism for the betterment of the region.

While we regularly incorporate our mission into our communications, the mission became our primary focus during the preparation of this year’s Business Report and we showcased our 2017 results as “Mission Driven Results” broken down by international trade, economic development, and tourism.

Executive Director Gary Nelson actually stated at the 2018 Business Report, “Many of you have heard me discuss the Port’s mission before but I like to reemphasize it because our policies and actions truly come back to these words. We take fiscal responsibility very seriously and our staff works hard every day to maximize the benefit from our limited resources in order to foster trade and commerce in order to generate a sustainable economy for our community.”



PowerPoint slides from the 2018 Port of Grays Harbor Business Report showcasing our “Mission Driven Results” in international trade, economic development and tourism.

3. Planning & Programming

The Port of Grays Harbor operates seven lines of business including the Westport Marina, the Satsop Business Park, Bowerman Airport, 4 deep-water marine terminals, pilotage services, industrial properties and several recreational facilities throughout the rural, county-wide port district. Essentially, everything a port district can do in the State of Washington, the Port of Grays Harbor does. The Westport Marina, the number one seafood landing port in the State, and number ten in the nation, is home to more than 350 commercial fishing families that are all annual moorage tenants, as well as several large seafood processors. The Satsop Business Park is home to online retail giant Overstock.com's newest Customer Care Call Center while Bowerman Airport's hangars are at capacity to general aviation enthusiasts. The Port's industrial property tenants vary from innovative composite companies to distilleries and trucking companies to large retailers like Home Depot. The Port's marine terminal's customers also represent a broad range of commodities and ownerships.

Communicating how these diverse facilities and their unique users and achievements positively impact our economy and community is the overriding message of the event.

Objectives

Objective #1 - Maximize partner attendance and engagement

Scheduling the event the morning after the Shipping Club Crab Feed attracts out-of-area port partners to both events. Save the date announcements are sent at the beginning of January for travel planning. Staff personally reach out to customers in advance to ask if they will share information about their annual results, upcoming opportunities and/or growth challenges.

Objective #2 – Effectively communicate the Port's progress and role in international trade, economic development and tourism

Our verbal presentation and visual communication pieces are thoughtfully designed to incorporate and share our mission driven results. Recognizing the large amount of information shared at the event, we also produce a take-away Annual Results Brochure that graphically highlights the statistics and information from the event.

Objective #3 – Networking Opportunity



Side A of the 2017 Annual Results Brochure which highlights the Port's accomplishments and is unveiled at the Business Report each year and incorporates the Your Port theme throughout the Z fold design.

The Port is proud to provide a professional, yet relaxed event in which customers, industry partners, community leaders and staff can interact and build relationships while developing an understanding and support for Port operations and facilities.

Audience

Primary Audience:

Customers and tenants from all of the Port's facilities

Secondary Audience:

Federal, state and local elected officials

Community and business leaders

Industry partners

4. Actions

Communication strategies used to achieve our above goals and objectives were:

Personalize the message: We shared the Port annual statistics, but shared the stories of multi-generation port users to demonstrate how the statistics were personal within the community. This strategy included the engagement of our customers who spoke during the interactive portion of the program and photos of our diverse partners in all communication materials.

Consistent branding: All materials had a consistent design and theme, Your Port. These materials will be used throughout the year to reinforce the message that Your Port benefits the community through partnerships that create jobs, infrastructure and a stronger economy.

Strategic implementation: With limited resources at our disposal, it was important that the materials developed for this event also be able to serve as the centerpiece of our community outreach for the coming year. This cost effective approach gave us more bang for our buck in printed materials, while the presentation can be updated and personalized for each audience.



Port of Grays Harbor Commission President Chuck Caldwell welcomes an at-capacity crowd to the 5th Annual Port of Grays Harbor Business Report in February. The audience includes a diverse mix of Port customers, elected officials, community and business leaders, industry partners, the Port Commission and staff.

Tactics:

- Save the date
- Invitation
- Agenda
- Breakfast
- Event Program
- Annual Business Review Brochure
- 4x8 ft. Posters
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Table Centerpiece Trivia
- Giveaway - Port Cookies
- Giveaway - USB sticks
- Post-event Survey



Two of the three 4x8 foot posters used at the event featuring the Port's 2018 Your Port slogan. The posters are now displayed in the entryway of the Port's main offices.



Business Report attendees line up for breakfast served by a popular local caterer.



The event program, annual results brochure, and Port logo giveaways are displayed for the taking at every table.



The table centerpiece Trivia was a fun and informational conversation starter for our guests.

Timeline:

Given our staff's limited time and resources, it's imperative we plan early and well. The breakdown of tasks by month is as follows:

December: Strategize event theme, update contacts, reserve venue, confirm caterer, begin layout of annual results brochure

January: Design and send out save the dates via email and postcard at the beginning of the month, followed by the invitation towards the end of the month; order "giveaways"; compile info and stats for the annual results brochure, develop port trivia centerpiece, design posters, design annual results brochure; develop and layout presentation and script

February: Presentation review with management team, event set up, send out post-event survey

With a public affairs department of just 1.5 FTE, we are extremely proud of the quality event we put on. All printed and electronic materials are designed in-house including the save the date, invitation, annual results brochure, poster boards, and trivia centerpieces. Printing of the annual results brochure and 4x8 foot poster boards is outsourced to a local print shop. Because the event fell on Valentine's Day this year, we also worked with a local baker to create Port logo cookies as a giveaway.

The PowerPoint presentation and script is developed by the Port's strategic planning consultant with help from the public affairs department. The presentation is also used as the Port's outreach presentation as we make our annual visits to the 9 cities and 3 other municipalities throughout Grays Harbor County.



