

## AAPA Communications Awards Entry 2019

### Overall Campaign: Port of Oakland - Growing the Business



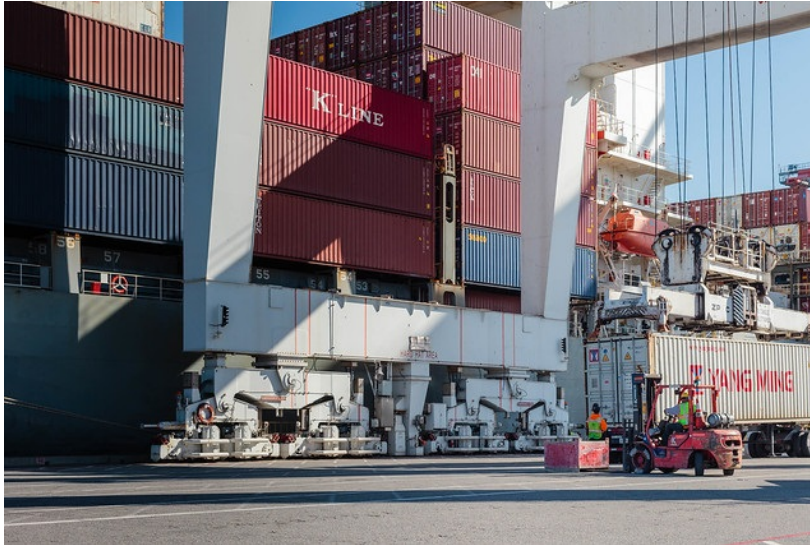
**Entry summary:** The Port of Oakland's mission is to grow responsibly for the benefit of customers, employees and neighboring communities. But expanding cargo volume is challenging in a competitive environment:

- Ports on the West, East and Gulf coasts offer alternatives to Oakland.
- Global trade has moderated, cutting percentage growth to low single digits.
- A trade war has threatened future growth.

Against this backdrop, the Port of Oakland's Maritime Division has initiated a strategic growth program. It calls for record cargo volume in each of the next five years with at least one to two percent annual growth. Drivers of this expansion include significant investment, transformed operations and new logistics capabilities no other U.S. port offers.

To help achieve its goals, the Port implemented a communications program over the past year (CY 2018 to 1Q 2019) called Growing the Business. The program aligned print, electronic, social media and face-to-face communications in support of the Port's strategic objectives. The message: The Port of Oakland is stronger than ever with a growth platform unique in the industry that's delivering reliability, cost-effectiveness and innovation to customers.

The communications effort succeeded in shaping positive perceptions and influencing desired stakeholder behaviors. Business and industry leaders reacted favorably – and publicly - to the Port’s program. Third-party advocates praised Oakland’s progress.



Most importantly, customers responded by sending a record 2.55 million TEUs (1 TEU = one, 20-foot container) across Oakland docks in 2018 or the equivalent of 5.2 percent growth, well above the annual target.

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

**– Describe in specific and measurable terms the situation leading up to creation of this entry.**

**– Briefly analyze the major internal and external factors that need to be addressed.**

Oakland’s Growing the Business communications program faced a significant challenge - how to help spur Port of Oakland maritime business growth in the face of the following factors: moderating container volume, a highly competitive U.S. port environment and a trade war.

- Challenge: Oakland is only California’s third-largest seaport. Competitive pressure from the Ports of LA and Long Beach, which combined are more than ten times as large as Oakland, make it difficult to attract additional cargo.
- Challenge: The Port’s role as a key U.S. export gateway was called into question in the wake of a 2018 U.S.-China trade war.



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

The Port of Oakland's mission is to be fiscally sound and grow its business for the benefit of customers, employees and the communities it serves. The Port adopted a 5-year strategic plan in 2018 called Growth with Care. The strategy prescribes a road map to growth that benefits, instead of hinders stakeholders. It calls for cargo volume growth resulting in more jobs/economic stimulus; without the attendant congestion, pollution, traffic or cargo delays.

The Port's communications program linked closely to this strategy. It made the case for moving more cargo through the Oakland Seaport. It highlighted the resulting job and economic benefits. It shaped stakeholder perceptions of a port on the move - gaining momentum, enhancing operations and demonstrating continual progress.

