

2022 AAPA Lighthouse Award – [New magazine](#)

Summary

Green Marine Magazine is the flagship publication of the Green Marine environmental certification program. The magazine is a must-read to follow Green Marine's developments, as well as the maritime industry's environmental initiatives, especially those of the program's members.

Each issue offers various articles on water and landside projects, as well as the scientific advancements, technical innovations and best practices for the environment. The twice-yearly publication also helps Green Marine to pursue its mission of advancing environmental excellence with magazine's revenues being reinvested in the program.

Since its 2009 debut, the magazine had until recently been mailed in a printed format to approximately 580 locations, with the [Flipbook](#) and [PDF](#) formats available on Green Marine's website.

The earlier formats had been produced in collaboration with a third party who assured its assembly, printing, and mailing, as well as handling all the advertising.

Communications challenges & opportunities

Given the production costs, the environmental impacts of printing the magazine, and the carbon footprint associated with its postal delivery, Green Marine had been considering a digital format for some time to offer a product more aligned with the organization's sustainability values. By avoiding repeated print runs and mailings, Green Marine saw an opportunity to significantly reduce GHG emissions.

Another key factor was the decision by some advertisers not to renew print ads in favour of eco-responsible media instead. The revenue decline called into question the magazine's survival. Some advertisers had also expressed dissatisfaction with the services provided by the third-party media partner whose agreement with Green Marine was coming to an end.

Green Marine's broadening North American reach, particularly the significant increase in American membership, had also been driving up the magazine's costs. Each issue had automatically been mailed to every member even though the U.S. postal rates were three times higher. As a result, the magazine's final printed issue (No. 23) cost \$5,000 to mail – a third of the issue's production budget.

All of these factors prompted a major rethinking of the magazine. As Green Marine's flagship publication that rallies members, generates some revenue, and showcases the program's credibility, it was important to keep this content, but review its format and our supplier partnership. This juncture offered **a unique opportunity to survey our readership** and then offer media better suited to their reading habits and interests!

The survey's results confirmed the preferences of our members and other readers for a flexible and responsive digital format that adapts well to all types of screens, rather than a PDF format which is sometimes difficult to read on mobile devices.

Our magazine reassessment started in the Fall of 2021, the same time as Green Marine began its **website redesign**. As we already were in contact with an agency qualified in web creation, the same agency made itself available for the magazine project as well, even though this project hadn't yet been planned out. Working on both projects with the same agency made sense in terms of identifying possible synergies between the new website and the digitally formatted magazine.

However, redesigning the website and magazine at the same time also meant that the Communications team (comprised of two individuals) had to prepare to **work twice as hard over several months to bring these two major projects to fruition**, all while organizing the annual GreenTech conference in June (for some 300 delegates). Bearing this in mind, Green Marine did not publish a Fall 2021 issue in order to take some time to really think about the redesign's next steps.

The goal was to come up with a new final version of the magazine in time for the May 2022 issue.

How does the communication used in this entry map back to the organization's overall mission?

It was imperative to have our magazine reflect our mission as well as our values, while also considering our increasing readership. It became clear that a print version was no longer viable as a responsible, environmental medium. We had to switch to a 100% digital format.

Green Marine had started its magazine project to add value to the program and its network. Specifically, the objectives for the magazine are to:

- Unify and solidify Green Marine's membership network
- Provide niche visibility to North American maritime companies
- Further augment Green Marine's credibility by focusing on quality content
- Become a reference hub for in-depth articles dealing with environmental topics and emerging issues relevant to the maritime industry.

Since the magazine's outset, Green Marine has always sought to identify subject matter for each issue that would interest members in being involved. The articles are always written so the information is applicable (and bilingual), with the content supported by research and/or interviews with the relevant parties. A rigorously journalistic approach is always taken with all of the editorial content. Green Marine Magazine never features advertorials, and the only invited guest writers are for the "Scientifically speaking / Parlons science" column to garner insights from an expert in a specific field.

The magazine has gained popularity over the years and, today, Green Marine is proud to be able to count on its engaged readership thanks to its quality content. So, it was important to have the best format to convey this valuable content, all while respecting our environmental principles.

What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?

In addition to wanting a responsible format for our readership and our advertisers, the magazine's redesign aimed to broaden the readership base. Green Marine invests a lot of time and effort into the magazine's writing and production, so the least we can do is make its content as visible as possible! But what format was best to use? Flipbook, PDF, or another solution?

It was essential to have the magazine available from the Green Marine website, along with a platform that facilitated archiving and easily retrieving previous issues, as well as it being simple to switch between languages (English and French). Advertisers also had to have a prominent place within the magazine. It was also necessary to be able to extract statistical information about the magazine and its advertising, such as the number of visits to an article or clicks on an ad.

