

# Brand Revolution

## Impact Networking Sets New Brand Building Standard in Dealer Segment

By Scott Cullen

Never underestimate the strength of a strong brand. You know the brands. You see them every day—Coca Cola, Apple, Microsoft, McDonalds. You get the picture.

One brand on the upswing in an array of Midwest markets is Impact Networking. Headquartered in Lake Forest, Illinois, with two branches in Chicago, four more in Illinois, two in Wisconsin and one in Indiana, Impact Networking has been diligently building its brand since 1999. With the completion of a new headquarters building, a new website, social media marketing, and ongoing community involvement and charitable initiatives, the Impact brand is growing stronger every day. That shouldn't be a surprise for a dealership that's been consistently enjoying 27% year-over-year growth.

Before we dig in, let's establish from the get-go that brand building in Impact's situation is at a local and regional level so national brand building rules aren't necessarily part of the Impact story.

### If You Build It, They Will Come

It may not be "Field of Dreams," but Impact's new Lake Forest headquarters, which opened its doors in January of this year, is a 20,000-foot, two-story structure, equipped with state-of-the-art technology befitting the image of one of the region's leading technology and solutions providers. Conveniently located across from Impact's distribution center, the new headquarters is home to administration, managed IT, dispatch and services, C-level executives, two sales teams, and a technology showroom.

The structure is quite an achievement, built specifically for Impact. The second



Impact Networking  
Headquarters in  
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floor has floor-to-ceiling windows and open workspaces. Every office also has its own flat-screen TV for displaying information, while desks at every workstation are motorized and can be raised or lowered, allowing workers to sit or stand while working. There's even a fish tank filled with saltwater fish. Another nice touch are office nooks that can be used by employees visiting from other branches, allowing them to work onsite and enjoy some privacy while visiting the company's headquarters.

Impact also has a full training center for staff and customer demos along with a room devoted to web conferencing and an IT command center.

"We've tripled our IT staff because we're pushing toward more managed services," stated Rebecca Adolf, Impact's Marketing Director.

The centerpiece of Impact's headquarters and its training center is a 16' x 9' Prysm wall. This high-tech addition with touch-screen panels enables interaction and collaboration, and reinforces Impact's brand as a progressive technology and solutions

provider. It's used for company meetings, training, teleconferencing, webinars and customer demos.

"This is going to re-engineer how we present to customers on large projects," said Adolf. "We'll be able to put their logo up and there will be video interaction with different web pages. The neat thing about this wall is the amount of energy it uses is so low, it's like powering up a lamp."

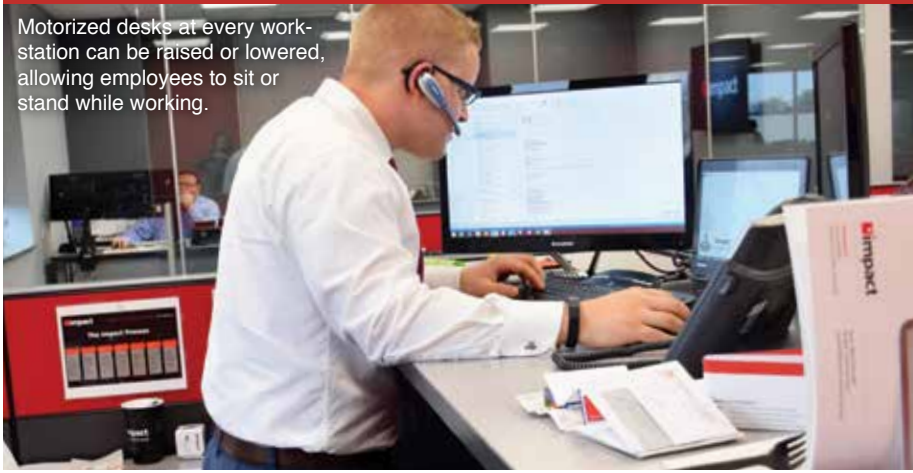
"It's just crazy, awesome technology," added Megan McClafferty, Impact's Digital Marketing Assistant.

Since installing the wall, Impact has become a vendor for Prysm products, and Impact has one of only two Prysm showrooms (Prysm has the other) in the region.

### Building the Brand Digitally

Any brand building going on in the digital age must encompass the business's web presence, and that's an area where Impact excels. The dealership already had an effective website, but after a recent redesign, Impact's site is much more effective at getting the Impact message

Motorized desks at every workstation can be raised or lowered, allowing employees to sit or stand while working.



across to customers and prospects. The revamped site is more responsive and is now mobile, tablet and desktop friendly. It also incorporates more video images and equally important, loads much faster.

The site redesign also keeps things simple. In the past, Impact's site showcased six buckets of services. Now, instead of Digital Office Equipment, Production Print, Document Management, Creative Services, Managed Print Services and Managed IT, the focus is simply on Technology and Solutions.

With the website enhancements as a guide, Impact is redesigning its marketing materials, including proposal covers, business cards, banners and billboards along the same lines.

"We're updating and evolving all of our messaging based on how we've grown our services," reported Adolf.

Thanks to the new branding initiatives, there should be no misconception that Impact Networking is just a copier-printer company.

