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Building Excellence



2023: CELEBRATING INNOVATION

Whether you're a startup or a legacy company, innovation is at the heart of what makes businesses succeed. Champions of Innovation allows businesses to share their own stories of how they developed new products and processes that allowed their companies to grow. This special sponsored content section will inspire you as your business travels its own innovation journey.

THINK BIG

"The construction industry pays extremely well and has excellent health and retirement benefits. On-the-job, hands-on training allows even those with no prior construction experience the chance to learn a new trade while making a great living."

BECKY WHITE
On-Site Risk Representative
3rd Generation Miron Employee



Building Excellence

At Miron Construction, we believe that the diverse skills and strengths of our workforce allow us to think big and bring out the best in each other. A work environment that welcomes team members from different backgrounds will ensure continued growth and allow the industry as a whole to thrive.

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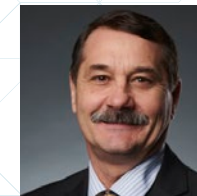


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Manufacturing solutions to this challenge (check all that apply)

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Brian Rasmussen

Publisher, Insight Publications
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Innovation is crucial for any business looking to remain competitive and relevant in today's fast-paced and ever-changing world. Whether you're a small startup or a large corporation, the ability to innovate and adapt to new trends and technologies is essential – innovation should be at the forefront of every business strategy.

We are delighted to present the annual Champions of Innovation special section, which allows New North companies

to share the stories of their cutting-edge products and processes in their own words. This year's special section includes stories of companies making advances in the areas of automation, energy efficiency, construction and accounting, just to name a few.

As I read through this special section, I was struck by the problem-solving prowess of companies throughout the region. In today's world, where disruption is the norm and technological advancements happen at lightning



speed, it's more important than ever to be innovative and adaptable. Whether it's through new products, new processes or simply a willingness to embrace change, innovation is key to success and these area companies are leading the way.

I hope you find as much inspiration in their stories as I did. 📌

Brian Rasmussen
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KEYNOTE SPEAKER
BILL FOURNET
CEO of The Persimmon Group

Fournet founded The Persimmon Group to help manufacturers and other industry leaders adapt and thrive in the face of disruption. Don't miss out on this opportunity to learn from a true visionary and take your manufacturing business to the next level.

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- Bill Marklein, Founder of Employ Humanity



CHAMPIONS OF INNOVATION

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How Oshkosh Corporation is driving innovative, disruptive technology



Jay Iyengar, Chief Technology and Strategic Sourcing Officer for Oshkosh Corporation, speaks to an audience at the International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) Summit in April.

The technology imperative is here, and it's driven by megatrends affecting all of us, including climate change and resource scarcity, the sharing economy, digital transformation, the global marketplace and the productivity imperative. It's more important than ever that companies develop innovation strategies that can drive advanced technology to market faster, provide economies of scale and product acceptance.

We've been continuously evolving our technology capabilities and development approach to match the needs of customers and the megatrends affecting the world around us. Our approach to innovation has evolved further with the addition of Jay Iyengar to Oshkosh as chief technology and strategic sourcing officer in January 2022. Jay brought with her a broad portfolio of experience from roles in automotive, aerospace and heavy-duty industrial vehicles.

We understand the importance of thinking differently about how we develop and deliver innovation in this technology imperative era, and Jay has been influential in advancing our approach. Our innovation and

strategic framework contain four key building blocks: world-class capabilities and a highly talented engineering team, accelerating impact through open innovation, collaborating closely with customers and embracing disruptive technology. This framework gives Oshkosh the ability to advance technology effectively and efficiently.

World class capabilities and a highly talented engineering team

As an industrial technology company, one of our core strengths is our people. We have a depth of engineering horsepower with expertise across key disciplines like advanced modeling and simulation, systems engineering, software and controls, IoT, electronics, material sciences, data sciences and many more – all of which are an important foundation of our strong innovation strategy.

Having the right comprehensive end-to-end product development capabilities enables us to get designs right the first time, which improves speed to market. We achieve this by focusing on requirements for management, digital engineering, design and product validation as well as lifecycle management.

Accelerating impact through open innovation

The second tenant of our strategy is accelerating impact with open innovation. We don't just innovate within the four walls of the company. Great ideas can come from anywhere. Oshkosh has built an ecosystem of technology partners such as start-ups, universities, suppliers and customers to leverage their strengths and extend our own research and development reach.

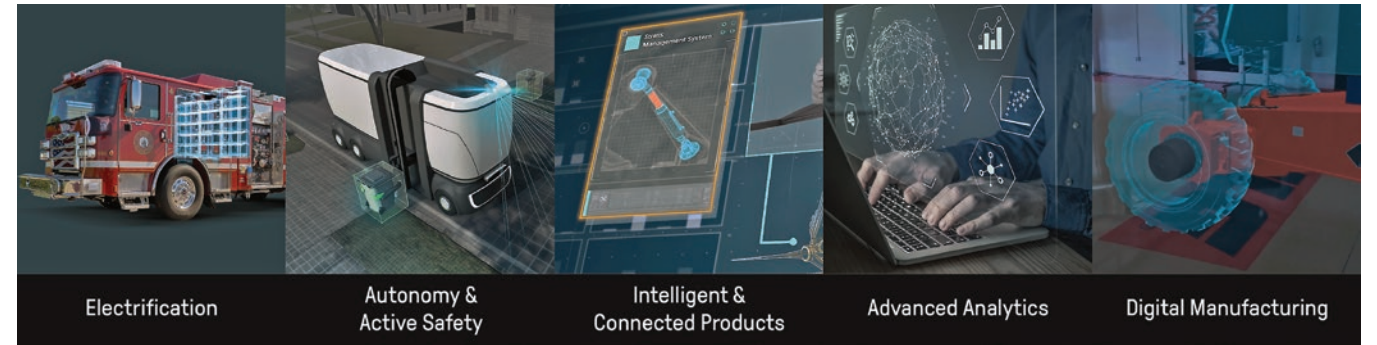
As an example, Carnegie Mellon University and Robotic Research are premier research institutions in autonomy. Not only are we partnering with them on the development of autonomous technology, we're also opening a technology center for the development of autonomous solutions in Pittsburgh.

