

# Crisis Communications: Lessons Learned

AAPA Cargo Optimization

June 2016



**PORT OF OAKLAND**

# Crisis!

- **What constitutes a crisis?**
- **What is your definition?**



# Disaster

- **Natural – Hurricane, earthquake, flooding**
- **Man-made – environmental pollution, terrorist incident, gas main explosion**



# Threat = Disaster

- Scandal – A senior executive caught taking bribes
- Economic instability – recession, global financial uncertainty
- Cyber security breach – company's customer database is stolen



# Definitions

- Any event that is expected to lead to an unstable and/or dangerous situation
- Any major threats to an organization's operations, brand, or finances





# Crisis

US West Coast ILWU/PMA dispute

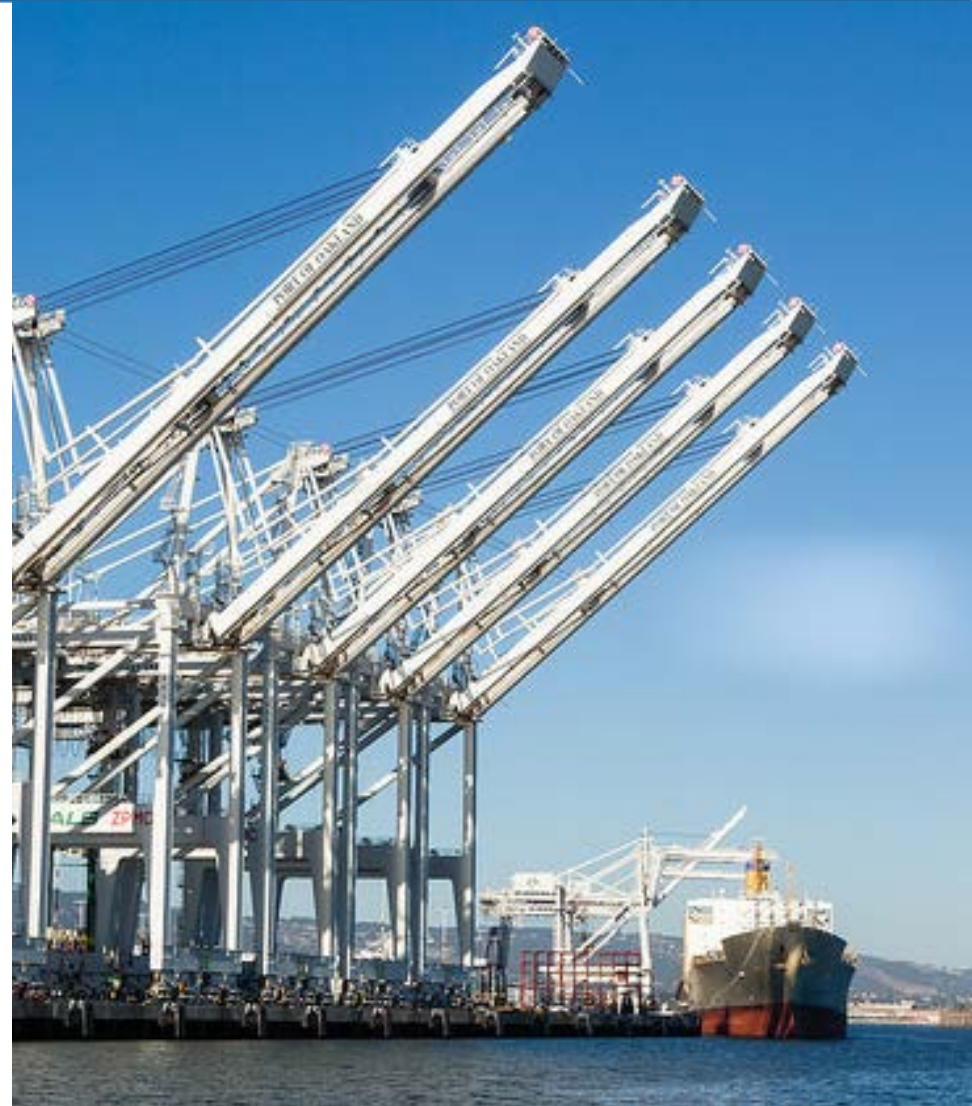
Fall 2014 - Spring 2015



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# Short and long-term threats

- **Cargo diversions from US West Coast ports**
- **Reputations at risk**
- **Loss of global business**
- **Loss of ILWU jobs**
- **Loss of economic benefits**
- **Ports' financial stability at risk**



# Challenges

- **Unique circumstances:  
Operational slowdowns**
- **ILWU and PMA are the  
negotiating parties**
- **Ports not a party to  
negotiations**
- **Ports and stakeholders suffer  
reputation and business losses**
- **Crisis extends over several  
months**