Below is an example of an ad integration in the PDF version of the Magazine 23rd issue:

The screenshot shows a magazine page with an advertisement for West Coast Biofuels. The ad is titled "NOTHING LEFT BEHIND*" and "EXCEPT CLEANER FUEL." The background is a scenic landscape with mountains and a road. The text on the page discusses biofuel production and its benefits for the maritime industry. The ad includes a quote from a West Coast Biofuels representative: "All West Coast Biofuels, nothing is important to us. Because when farmers harvest left-behind crops, we collect food waste and by-products from food processors, the farms, restaurants and even supermarkets, transforming them into high-quality feed in animal feed, renewable energy, and thousands of other products we use every day that directly contribute to a sustainable local food supply, and help us set the bar in clean and healthy communities." The ad also includes a small image of a ship and a logo for West Coast Biofuels.

We also wanted it to be relatively easy to integrate the content so that Green Marine could do so itself in English and French for both quality and cost control. It was also essential to present the articles in a dynamic way by having the option to highlight certain information, such as key quotes, as well as the means to add media (both photo images and video clips).

Moving to a digital format would also help us to obtain more precise statistics regarding the magazine's use and reach, which isn't possible with a printed edition beyond the initial recipient. Therefore, we insisted that it be possible to pull stats for each page of the magazine, as well as every advertisement.

In order of priority, the magazine's prime readership targets are Green Marine members, the maritime industry, NGOs and environmental organizations, the general public, as well as decision-makers (i.e., government).

Actions taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?

From the moment we decided to go with a digital format for the magazine, we knew our first step had to be to survey our readership to find out more about their reading habits. A survey was also sent to advertisers to find out their interest and expectations in terms of digital visibility. [The survey results](#) confirmed that a vast majority of our readers (75% of respondents) welcomed the idea of having our magazine in a solely digital format twice a year without too much advertising as readers found that annoying.

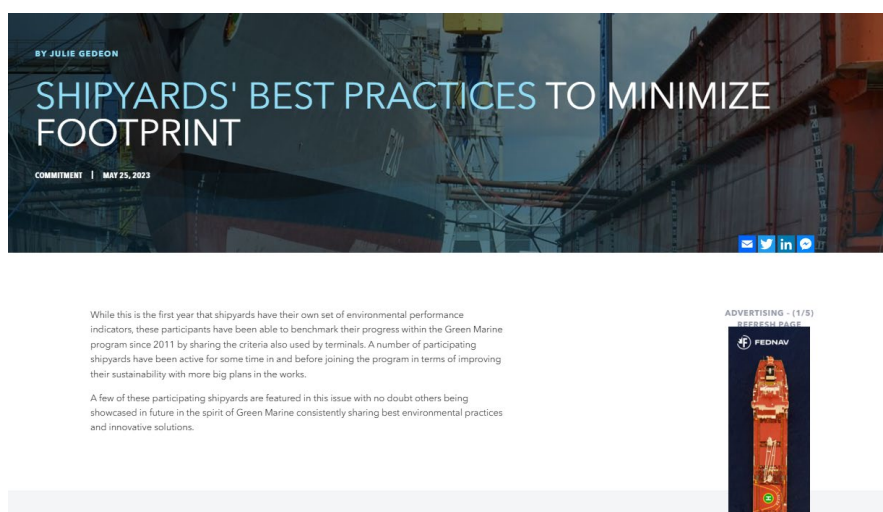
A subsequent discussion with the outside party involved with the previous magazine formats to explore potential involvement going forward ultimately resulted in the realization that the partnership was no longer mutually beneficial. No longer availing itself of this supplier's services, Green Marine assumed the responsibilities of finding advertisers, and managing their advertisements and related billings.

The initial redesign meeting with the agency (that was also working on the website's redesign) was held in December 2021 with the project's delivery date set for prior to the magazine's spring issue in May 2022.

Taking into account the survey responses as well as our own criteria, the contemplations done with the agency led us to create a platform specifically for the magazine – in essence a website dedicated to the articles, organized by issue, that could easily be linked to the Green Marine website.

While the agency was busy developing a new magazine's design, Green Marine had to give further thought to the [media kit](#) and the [distribution strategy](#). Green Marine regarded the initial magazine issues as test editions that would provide a clear picture of each advertisement's cost and level of visibility. The other challenge was getting people to view the digital format online, as opposed to when the printed version was mailed to them.

Below is an example of an ad integration on an article page of the new digital format (this ad format remains anchored on the right when scrolling the article):



The screenshot displays a digital magazine article page. The main article title is "SHIPYARDS' BEST PRACTICES TO MINIMIZE FOOTPRINT" by Julie Gedeon, dated May 25, 2023. The article text discusses environmental performance indicators in shipyards. On the right side, there is a vertical advertisement for PEDNAV, which features a ship and the text "ADVERTISING - (1/5) REFRESH PAGE". The advertisement is anchored to the right side of the page, as indicated by the text in the prompt.