Recently we also invested in a LiDAR technology company, Baraja Pty, Ltd., an Australian-based startup that develops differentiated LiDAR solutions that will further support our technology development in autonomy.

By combining our internal capabilities with this open innovation approach, we can reduce the time required to bring new, disruptive technologies to market.

Collaborating closely with customers

One of our strengths is the relationships we develop with those who rely on Oshkosh products to do their difficult jobs every day. We work very closely to understand their pain points and challenges. For instance, firefighters need their vehicles to be fully capable and ready to go at the instant they receive a call. Soldiers on dangerous, complex missions rely on our vehicle mobility and protection. Construction operators working at height need to feel safe. Environmental and mail carriers



Oshkosh's five key technology focus areas

who spend all day in their vehicles, essentially their offices, need to be comfortable and productive.

A great example of close customer collaboration was the development of the purpose-built Pierce® Volterra™ Electric Fire Truck. Our team of engineers spent countless hours with firefighters to understand what was most important to them in the development of this new vehicle. The number one priority for them was that we preserve vehicle configuration and performance, keeping everything in the same place as a conventional fire fighting vehicle. And the Pierce Volterra does just that.

Embracing disruptive technology

Looking at the megatrends affecting the world and the needs of our customers, we focus on five key technology areas: electrification, autonomy and active safety, intelligent and connected products, advanced analytics and digital manufacturing.

Electrification

Driven by climate change, the need to reduce emissions and new regulation in some states, electrification is a technology that our customers need and our communities want. With nearly 30 years of electrification experience, we're applying that knowledge in the development of electric, zero emission, purpose-built vehicles and equipment. We've launched electric products in almost all our end markets. They include the Pierce Volterra and Oshkosh Airport Products Volterra Electric Fire Fighting vehicles, the USPS Next Generation Delivery Vehicle

(NGDV), the DaVinci all-electric scissor lift and, most recently, the Fully Integrated Electric Refuse Collection Vehicle.

Autonomy and active safety

The productivity imperative and labor challenges faced by many can be addressed through autonomy and active safety. Across many of our applications these technologies provide benefits from advanced driver safety, simplification and automation of complex vehicle operations, enhanced productivity and a solution to the labor shortage. A great example of this is the addition of active safety technology in the USPS NGDV. The new vehicle comes with collision warning systems, automatic braking, 360-degree camera and low speed radar, as well as bumper sensors – helping keep people safe and improving productivity.

Intelligent and connected products

Digital transformation and the productivity imperative mean the products that we design and build need to be intelligent. Our products are inherently intelligent, with embedded controls, software and electronics. As an example, Oshkosh Airport Products Airport Rescue Firefighting Vehicle (ARFF) has about 30 electronic control units on it. Using telematics, we collect data from connected products around the world and provide insight to our customers. This technology has tremendous benefits in driving productivity and improving total cost of ownership for our customers.

Advanced analytics

Not only is digital transformation important in our products, it's also

critical within our own business. We're applying digital technologies to continuously reimagine our business. Using advanced analytics and AI, we're partnering with our internal business teams to increase productivity while providing greater business intelligence to decision-makers and delivering operational excellence on behalf of our customers.

Digital manufacturing

We're connecting people, equipment and processes with real-time data, using automation to replace mundane and repetitive tasks so our team members can focus on more value-added work. We're also leveraging augmented reality to train the next generation workforce on a technology they're familiar with and one that creates a risk-free environment enabling real-time feedback.

The world is changing faster than ever. So are the needs of people, communities and customers. Developing an agile innovation approach that has a strong foundation in people and capabilities, being open to new and different ways to innovate, working closely with your customers and focusing on the right technology that matters will be key to navigating the technology imperative successfully. 📌



Company: Oshkosh Corporation

Innovation: Innovative technology

oshkoshcorp.com

Sofidel America invests in innovation

By: Stefano Giannini, Operations Manager, Sofidel America

The phrase “adapt or die” is often heard in the business world – to retain customers and employees while also attracting new ones, an organization’s leaders must constantly find ways to improve business operations. In other words, innovation is a key aspect of successful companies. While some innovative ideas are grandiose, even small innovations can have a big impact. Over time, The Sofidel Group, known as Sofidel America in the U.S., continues to find innovative, sustainable solutions to help the planet and its people thrive.

Where it all began

In 2012, The Sofidel Group acquired Cellynne Tissue Company, which was the start of Sofidel America’s journey. In 2015, Sofidel acquired part of Green Bay Converting, Inc., which became the major plant to convert paper for Sofidel America.



The Sofidel Group is known for its commitment to producing high-quality paper products utilizing environmentally friendly, energy-efficient processes. Since 2008, Sofidel has been a member of the WWF Climate Savers Program, an initiative committed to the reduction of climate altering emissions.

As part of Sofidel’s commitment to limit its environmental impact, it has made significant strides. It is applying strict procurement policies for raw materials of forestry origin



and managing water responsibly by constantly monitoring production processes.

