TRADEWINDS MAGAZINE

Excellence in Print or Digital Media Communications +
Excellence in Public Relations Campaign



PORT OF KALAMA
Kalama, Washington

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1. Background, Purpose and Goals

The Port of Kalama is a small but highly productive marine terminal on the Columbia River, recognized as the nation's largest wheat exporter and 15th-largest U.S. port by volume. Prior to 2022, the Port's external communications relied on an irregular, vendor-produced newsletter that lacked consistent quality, creative control and meaningful community connection. The publication functioned more as a basic corporate bulletin than as a strategic communications tool.

In 2022, a single staff member led a complete redevelopment of the publication into *TradeWinds*, transforming it into a full-color quarterly magazine. That initial redesign was recognized with the AAPA Award of Excellence in Periodicals. Since then, *TradeWinds* has continued to evolve with a deliberate focus on deeper, human-centered content, warmer design elements (including handwriting fonts) and stronger community connection.

The strategic goal has been to move beyond transactional updates and create a human-centered communications platform that builds genuine community pride, strengthens stakeholder relationships, and clearly communicates the Port's role and value in an approachable way. The program has saved the Port nearly $100,000 annually in outside vendor costs while significantly improving quality and impact across multiple channels.

2. Implementation and Resources

One communications staff member assumed full responsibility for writing, photography, graphic design, layout, printing coordination and distribution. The first redesigned issue launched in early 2022, and *TradeWinds* has maintained a reliable quarterly schedule since.

All work is produced in-house using Adobe Creative Cloud tools, dramatically reducing costs while improving quality and speed. The staff member also manages digital promotion across the Port's social media channels. Total annual cost is approximately $29,964—a fraction of the previous outside-vendor model.

3. Innovation and Relevance

TradeWinds was strategically reimagined not simply as a better-looking newsletter, but as an integrated print and digital communications platform. This included high-quality photography, magazine-style editorial storytelling, real-life feature stories, and a warmer design aesthetic intended to make the publication feel right at home in a living room, waiting room or lobby.

The magazine deliberately focuses on the people whose lives and livelihoods are connected to the Port. This approach is paired with consistent digital promotion that extends the storytelling and engagement beyond the printed page. This integrated model has proven highly relevant for a small port seeking to build deeper community relationships while still effectively communicating its economic role and strategic priorities.

4. Results, Evidence and Impact

Each issue is printed in a run of 5,100 copies. Of those, 3,800 are mailed directly to every mailbox in the Kalama zip code, 800 are sent to peer ports, legislators, and requested recipients nationwide, and the remainder are distributed locally.

Digital promotion of each issue drives strong and consistent engagement. Recent issues have generated the following results:

- Spring 2025: 5,714 total views, 43 interactions, 44 comments
- Summer 2025: 8,470 unique viewers, 21,680 total views, 100 interactions
- Fall 2025: 5,608 unique viewers, 13,074 total views, 84 interactions, 70 comments
- Winter 2025: 4,488 total views, 45 interactions, 13 comments
- Spring 2026: 4,935 unique viewers, 7,107 total views, 141 interactions

These results regularly extend the magazine's visibility well beyond its physical distribution and generate positive community conversation.

Residents have shared comments such as "We always look forward to the Port's newsletters—thank you!", "It's truly commendable how you are giving our local folks the flowers they deserve!", and "Great job, Port of Kalama!"

One commissioner noted that customers frequently visit his downtown business specifically to congratulate him on new issues. Port leadership regularly takes recent issues to industry events, where they are positively received by peers. These outcomes demonstrate strengthened resident pride and sustained engagement over five years.

5. Integration, Adaptability and Scalability

TradeWinds integrates seamlessly with the Port's broader communications efforts, including the Discover Kalama tourism initiative and interpretive signage projects. The magazine format has proven highly adaptable and has influenced similar redesigns at other small ports. The story-driven approach continues to evolve while maintaining a premium, collectible aesthetic.

6. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

The magazine actively engages residents through real-life stories, employee spotlights, and the recurring "What's Your Port Story?" call for submissions. Digital promotion through the Port's Facebook page and local community groups significantly amplifies reach and fosters conversation.

The consistent positive feedback demonstrates that *TradeWinds* has become a valued community asset rather than just a corporate publication.

7. Conclusion

Four years after its initial redesign — which was recognized with the AAPA Award of Excellence in Periodicals in 2022 — *TradeWinds* demonstrates sustained excellence in both print and digital media communications and as an ongoing public relations platform.

By combining high production values with increasingly story-driven content and consistent digital engagement, the publication has strengthened community connection, improved the Port's visibility and reputation, and created a replicable model for other small ports. We are proud to submit this evolved program for consideration in the 2026 Lighthouse Awards.

Beacon of Excellence Statement

TradeWinds exemplifies overall port excellence by transforming a fragmented, high-cost communications program into a highly efficient, in-house quarterly magazine that delivers measurable community impact while advancing multiple strategic priorities. Operating on a lean $29,964 annual budget, the single-staffer program reaches thousands of residents and stakeholders through 5,100 printed copies and digital posts that consistently achieve strong engagement, while fostering genuine pride and connection evidenced by ongoing positive community feedback.

By focusing on human-centered storytelling and integrated print-digital promotion, *TradeWinds* bridges economic development communications and community outreach, creating a unified and respected platform that other small ports have begun to emulate. This sustained, multi-year evolution, building on the foundation of the 2022 AAPA Award of Excellence in Periodicals, demonstrates the kind of continuous improvement and holistic excellence the Beacon of Excellence Award seeks to recognize.