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

***– Describe the entry's goals or desired results.***

***– Describe the entry's objectives and list specific, measurable milestones needed to reach its goals***

The goal of the communications program was to support maritime business growth at the Port of Oakland by creating an atmosphere of favorability for using Oakland as a global gateway. To achieve this, communications outputs were frequent, used multiple tools and showcased Port of Oakland progress, new infrastructure and operational advancements. The desired result was at least a one to two percent increase in total TEUs for CY 2018 – the result was 5.2 percent growth.

- The vision: The Port of Oakland is The Choice for global trade facilitation.
- The objective: Positive shipper perceptions about Oakland as a reliable, convenient gateway.
- The goal: Influence shippers to direct more cargo over Oakland docks.
- The messages: Investor faith in Oakland is building an unrivaled growth platform; Oakland has never been in a stronger position.



[Investing in raising cranes \(:30 video\)](#)

- Milestones: Increased communication volume (more outputs in videos, press releases, and social media – see data in section #5), third-party endorsements, improved media perceptions, major service offering announcements and cargo volume growth.
- Audiences: Primary – Port of Oakland shippers, prospects, tenants, and business partners; secondary – influential trade media.

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

- Explain what strategies were developed to achieve success and why these strategies were chosen.
- Specify the tactics used (i.e., actions used to carry out your strategies).
- Detail the entry's implementation plan by including timeline, staffing and outsourcing used.



The Port of Oakland developed a comprehensive communications program to support the Maritime Division's strategic goal: growing cargo volume.

Strategies: 1) Boldness – an aggressive, high-volume communications campaign was needed to command equal audience mindshare against larger competitors 2) Momentum – communicate progress in performance, reliability and service offerings and gain endorsements from third-party influencers to create perception of Oakland as the intelligent choice for shippers 3) Differentiation – highlight innovative logistics offerings to attract additional cargo in face of larger competitors.



[Cool Port Oakland](#) – new refrigerated distribution warehouse in heart of seaport

Tactics: The Port of Oakland arrayed the complete range of communications tactics/tools to support its maritime business growth objective. The program included press releases, videos, social media, print, website, e-newsletters (monthly), face-to-face meetings and public access. Message delivery was pre-eminent. High volume was also critical to ensure that the Port's story shined against larger competitors.

Implementation plan: The Port's Growing the Business communications plan began in January 2018. It concluded 1Q 2019 with communications reviewing the Port's growth progress. Three full-time Port Communications Division staff members executed the plan. External support included a graphic designer who produced the Port's monthly Maritime Newsletter, and a video production company.

Here were the elements used in support of the two key Port messages:

### **Investor faith in Oakland is building an unrivaled growth platform:**

- CenterPoint Properties commits to build Seaport Logistics Complex in Oakland
  - [Microsite](#): The key to Oakland's future, logistics hub next to docks
  - [Newsletter](#) Game changer for global trade and transportation
  - [Press release](#) Project seen as key to future about to begin
- TraPac marine terminal doubles Oakland footprint
  - [Press release](#) TraPac concludes \$67 million buildout
  - [Newsletter](#) TraPac completes expansion
- SSA marine terminal invests \$50 million to raise/purchase new cranes
  - [Press release](#) Done! Four cranes raised to soar 393 feet
  - [Press release](#) Oakland getting three new cranes, tallest in US
  - [Newsletter](#) Three massive cranes coming to Oakland
  - [Video](#) Big ships need taller cranes
- Largest tenant extends lease
  - [Press release](#) Faith in future: SSA adding land, buying cranes
- Lineage Logistics opens Cool Port Oakland
  - [Microsite](#) Cool Port increases import/export of perishables through Oakland
  - [Press release](#) World's latest next generation cold storage facility
  - [Newsletter](#) Lineage Cool Port now open
  - [Video](#) Oakland the coolest place on earth
- Operations continue to improve
  - [Press release](#) TraPac opens night gates for truckers
  - [Press release](#) Oakland project could have \$1billion upside
  - [Web portal](#) Oakland Portal a one-stop online window for Port access
  - [Press release](#) Online shipping platform goes live
  - [Press release](#) Oakland ready for Japan's merged shipping lines