Where we are now

One of the biggest innovations at the Green Bay plant was implementing LED lights throughout the interior and exterior of the facility. This project is set to be completed by 2024. Aside from offering brighter and cleaner lighting, this project will allow Sofidel to save some money, but more importantly it will help to reduce the release of approximately 690 tons of CO2 emissions per year.

Along with switching to LED lights, the Green Bay plant is moving away from gas-powered vehicles and prioritizing electric technology. Electric forklifts and other manufacturing machines have reduced maintenance costs, increased efficiency and greatly reduced the Green Bay plant’s greenhouse gas emissions.

What’s to come

The Green Bay plant’s leaders are eager to implement innovations that help it to operate more sustainably.

As of 2020, The Sofidel Group has reduced its CO2 emissions by 24% thanks to investments in cogeneration, solar and hydroelectric power plants, biomass power plants,

and through improvement of energy efficiency and company logistics. The organization aims to use energy from renewable sources for 84% of its energy consumption by 2030.

Sofidel America continues to look for innovative approaches that help the company grow in a safe and sustainable way. By focusing on corporate and social responsibility, Sofidel hopes to improve the lives of its employees and the Green Bay community. ❶

Author Bio: Stefano Giannini is the Operations Manager at Sofidel America’s Green Bay plant. He’s worked at Sofidel for 13 years, starting on the finance team, where he handled mergers and acquisitions. He now supports the Green Bay team to achieve their targets via managing converting operations across several business lines.



Company:
Sofidel America

Innovation: Improvement of energy efficiency and company logistics

sofidel.com

Family business peer groups launch in Northeast Wisconsin

Two family business peer groups (one for CEOs and the other for future leaders) will be starting in Northeast Wisconsin this fall. These peer groups are being brought to Northeast Wisconsin through a collaboration between Strategic Solutions Consulting/Seefeldt Institute for Family Business (SSC) and the Wisconsin Family Business Center (WIFBC), which is affiliated with the Wisconsin School of Business at UW-Madison.

These confidential peer groups will meet monthly starting this fall. Topics may include the following: succession and transition of ownership and leadership; family dynamics; business strategy; leadership development; communication and conflict management, etc.

The two organizations have been collaborating for the past couple of years to provide similar peer groups in the Madison and Milwaukee areas. “We are very excited to partner with

the Wisconsin Family Business Center to bring peer groups to Northeast Wisconsin family businesses. Our goal is to help family businesses create business success and family harmony,” says Shipra Seefeldt, founder of SSC, a family business located in Appleton that for the past 22 years has provided management consulting and business psychology services to its clients.

Through this collaboration, the two organizations aspire to positively impact family businesses in Northeast Wisconsin. “The peer groups offer a safe space for family business leaders to learn, collaborate, explore new ideas and problem solve. Having facilitators who also operate a family business brings another level of expertise and understanding to the groups,” says WIFBC Director Sherry Herwig. For 25 years, WIFBC has been bringing family business leaders together to learn and grow through educational programs, peer groups and a trusting community.



Both organizations are excited to offer this valuable, immersive and interactive experience to family business leaders in the region. ❶

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Companies: Strategic Solutions Consulting, LLC and Wisconsin Family Business Center

Innovation: CEO and Future Leader Peer Groups in Northeast Wisconsin

strategicsolutionsconsulting.com
uwfbc.org

Cultural innovation in construction



AZCO project team in Superior, WI joins local curling league.

Innovation isn’t just coming up with new ideas. Sure, that’s a start – the seed to germinate the process of growing value in what you are doing and what you are providing. Innovation isn’t just getting the job done or spending more money on what is trendy and new. It’s about trying to be better, developing better projects, developing better individuals and developing a better company.

At AZCO, that progress – that innovation – starts with our culture as a construction company. Years

ago, we started with four individuals determined to become an A-to-Z company that provided it all: construction to anyone who needed it. Today that grit is instilled in the heart of each of us.

Our culture sets us apart as a construction and prefabrication solutions provider. AZCO engages our clients, becoming part of the community in the areas where we provide projects and encouraging creative mindsets to turn ideas into reality. We invest in a better world by joining forces with high schools and mentoring programs to promote career development in the trades, leadership and confidence in supporting STEM-led robotics, and joining town hall meetings and athletic teams in the communities we serve. We understand our projects by understanding our neighbors and friends.

It’s not just what we do at the project site that sets us apart. An innovative culture in construction at the very

beginning of design balances proven performance and procedures with flexible and adaptable improvements. We use what we’ve learned to inspire creative collaboration and make the construction industry at large ready for change.

We are still that original company, providing construction and prefabrication to anyone who needs it. And we’ve grown to learn that while providing services we can also share ideas, improvements, time, energy and our grit to invest in growing as individuals, as a company and as a community. ❶



Company: AZCO INC.

Innovation: Cultural leadership

www.azco-inc.com

Innovation in construction



When thinking about innovation in construction, areas such as technology, virtual construction, or advancements in tools and equipment are likely to come to mind. While innovations in these areas are a regular occurrence at Miron Construction Co., Inc., another space in which the company is strengthening its innovation muscle is company culture. A culture of innovation allows Miron to attract and retain top talent, increase productivity, and foster a sense of community in the workplace.

Miron is actively progressing efforts and knowledge in diversity, equity, and inclusion. The team continuously advances toward the more equitable inclusion of all people. Understanding that diversity drives innovation, Miron is dedicated to building a workforce comprised of a variety of backgrounds, skills, and views, and cultivating a workplace of belonging that is the right fit for every person inside of it. Miron's commitment to inclusion across race, gender, age, religion, identity, ability,

and experience drives them forward together every day.