Commissioners and Port staff pose for a photo after the 5th Annual Business Report. Due to our limited time and resources, staff help and participation is critical to the success of the event.

On the day of the event, it is all hands on deck. Staff from each facility and department arrive early to fine-tune details and help greet and check in attendees. This also provides opportune interaction between staff, customers, and business and community leaders that may not always get to see each other. We also ask that our staff spread out and sit no more than two to a table at the event so that they are able to network and answer any questions about the Port that may come up.

5. Outcomes & Evaluation Survey

While the Port has received extremely positive feedback about the event since it started in 2014, we knew a more formal evaluation process would provide better and more constructive feedback. This year we sent out an anonymous, six question post-event survey via email to all those in attendance. Approximately 40% of attendees completed the online survey, giving the event 4.6 out of 5 stars. Examples of positive feedback and what is liked most about the event include:

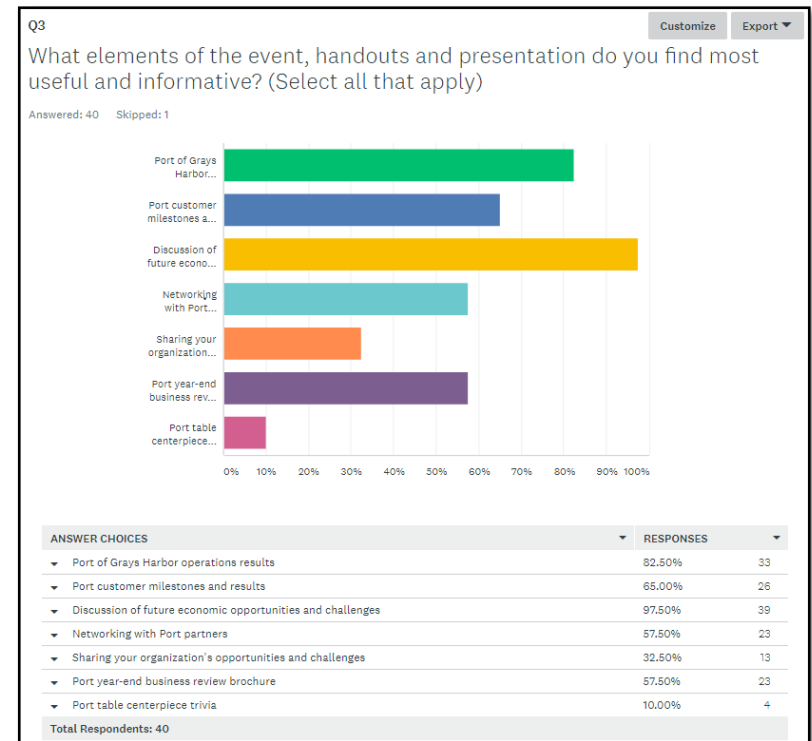
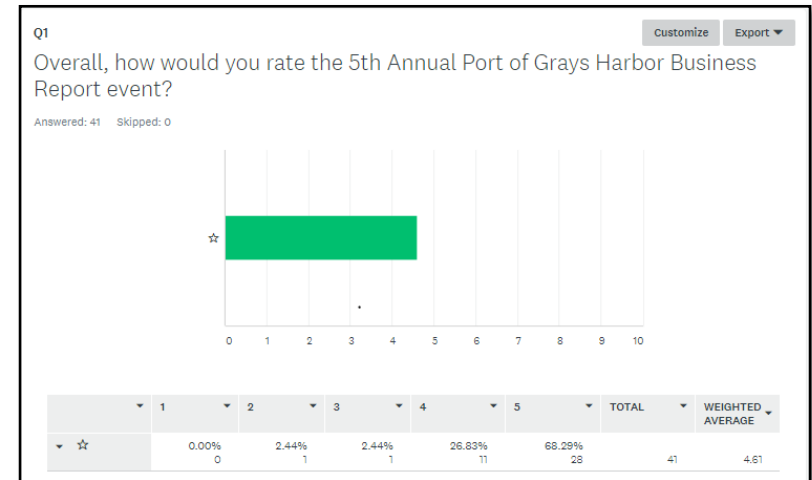
"I like the forum and that the info is factual and to the point, the meeting is well ran and the perfect length."

"The interaction of the tenants and area businesses that are affected by how the Port is doing. I liked the discussion that occurred and like how the information about the port's operations and level of activity was tied to the rest of the area."

Survey results also showed that the communication of the Port's operating results, the sharing of customer milestones and results, and the end of event discussion of economic opportunities and challenges are the most useful and informative elements of the event. Some of the feedback we received included:

"I liked that Port partners had the chance to talk about what challenges they face with their business. It's great to have that open communication so that we can help them to be successful and grow in our community."

But no good feedback survey would be complete without an opportunity to make improvements. With slightly less than half of the participants choosing to answer the question and about half of the comments being along the lines of "no complaints" or "Cannot think of anything I don't like", we did receive some great ideas for improvements including the following:



"It would be nice to have more time dedicated to hearing from the Port's tenants/customers to learn about their products, employees, challenges, future plans. Also, rather than the executive director leading the entire presentation, I would like to hear directly from the staff that manage the different departments such as the marine terminals, Westport, and Satsop."

"I would have liked to see a couple demonstrations of connections. Showcase a tenant, then all the links in the chain that connect that tenant to the community. Business to rail to longshore to tools and supplies to contractors who do business, etc. It could show how the whole room is basically a large support network."

We will be taking the attendee's suggestions and comments into consideration for next year's event and will most certainly be sending out the feedback survey every year. The survey results really reaffirmed why we hold this important event and the opportunity it affords our intended audience to not only learn about the Port's operations, but to network and discuss economic opportunities and challenges for the entire Grays Harbor business community.



Port of Grays Harbor

On Washington's Pacific Coast