As our budget was limited, the agency opted for a specific formula: it created a design consisting of content blocks to fill so that Green Marine could later directly add the content (in English AND in French). This is the same design principle as for the website.

The initial 100% digital issue was put together by Green Marine using the website’s content management tool, a process that took some time given the unfamiliarity with the new platform and the fact that the printed version had not been put together in-house. Nevertheless, the magazine’s first digital issue appeared in May 2022 as scheduled and was notably promoted by a mass e-mailing announcement using Mailchimp. With Green Marine already having upwards of 4,500 contacts for its newsletter distribution, it was agreed that the same Mailchimp list should be used to send a link for each new magazine issue. It is also now possible to subscribe to this distribution list and select the content that you prefer to receive (e.g., the magazine, newsletter, GreenTech news, etc.).

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

Switching to a digital format has facilitated Green Marine maximizing the magazine’s reach by getting it to a larger number of people through the same distribution list as for the newsletter which totals more than 4,500 contacts. The distribution list for the printed issued totaled approximately 580 mailing addresses.

- Mailchimp campaign for the Summer 2022 issue: <https://mailchi.mp/green-marine.org/green-marine-magazines-24th-issue-is-out>
- Mailchimp campaign for the Fall 2022 issue: <https://mailchi.mp/green-marine.org/green-marine-magazine-the-new-issue-is-out-wy6ws9xepm>

Above average opening rates

This new Mailchimp delivery strategy delivers measurable results by tracking the email opening rates. Here are the Mailchimp campaign statistics for the first two digital issues:

		Openings	Opening rate	Clicks	Click-through rate
Magazine No. 24	Summer 2022 (ENG)	1,526	37.3%	748	18.3%
	Summer 2022 (FR)	263	46.9%	147	26.2%
Magazine No. 25	Fall 2022 (ENG)	1,084	26.8%	77	1.9%
	Fall 2022 (FR)	193	34.6%	30	5.4%

According to Mailchimp, businesses in the transportation sector have an average opening rate of 20.4% and an average click-through rate of 2.25%. The results illustrated in the above table are therefore higher than the average for campaigns in transportation industries.

In its first year of existence, the magazine's new format generated more than double the number of visits compared to the previous format.

An analysis of the magazine platform's web statistics for the two digital 2022 issues also shows that the magazine's Home page, where the headlines for the articles in each issue are displayed, received more than 3,100 visits, while the individual stories attracted more than 5,100 readers. The average reading rate for a given page also indicates that people are paying attention to the content and actually reading the articles. This rate is three minutes on average.

As for the return offered to advertisers, the overall average click-through rate (CTR) of the very first digital edition was positive. The media kit offers four levels of digital banners to advertisers, with a set limit of advertisers at each level in order to maximize each advertiser's visibility and to respect the surveyed readership's preference for limited advertising. The issue's CTR stands at 0.52% compared to [the approximately 0.46% that is considered a good CTR rate across industries for a banner ad](#).

Less paper, more nature!

In addition to the larger reach, it is important to emphasize all the printing avoided with a digital format. The final two print editions (the Fall 2020 issue and the Summer 2021 issue) constituted a 750 and 600 print run respectively. Considering that the magazines averaged 60 double-sided pages, the last two issues required printing 81,000 pages in total, whereas the digital format requires no printing whatsoever.

Below is a seed paper bookmark we created to promote the new digital Magazine during GreenTech 2022 and other industry events:



With our Mailchimp distribution list, it is also now much easier for anyone to sign up to regularly obtain a link to issues of the magazine through a call-to-action button on the magazine's website.

Ads with an environmental message within a green media

The other success story relates to the advertisers. With a digital magazine, Green Marine now offers a green media consistent with the environmental values of the advertisers. The first two issues tested the display of ads from 12 advertisers (the Port of Corpus Christi, QSL, Algoma, the CSL Group, Montreal Gateway Terminal Partnership, Urgence Marine Environment, XBEE, the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, Fednav, and the Chamber of Marine Commerce) offering them a special introductory rate, with 11 of them subsequently committing to the Spring 2023 issue! A further review of the statistics related to the initial four digital issues will be done to update the 2024 media kit regarding the CTR for advertisers at each of the four offered ad banner levels.

Viewing the first version of the digital magazine as a work in progress, Green Marine seeks to ensure its optimization to offer an ever-improving platform for its visitors and advertisers. After nearly a year of the magazine's digital platform, we're embarking on a second optimization phase with the same agency to make the improvements we have noted and prioritized in recent months.

The beauty of the digital format is its versatility to change with ever-evolving technology, as well as the media expectations of readers and advertisers.