After becoming certified in workplace DEI from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Sara Montonati, Miron's communications and culture manager, took steps of progress that have embedded accountability for DEI throughout the organization.

In a conscious effort to create lasting, impactful change, Miron started executing various strategies in 2020 to move them toward a more diverse and welcoming workplace. In the beginning, Miron's efforts focused on actively recruiting from diverse populations. They were guided by diversity-focused workforce organizations, highlighting traditionally marginalized individuals to show that Miron is a place for everyone, and learning the basics from external experts. These actions were shifting practices, elevating equity,



and activating diversity at Miron. The needle was moving in the right direction, but it wasn't far enough.

Within Miron's employee base exists a broad range of people with traditionally marginalized and intersecting identities. "We needed to learn how to show up as allies for one another, to help everyone feel supported and included," Montonati said. "I knew that so much of Team Miron thought of themselves as allies, but some individuals still weren't receiving the allyship they deserved."

The team learned there was a gap between intent and action. While it was true that the majority considered themselves allies, few were performing allyship actions, which can feel uncomfortable at first. Enter: Allyship at Work workshops.

Allyship at Work Workshops

Allyship is everyone's work, and it's largely the work of people with privilege to support and advance those with less privilege. During the Allyship at Work workshops, participants learn what allyship is (and what it isn't), unpack their personal privilege in and outside of Miron, learn about inequities that impact people with less privilege, discover what power they have to enact change in the workplace, and learn specific actions to practice

CHAMPIONS OF INNOVATION

allyship. The workshops have resulted in participants deploying real allyship actions and have inspired them to serve as change agents.

"The personal privilege exercise and discussion we dive into during Allyship at Work requires participants to look inward and be vulnerable," said Montonati. "Understanding our privilege is central to allyship; it's important to see examples of how some of our identities may provide us advantages, while others may put us at a disadvantage. We can't show up for our colleagues unless we first understand what barriers are in their way. We must remember that having privilege doesn't mean one hasn't suffered, but simply that one's identity hasn't contributed to their suffering."

Since the beginning of 2022, more than 160 Miron employees have taken part in the company's workshops. The feedback from each session has been overwhelmingly positive, and testimonials from past participants have resulted in each round reaching capacity, forcing overflow to future sessions.

At its project sites, Yard Operations, and each of the seven offices, Miron has trained, confident, compassionate allies showing up in little and big ways for their colleagues. Past participants continue to share real examples of active allyship with Montonati, who facilitates the workshops. If they're people in a traditionally marginalized group and have been discriminated against in the past, they feel seen, heard, and protected. If they're someone who possesses more privilege, they share concrete examples of how they're using their power in new and meaningful ways.

Examples of active allyship happening at Miron include employees educating themselves about the experiences of people of color, male employees publicly



giving female colleagues credit for their ideas, craftspeople confronting discrimination when they see it, and middle managers mentoring and advocating for new opportunities for individuals with different identities than their own.

Simply put, allyship is a powerful force for good.

IDEA Council

A newly formed group at Miron called the IDEA Council is comprised of members from diverse backgrounds, which includes diversity in race, gender, ethnicity, and orientation, as well as diversity in role and tenure with Miron and within the industry. The IDEA Council (which stands for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Allyship) has four pillars: inclusion and retention, attraction and recruitment, messaging and metrics, and community and partnerships. The members of this group discuss opportunities for improvement in each of these focus areas and help champion innovation throughout the company's culture.

Culture of CARE

Miron joined thousands of general contractors and construction managers across the nation to become an Impact Champion of the Culture of CARE, an initiative created by the Associated General Contractors of America.

As an Impact Champion, Miron **Commits** to hire based on skill and experience regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, gender identity, nationality, race, religion, sex or orientation; **Attracts** prospective employees by creating inclusive workplaces that are free from harassment, hazing, and bullying; **Retains** high-performing employees by identifying and removing barriers for advancement; and **Empowers** every employee to promote a culture of DEI.

"At Miron, we'll always have more work to do in this space, but we're invested in and committed to being transparent in our purposeful evolution, continuous learning, and intentional ideation," said Montonati. "Our team actively lives out our core values so that inclusiveness is a reflex, not an initiative." 📌



Building Excellence

Company: Miron Construction

Innovation: Embedding allyship into company culture

miron-construction.com

An innovative approach to getting automation right

WMEP helps Go Fast Manufacturing meet growing demand



How can a company with proven marketplace demand and ambitious plans for growth achieve its goals in a tight labor market?

Go Fast, a Wisconsin-based manufacturer of industry-leading pallet and sawmill equipment, knew automation was key. To help ensure success, Go Fast partnered with WMEP, the Wisconsin arm of the MEP National Network, a public-private partnership that advances manufacturing in the U.S.

Start with a profit/risk analysis to identify high potential interventions
Step No. 1 was a PRA, WMEP's Profit Risk Assessment. This structured assessment confirmed Go Fast's belief that automation could be a game changer.

Next up: Decide what to automate
WMEP conducted an Automation-Advisor assessment. WMEP worked with Go Fast to evaluate any process that required physical labor, then provided a prioritized list of processes



to automate, ranked by their likely return on investment (ROI).

One option quickly rose to the top: replacing an outdated plasma table with a laser cutter. "We had already identified that as a place to automate," said Dan Berken, president of Go Fast. "It was helpful to have WMEP's confirmation."



Dan Berken

WMEP appreciated the hands-on approach Go Fast took during the assessment. "When we work together, the output is always better," said Colin Wilson, senior consultant for automation at WMEP.