"People ask me what Impact does," noted Adolf. "The easy answer is we sell copiers and printers, but really we provide technology innovation for business processes. That's the truth. I never thought we'd become a dealer for Prysm walls solutions, but it makes sense for collaboration tools. You never know how we're going to grow and what new technology we're going to add each year, which is exciting. Everything we do reflects our culture and our branding—for winter,

we just gave employees Impact-branded fleece blankets and car ice scrapers. You never know what I'm going to be sourcing next. We have some interesting stuff that's going to be coming out too."

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#### The People Factor

The ultimate goal of branding is to pump up the bottom line. When it comes to that bottom line, one can't overlook the role Impact's employees contributing to its branding initiatives, whether they're actually working on those initiatives or simply going about their everyday responsibilities. After all, they are living, breathing examples of the Impact brand. Employee input is something that Impact's upper management values and why, earlier this year, the company introduced the Innovation Initiative, a formal program where employees can share their ideas for improving the company, and by extension, the Impact brand.

Employees submit suggestions via Impact's employee portal—where they'll find a sort of a 21st-century suggestion box. To encourage employees to participate, anyone who submits is placed in a

raffle and a winner is drawn at the next company meeting. At Impact's year-end company banquet, the top idea in any category—culture, charity, brand, streamlining/reducing costs—that made the biggest impact will receive the Innovation trophy.

Adolf and Impact's CEO Frank Cucco review every submission. When they find one they think will make a difference, they forward it to the appropriate individual or individuals within Impact to implement.

One of the three suggestions the company is currently acting on came from a service tech and streamlines the installation and parts delivery process.

Impact's management also values feedback elicited from customers and employees via surveys. Information collected from those, too, is helpful in shaping Impact's brand. After every company meeting, banquet or function, employees are surveyed to determine what they liked, what they didn't, and how to make the next meeting or event better.

"We're very honest about food," laughed Adolf. "If there are any complaints [about working at Impact], it's that we're surveyed out."

With such an open and nurturing work culture, it's little wonder that Impact Networking was recently named one of 23 of Milwaukee's "Best and Brightest Companies to Work For" by the Best and Brightest organization. This acknowledgement adds to a litany of other best workplace recognitions Impact has garnered over the years.

#### Impact's Youth Movement

What's also been a boon to building the Impact Networking brand internally and externally is youth.

"We're a young company," observed Adolf. "The majority of employees are in their twenties and thirties."

And everyone gets along.

"There's a lot of laughter and camaraderie

here,” said Adolf. “We have a lot of parties and get-togethers.”

When asked how Impact’s culture affects its customers, Adolf responded, “Happy employees, happy customers. I’ve listened to customer service calls in our office. The people we employ are often laughing with the customers and developing relationships.”

And customers aren’t shy about letting Impact know how they’re doing.

“We have over 400 reference letters, and every time someone does a good job and the client lets them know, it’s shared with the whole company,” stated Adolf. “We give a gift card to an employee every time either a customer or someone from another department says they’ve gone above and beyond.”

### Caring for the Community

Impact’s charitable initiatives have also made a difference in building the Impact brand, even if those initiatives are making a bigger difference for the communities Impact serves. Many of those initiatives are seasonal such as the company’s flagship charitable event, Letters to Santa. This particular charity, which started in 2005, uses voluntary deductions from employees’ paychecks to support Impact’s adopted Chicago public school, Pickard Elementary, throughout the holiday season. Over a three-month period, select employees use the contributions to buy a personalized ‘want’ and ‘need’ gift for each student, along with wrapping paper. After holding a wrapping party to organize each student’s gifts, employees volunteer to dress up as Santa and his elves to hand them out at the school, where there is also be an annual pizza party.

“This is just an amazing way for our employees to give back to the community, because they are helping out multiple families and can directly see how much their contributions mean to each child,” said McClafferty.

Another way employees give back is



Prism Visual Workplace Demo

through employee contributions. Similar to the Letters to Santa voluntary donations, employees donate to select charities in Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana. The other two charities that Impact donates to are Hometown Heroes and Bosma Enterprise. Through Hometown Heroes, Impact helps give back to those who make the community a better place.

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“Our employee contribution to this organization assists Hometown Heroes in offering real savings when buying, selling or refinancing a home,” observed McClafferty. “This also includes help for past or present military members, medical personnel, first responders, non-profits, educators and school employees, and government employees.”

Proceeds will help provide equal opportunities for freedom, independence and self-determination.

“Through Impact’s contributions, we help make it possible for Bosma to provide job training, employment services, rehab and outreach programs for the blind and visually impaired,” explained McClafferty.

The newest non-profit supported by Impact is the Latino Community Develop-

ment (LCD) organization, located near Indianapolis. LCD provides the Latino community with tools, resources and opportunities to empower themselves. It has recently started to provide financial counseling, banking support and assistance with renting or buying homes. In addition to these resources, recipients also are provided with resources for finding a job and interviewing, information on health and nutrition, and anything else necessary to help support a growing community. Impact Indianapolis’ Branch Manager Chris Zvirbulis has even joined LCD’s Board of Directors and hopes to share his experience to help run the organization more efficiently and help raise organization funds.

### What’s Next?

Other initiatives in the works that will further enhance Impact’s image include expanding into new markets, adding to its technology offerings, including the aforementioned Prism technology, growing managed IT, and ramping up its social media services offerings.

“Our next goal is offering more office automation tools for customers and more formal content creation,” revealed Adolf. “That’s a long-term project for marketing.”

This is among the many ways Impact is raising its profile and reinforcing its brand across the many markets it serves.



### Questions About This Story?

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