# Leadership role

- **Neutral position**
- **Core message - come to agreement sooner than later**
- **Encourage electeds, customers and other stakeholders to push for resolution**
- **Communicate frequently with all audiences**
- **Provide as much information as possible**



# Communications

Traditional and new



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# Editorials

- Port Executive Director editorials in JOC and SF Chronicle; share everywhere
- Acknowledge issue and directly address it; express empathy
- Push for resolution of dispute; explain consequences of continuing crisis
- Offer solutions



## We must make 2015 the Year of the Customer

**Editor's note:** The following commentary from Port of Oakland Executive Director Chris Lytle appeared Jan. 5 in the *Journal of Commerce*

On Feb. 19, Asia begins its celebration of Lunar New Year. It will be The Year of the Sheep. Perhaps our industry should consider a variation on a theme: The Year of the Customer. After all, we owe customers something. Goodness knows we made them suffer enough in 2014.

From port congestion to labor negotiations last year was a trying one for international shippers. We've got to do better for them this time around – not just for their sake, but ours, too. If we don't, especially on the U.S. West Coast, they'll bolt.

Canada....Mexico....Suez Canal....Panama Canal....we know the alternative paths to the U.S. Our customers do, too. Frustrated by delays in California and the Northwest, they're increasingly using those gateways. It's hard to blame them.

So what do we need to do to stem customer attrition? We need to do a lot, and in a hurry. Here are improvements we have to make right away:

# Tools

- Customer updates two to three times a day
- Daily blog, press releases, social media
- “Dark site” for website
- Link to resources, contacts & related news stories
- Post letters from electeds and stakeholders
- Monitor media, counter rumors, correct misinformation

## No More Business as Usual



J. Christopher Lytle  
Executive Director

Disruptions from waterfront labor negotiations have waned, but don't expect a return to business as usual at West Coast ports. "The old methods won't work any longer," Port of Oakland Executive Director Chris Lytle said this month.

Addressing shippers and other stakeholders at a meeting of The Waterfront Coalition in Long Beach, Mr. Lytle said his industry must change, "We can't go back to the way it was; that's not acceptable," he told an audience that included Federal Maritime Commission Chairman Mario Cordero. "We have to do a better job for our customers if we want to hold onto our market share."

Mr. Lytle joined other West Coast port executives in addressing the aftermath of nine months of labor-management disputes on the waterfront. The longshore contract impasse ended February 20 with a tentative settlement of a new contract for ports from Seattle to San Diego.



# New tools

- Daily status update on website homepage
- LiveChat
- Daily seaport operations update
- Initiated monthly maritime newsletter
- Commissioners daily status report
- ED speaking regularly with both sides for status updates

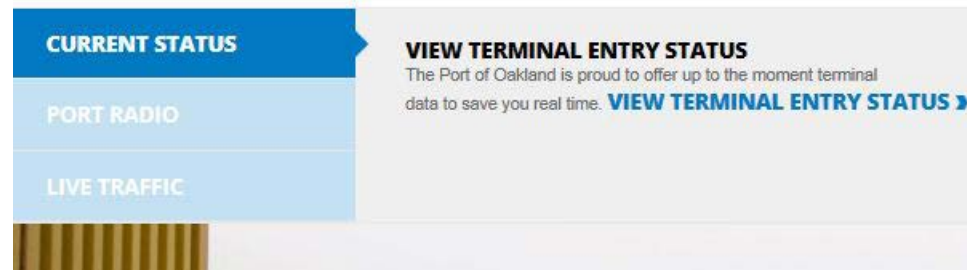


### Vessel Backlog Disappearing

A vessel backlog at the Port of Oakland is disappearing. The Port said today no ships are anchored in San Francisco Bay awaiting berths. Only two are holding station outside the Golden Gate until berths open. That's down from a high of 20 vessels waiting to dock at the

### Customer Sees Improvement

A major California exporter sees progress in Port of Oakland efforts to eliminate a cargo backlog. Stockton-based Capital River Group says the velocity of its cargo volume through Oakland gates has increased in three consecutive weeks. It's a sign that trade is rebound-



## Port of Oakland Seaport Operations Update

June 3, 2016

Dear Maritime Stakeholder,

Below is today's Operations Update from the Port of Oakland. Street wait times are based on DravQ application. Conditions at the terminals are dynamic and subject to

# Operational solutions



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# New operations

- Brought group together to come up with new ideas to phase in over time
- Saturday gates
- Night gates
- Exclusive import pick-up yard
- Remote Central Valley depot
- Mobile phone apps to measure transaction times
- Mobile phone app to enable empty container interchange
- Terminal Appointment System



# Transformation

The Port of Oakland is changing the way it's operating to improve customer service, accommodate growth and attract new business.





# Collaboration

**Port leadership brings its maritime stakeholders together to facilitate relationships and solutions.**

**It works!**



# Thank you!

Spokesperson

Marilyn Sandifur



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