Ensure employee buy-in

Although employees often saw automation as a threat in the past, today it has a more positive reputation. Automation eliminates jobs that are dull, dirty and dangerous, and helps position companies as forward thinking and innovative, which ultimately leads to more growth and opportunities for companies.

"Wisconsin simply doesn't have the people we need to fill the jobs," stressed George Bureau, vice president consulting at WMEP. "The more we automate, the more we create opportunity and higher paying jobs. It's a win for Wisconsin manufacturers and employees."

To drive acceptance, Go Fast worked with employees to show how the new equipment would improve their jobs.

"Everybody in our facility could see this would help make our product better and easier to produce," said Dennis Berken, Go Fast managing member.

Innovation drives impressive results

Go Fast installed the laser cutter in late 2022, and the benefits were evident immediately.



- **Equipment payback in less than a year.** The equipment is designed to run two shifts; the company achieved fast payback running just one. Go Fast will save even more as production ramps up.
- **Increased manufacturing speeds.** While the old system ran up to 400 inches a minute, the new one runs up to 4,000.
- **Enhanced product accuracy and safety.** Internal control helps drive improvements in both areas.
- **Increased employee efficiency.** Go Fast was able to re-deploy half a full-time employee.
- **Savings in outsourcing costs.** Go Fast brought a sizeable portion of work back in house.



- **Improved control of the R&D process.** Go Fast slashed lead times and improved product quality. "During COVID, outsourced work had lead times of three to 10 weeks," said Dan. "In-house we can handle things in hours."
- **Insights into product improvements.** "We're learning from this installation, and I think we'll see new products and better processes coming out it," said Dennis. 📌



Company: Go Fast Manufacturing

Innovation: WMEP's Profit Risk Assessment

gofastmfg.com

New North regional assets important to statewide tech hub federal application



In December 2022, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 was signed into law, appropriating \$1.6 billion to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for fiscal year 2023 programming. The appropriation includes \$500 million for launching the Regional Technology and Innovation Hub (Tech Hubs) program. This will identify and support innovative centers in key U.S. regions, accelerate a region's evolution into a global leader in an industry of the future, and strengthen U.S. global competitiveness within critical technologies.

Receiving the designation for this program is extremely competitive, and only 20 hubs are anticipated across the nation. However, Wisconsin has a strong story to tell with its long tradition of business-government-academic collaboration. The competitive process will include opportunities for Tech Hub designation, funding for strategy development, planning and capacity building, and awards for strategy implementation.

Our statewide application will demonstrate assets we currently have to drive technology and innovative centric growth that leverages our R&D strengths. We will also demonstrate how we catalyze the creation of good jobs for American workers at all skill levels equitably and inclusively. Our New North region will be part of that narrative, with our rich history of manufacturing and technology-based innovation, increased venture capital, research commercialization, distinct urban and rural assets, cultural diversity and sustainable business models.

With the highest concentration of manufacturing in Wisconsin, the New North region continually demonstrates that manufacturing is nothing like it was five years ago. Our manufacturing base also includes food production, packaging



and food safety, all important in feeding America. Advancements in technology, capital upgrades and automation have supported significant business expansion, job creation and productivity. This has contributed to the competitiveness and growth of domestic suppliers.

The New North region also fosters a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem by supporting startups and the commercialization of new



technologies, as well as creation of technology-driven businesses and high-skilled, well-paying jobs of the future. New North created the NEW Launch Alliance three years ago to support business discoveries and idea creators in Northeast Wisconsin. Through this entity, we collaborate frequently with the Milwaukee and Madison regions, sometimes referred to as the Innovation Triangle, or "Cheese Wedge." TitletownTech, formed out of a partnership between the Green

Bay Packers and Microsoft to build and fund early-stage, high-growth startups, is a model that other states are trying to emulate.

Many of the companies and higher educational institutions in the New North have also addressed climate change through environmentally sustainable developments, which have increased U.S. exports and foreign direct investment. From engineering, design and implementation of renewable energy and stronger microgrids, many of our companies are leading the way in emerging technology for cleaner, more efficient use of resources.

New North is excited to be a collaborator in Wisconsin's Tech Hub submittal to support critical, new technologies, accelerate economic growth and ensure that the industries of the future start, grow and remain in our region, in Wisconsin and in the United States.

It is Wisconsin's time to be identified as a leader in innovation, and the New North is here to help support that narrative. 📌



Accelerating entrepreneurship and innovation in Greater Green Bay



Chamber receives federal grant, launches Startup Hub and earns Excellence Award

The Greater Green Bay Chamber is making waves in the world of entrepreneurship and innovation with a series of exciting achievements. With support from the Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE), part of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the chamber has secured a federal grant totaling \$467,500 through the Venture Challenge – Build to Scale program. This funding will enable the chamber to scale up its tech-based entrepreneurial ecosystem and provide additional support to startups in the region.

The chamber's Startup Hub, which recently earned the chamber an Excellence in Economic Development Silver Award from the International Economic Development Council, will benefit from the grant. The Startup Hub, formerly known as the Advance Business and Manufacturing Center, underwent a rebranding and relaunch in 2019 to better align with its target market and increase community engagement. This transformation from a physical business incubator to a "virtual front door" for entrepreneurs has been a resounding success, with an occupancy rate for office space reaching a remarkable 107% thanks in part to a partnership with a local technical college.



"This grant will enable the chamber to scale up our tech-based entrepreneurial ecosystem," said Laurie Radke, chamber president and CEO. "These dollars will complement the chamber's existing entrepreneurial efforts, infusing even more businesses into the community and aiding in providing further support for those individuals looking to start a business."