### **Oakland has never been in a stronger position**

- Record performance two years in a row
  - [Progress report](#) Record volumes
  - [Video](#) 2018 a resounding success
  - [Press release](#) Port of Oakland boss says: "This is our time"
  - [Press release](#) Cargo volume hit all-time high in 2018
  - [Press release](#) Port of Oakland import volume at all time high
  - [Press release](#) Import volume increased 9 percent in January
  - [Press release](#) Oakland shatters 11-year old November import record
  - [Press release](#) Oakland's busiest peak season ever
  - [Press release](#) Growth goal unchanged despite trade uncertainty

- A new 5-year plan for growth
  - [Press release](#) Oakland's new strategy: Growth with Care
  - [Microsite](#) Port of Oakland's business plan 2018-2022
  - [Newsletter](#): Investments paying off at Port
- Overcoming trade barriers
  - [Press release](#) Port of Oakland export winning trade war
  - [Press release](#) Oakland fruit veggie cargo up 36 percent in four years
- Improving transparency, demonstrating confidence in operational performance
  - [Turn times](#) Current transaction times for shippers/truckers available online
  - [Press release](#) Port adds trucker turn times to online portal
- Collaborating with business partners to address growth demands
  - [Face-to-face meetings](#): Port Efficiency Task Force convenes stakeholders
  - [LiveChat](#): real-time chatroom for stakeholder questions/concerns
- Highlighting our progress for stakeholders
  - [Free harbor tours](#) provide up-close access for customers/public



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

**– Describe any formal/ informal surveys used, or anecdotal audience feedback received, that helped in evaluating the success of this entry.**

**– If possible, explain how this entry influenced target audience opinions, behaviors, attitudes or actions.**

The communications plan reached its goal: helping to boost cargo volume at the Port of Oakland. Containerized cargo volume increased 5.2 percent in 2018 to 2.55 million TEUs, a new Oakland record. The business growth was well above the one to two percent annual growth target. The Port's Maritime Operations, Marketing and Planning departments were central performers. Volumes were also boosted by a frontloading phenomenon as shippers raced to beat tariff implementation.

Communications shaped positive perceptions of the Port, and created marketplace momentum that produced a favorable commercial environment. We highlighted our public/private infrastructure investments, promoted the Port of Oakland's new operational efficiencies, and grew the Port's visibility through increased volume of communications (see numbers below).

The huge quantity of Port of Oakland communications has been key to creating a bigger stature for Oakland among maritime customers and reporters relative to its larger competitors. We are hearing anecdotally from customers and business partners that they see the Port of Oakland as more reliable, improving operations and making the right kind of investments in logistics infrastructure.

Metric: Increased communication volume

- Average of 12 press releases per month, up from 10.5 the prior year
- Average 5.7 stories, per day, seven days a week, about Port of Oakland in traditional media; up from 4 the prior year.
- Average three videos per month, up from one video a month in the prior year
- Average more than 1,000 social posts per month, up 3.5 percent from prior year; increased Port of Oakland Facebook followers by 17 percent





- 2,474 LiveChats, up 5 percent from the prior year

Metric: Shaping perceptions

- Negative Port perceptions on social media down 3 percent from prior year
- Positive perceptions of Port in traditional media at 71 percent: target 70 percent
- Negative perceptions of Port in traditional media held steady at 11 percent

Metric: Publicly expressed perceptions of key 3<sup>rd</sup> party influencers

- “Oakland is the best productivity port on the coast.” – Ed DeNike, President SSA Containers
- “I keep reading all the great press coverage around your port...very nice to see.” – Brian Taylor, President DCLI
- “What sets Oakland apart from competitors is its close-knit network of stakeholders including shippers, labor, freight forwarders and carriers.” – Kevin Bulger, Apex Maritime
- “The port doubled down on infrastructure expansion. Now those capital projects are beginning to pay off.” – Bill Mongelluzzo, Senior Editor, Journal of Commerce
- “Oakland is growing strongly and I’d like find out more about it.” – Paul Avery, Editor, World Cargo News
- “Oakland is now focusing on developments within the harbor footprint, that will improve efficiency and differentiate it from other U.S. ports.” -- Colliers
- “Oakland has an inherent, solid base in being the natural outlet for the huge volume of farming exports from California’s Central Valley.” – Port Strategy magazine