As part of the chamber's efforts to further accelerate entrepreneurship in the region, the federal grant will also support the expansion of the startup accelerator services and the employment of an entrepreneur in residence. This experienced technology entrepreneur will provide invaluable guidance to startups, helping them navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship and build their dream businesses. Additionally, participating startups in the chamber's Build Up program, a 10-week virtual tech accelerator program, will receive individualized coaching, access to industry leaders, and free shared space membership at The Urban Hub, a coworking space in downtown Green Bay, among other benefits. The goal is to plug startups into a strong network, accelerate their product development and help them build robust teams.

The chamber's efforts in entrepreneurship and innovation are truly collaborative, involving partnerships with local institutions such as UW-Green Bay. The chamber's partnership with UW-Green Bay began with the WiSys Venture Home partnership and has continued to advance the ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship

in Greater Green Bay. This was further exemplified by the recent unveiling of the UW-Green Bay building sign outside The Urban Hub, solidifying its presence in downtown Green Bay and its commitment to fostering entrepreneurship in the region.

The impact of these achievements is far-reaching and will undoubtedly benefit the Greater Green Bay community as a whole. By providing startups with access to support, capital and resources, the chamber is creating an environment where entrepreneurs can thrive and businesses can flourish. The chamber's focus on the technology industry aligns with the growing demand for innovation in various sectors, and the expansion of the entrepreneurial ecosystem will foster economic growth and job creation in the region. 📌



"The addition of a focused entrepreneur in residence allows for entrepreneurs to learn first-hand from an experienced technology entrepreneur," said Kelly Armstrong, vice president of economic development for the chamber. "This individual will help entrepreneurs understand the journey, the challenges they may encounter along the way, and provide the solutions and network to build their dream."



Company: Greater Green Bay Chamber

Innovation: The Startup Hub

greatergbc.org

Settlers bank sets new standard for personalized banking with custom services

People-forward approach puts customers first, tailoring solutions to meet needs

Since the launch of Settlers bank in 2007, the technologies we embraced have now become more commonplace. While other financials have gradually onboarded similar systems, our commitment to innovation continues to drive us toward new or unconventional ways of doing business. This mission and innovation-centered business model strategy allows us to simplify and customize our client experience.

Our mission:

- Be accessible through technology and in person.
- Listen to learn, then offer solutions.
- Build relationships through collaboration.

creatively to bridge the gaps between a client's needs, looking beyond "the box," and the products and programs typically provided.

When innovation is not inherent to the culture, clients may be frustrated if their situations fall outside the static parameters of standardized programs. Employing a cookie-cutter approach means that a loan application process for the self-employed borrower or prospective homeowner experiencing a life change such as



Michael Waters
Market President



Alli Mathys
Mortgage Loan Officer



Todd Bestor
VP, Private Banking

process. After a loan closes, proper structure and products can contribute to a project's success and enhance overall business operation.

Build relationships through collaboration

At traditional banks, departments can be siloed. At Settlers bank, our bankers work together to consider the entire client relationship. While other banks may make loan decisions behind closed doors with little collaboration with the client, our bankers work with our clients to properly analyze what they want to accomplish and how best to do so. Our practices remove the potential for frustration and ensure that all aspects of the client's banking relationship, from treasury management to private banking, from personal accounts to mortgage loans, are in harmony. The result is a better client experience that allows our clients to develop relationships with several of our bankers versus just one – bankers the client can easily access for help in their areas of expertise. 📌

"We were so pleased with the ability of Settlers bank to collaborate on a loan solution for us. Our mortgage lender, Alli Mathys, worked directly with our Private Banker (Todd Bestor) and shared information to create the best outcome for us. Their joint effort prevented us from starting over in the process from scratch and saved us valuable time!"

— Mary Hosmer

Be accessible

To meet the ever-changing needs of our clients, we regularly review our staffing model, realign departments and redistribute responsibilities, allowing us to provide a consistent and streamlined client experience. Now remote connectivity allows onsite visitors immediate access to our subject-matter experts at any Settlers bank location. Customer service teams are available via text, and 95% of callers can anticipate that their questions will be addressed by the banker answering their call. Our aim was – and still is – to be easily accessible to our clients, using whatever form of communication they prefer.

Offer solutions

Our experienced bankers think

the loss of a loved one, divorce, or change in employment may end in disappointment. Thanks to an experienced staff committed to innovating creative solutions at Settlers, those individuals are much more likely to leave with financing in place or action plans for achieving their goals.

The blend of experience, fresh thinking, and subject-matter expertise allows the Settlers bank team to introduce borrowers to less traditional opportunities with better results. Our lenders' deep understanding of local industries and available loan programs equips them to craft ideal and often unique solutions to meet our borrowers' needs. The benefit of this difference extends far beyond the application



Company: Settlers bank

Innovation: Creative solutions that make banking easier

settlerswi.com

Building a sustainable future with natural refrigeration

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for building owners to reduce waste and climate harm out of the built environment. It directs \$386 billion to clean energy spending and tax incentives, making it the largest investment ever made by the federal government to support projects that will positively impact our environment.

Throughout its 87-year history, Bassett Mechanical has helped its customers achieve their sustainability goals. We are well positioned to help companies in Wisconsin and around the country benefit from opportunities within the IRA and other regulatory changes promoting green energy.

Using natural refrigerants, Bassett Mechanical has established itself as a national leader in designing, fabricating, installing and maintaining large industrial refrigeration systems. Natural refrigerant advantages are well known, as they do not destroy

atmospheric ozone and do not contribute to climate change.

For more than eight decades, Bassett Mechanical has primarily used ammonia as its natural refrigerant solution. Ammonia is a very efficient refrigerant, enabling food, beverage and cold storage facilities to operate in a sustainable and energy-efficient manner. However, in smaller refrigeration systems, synthetic refrigerants have been applied as a low-cost alternative. Unfortunately, synthetic refrigerants have brought an array of unintended environmental consequences.

As such, the EPA has enacted regulations to phase down complex synthetic refrigerants, opening more opportunities for natural refrigerants such as ammonia and carbon dioxide (CO2). Leveraging its expertise in ammonia refrigeration, Bassett Mechanical has a dedicated team of engineers, technicians and control

CHAMPIONS OF INNOVATION

experts developing best practices for CO2 applications. In addition to CO2's efficiency as a refrigerant, it is also a component of the air we breathe and is used by plants — along with sunlight and water — to create oxygen.

Whether ammonia or the emerging use of CO2, natural refrigerants require skills and knowledge for their safe and efficient use. This skill and knowledge are proficiencies that the Bassett Mechanical team shares with its customers. ❶



Company: Bassett Mechanical

Innovation: Natural refrigerants for industrial refrigeration systems

bassettmechanical.com

Print industry leader expands state-of-the-art facility, updates press technology



Established in 1884, Seaway Printing has evolved into an industry leader renowned for its expert craftsmanship, service and reliability. Owned by Lynn and Kevin Heslin, the company has solidified its position as an innovative print partner for publishers nationwide.

Seaway continues to foster a work culture that strives for ongoing improvement. The unwavering loyalty, dedication and hard work of its employees have played a vital role in supporting the company's growth and expanding opportunities.

The company recently marked a significant milestone with the groundbreaking of its new headquarters, a 57,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility designed to accommodate new press acquisitions.

Among these innovative machines is the Heidelberg XL 106 8-color perfecter with Cut Star. This press is uniquely configured for autonomous manufacturing with continuous quality inspection and removal of bad sheets, along with automated printing plate and finished product logistics.

Additionally, Seaway Printing is incorporating the HP A2200 Inkjet Web with the Sigma finishing line. With the flexibility for future expansion, this new facility ensures that Seaway Printing remains at the forefront of the print industry, poised to continue its remarkable progress.

"We are a reliable supplier, and our

clients know that we always deliver on our promises," said Kevin Heslin. Seaway Printing's commitment to innovation and dependability has earned it a reputation as a leading innovator in the print industry.

With a legacy spanning over a century and a relentless pursuit of innovation, Seaway Printing is poised to shape the future of the print industry, maintaining its position as a trailblazer committed to delivering outstanding results for its clients. ❶



Company: Seaway Printing Company

Innovation: Press technology updates

seawayprinting.com

Innovating personalized wealth management and exceptional service for long-term success

CHAMPIONS OF INNOVATION

Whenever an organization or individual introduces a new service or product that simplifies a particular task for people, it is known as innovation. When the founders came together to establish Legacy Private Trust Company, they innovated private wealth and asset management through personalized service and customized portfolios. Legacy offers a wide range of wealth management and trust solutions for high-net-worth individuals and families.

In the early 2000s, the trust and financial services industry experienced a significant shift due to mergers and consolidations, resulting in many local trust offices relocating out of Wisconsin and into large metropolitan areas. Clients faced a decline in personalized service and an increase in employee turnover.



Michael Mahlik



Joseph McGrane

The founders of Legacy Private Trust Company, Michael Mahlik and Joseph McGrane, recognized this as an opportunity to create something extraordinary. They founded Legacy Private Trust Company, an independent fiduciary that prioritizes providing exceptional service and customized solutions while always putting their clients' needs first.

Full array of value-added solutions maximize client success

At the heart of Legacy's methodology lies a dedication to individualized wealth management solutions that include trust services, investment management, charitable giving, retirement, estate, financial and tax planning. These services aim



to assist clients in growing and safeguarding their wealth over an extended period, ensuring their economic well-being across multiple generations. The firm's seasoned experts devote considerable time to understanding each client's distinct financial aspirations and objectives, collaborating closely with them to devise a tailor-made wealth plan and corresponding investment strategy.

Legacy's Managing Director of Trust Investments Greg Hansen states: "Investment management is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Each client has unique financial goals and objectives and requires a tailored investment strategy. The investment team at Legacy continually monitors market conditions, analyzing new investment options and opportunities as they arise." By closely monitoring the markets and being proactive in their investment approach, Legacy ensures that clients are well-positioned to take advantage of market trends and capitalize on investment opportunities as they emerge.

Innovation leads to a holistic team approach

Their holistic team approach is a key differentiator setting Legacy apart from its competitors. When clients partner with Legacy, they work with more than just a single advisor — they work with a team of experts across multiple disciplines. All Legacy clients have access to experts in

tax law, investment management, estate planning, retirement planning, financial planning and charitable giving, all working together to develop a comprehensive plan for their unique needs and objectives. This collaborative approach ensures that clients receive the best possible advice and guidance, with each team member bringing their unique perspective and expertise.

Legacy has carved out a niche as a frontrunner in financial services by emphasizing tailored wealth management solutions and an unwavering commitment to exceptional service. With its deep expertise in trust services, investment management and other financial offerings, Legacy has emerged as a trusted source of financial solutions for high-net-worth individuals and families. As Legacy continues to grow and prosper, its unwavering dedication to exceptional service and innovative financial solutions ensures it will remain at the forefront of the financial services industry. ❶

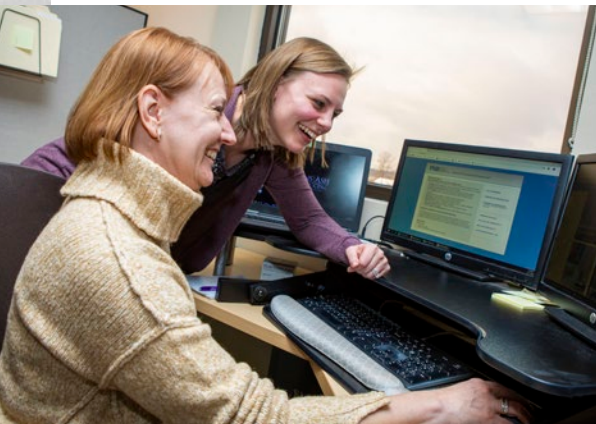


Company: Legacy Private Trust Co.

Innovation: Personalized wealth management

LPTrust.com

Hawkins Ash CPAs: Accounting for the future



The accounting industry, nationwide and here in Northeast Wisconsin, has seen its fair share of mergers and acquisitions. In 2022 accounting firm M&A deals doubled from the previous year. For many firms, the increasing staffing costs, growing IT needs and demand for expertise beyond basic tax preparation and accounting, selling or merging is the only road forward. However, Hawkins Ash CPAs has leveraged its talent and reach to cement its independence as a legacy firm while providing clients nationally recognized, competitive, local tax, audit and advisory services.

Hawkins Ash CPAs was formed in 1956 in La Crosse, Wisconsin. From its humble beginnings of one office with 14 employees, the firm has grown to 10 offices with more than 180 professionals. Its trusted advisors serve more than 10,000 clients from offices in Green Bay, La Crosse, Manitowoc, Marshfield, Medford, Mequon and Neenah in Wisconsin to St. Charles, Winona and Rochester in Minnesota.

“Growing our firm is critical to our success,” said Abe Leis, CPA, manager partner. “In the next five to seven years, we’re geared to become one of the 100 largest CPA firms in the U.S. We’re currently in the top 200. We will continue to provide clients dependable, customized service and expertise.”

In 2021, the Firm made an assertive effort to establish its estate planning practice. Leis said, “Hawkins Ash has talent and resources to assist clients with their estate planning needs. Our team can assist with setting up an estate plan and be part of your estate planning team. Some estate plans need valuation of businesses, and we have certified valuations analysts (CVAs) who can perform these valuations.”

A critical part of the firm’s growth is dependent on the ability to attract and retain talent. Hawkins Ash CPAs is redefining work-life balance as part of the firm’s culture. “The firm has delivered autonomy to our professionals, which in turn has



boosted recruitment of top talent and staff retention,” said Alysha Jeske, SHRM-CP, senior HR generalist.

Outside of “tax season” employees enjoy four day work weeks and the firm has worked to help employees find flexibility in their work day. Implemented in 2022, Hawkins Ash CPAs rolled out a program to aid their professionals who wish to set up space to work from home. Each employee was given a stipend and laptop to ensure remote work is feasible and effortless.

Hawkins Ash CPAs employees are passionate about fostering the next generation of public accounting professionals. The firm’s internship program provides college accounting students the ability to gain the full

public accounting experience close to home while completing their education.

Hawkins Ash CPAs prioritizes the technological needs of its professionals and clients and has empowered the IT department to focus on consistency, timeliness and frontline technologies.

Bob Spencer, IT manager at Hawkins Ash CPAs, said this philosophy “results in the ability to update systems and provide access efficiently, all while minimizing downtime for users. We strive to ensure our professionals focus less on the function of the system and more on serving the needs of our clients.”

To ensure this seamless functionality, the firm embraced a secure cloud-based infrastructure to increase flexibility and to be prepared for any situation that arises in the IT world.

The Hawkins Ash CPAs professionals demonstrate knowledge and share accessible advice through podcasts, short videos, newsletters, articles and training events.

“We strive to keep accounting and tax information easy to understand,” said Corenne Gutierrez, marketing manager. “All this information is found in the CPA-HQ section of our website and on our YouTube channel.”

Learn more about the capabilities of Hawkins Ash CPAs online at www.HawkinsAsh.CPA.



Company:
Hawkins Ash CPAs

Innovation:
Accounting for the future

HawkinsAsh.CPA

New leadership approach turns Gorilla Mill into a national competitor

WMEP’s transformational productivity assessment key to manufacturer’s success



Carbide Grinding-Gorilla Mill was a respected, third-generation company with solid sales, a great product line and a big dream: To go head-to-head with national companies. Fortunately, they knew just where to turn for help: WMEP Manufacturing Solutions, a public-private consulting group focused on helping Wisconsin manufacturers succeed.

An innovative approach to business transformation

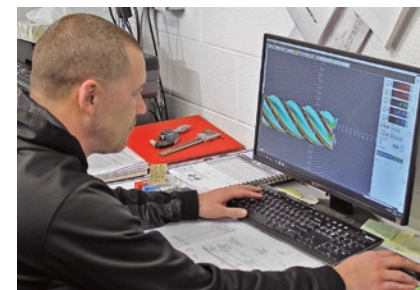
Carbide’s journey began with an enterprise-wide assessment, followed by an integrated, three-element process:

Put the right people in the right seats

“The best operational changes won’t have staying power unless you engage the hearts and minds of your team,” said Carol Crawford, a senior consultant at WMEP.

To make this happen, every Carbide employee completed a Gallup StrengthsFinders assessment.

“I thought I needed to be involved in everything,” said Kevin Cranker, Carbide’s president and owner. “The



minute I started letting go, and other people started to realize from their StrengthFinders assessment what they were good at and enjoyed doing, we put them in those areas. Once we did, things started to turn around.”

Pinpoint opportunities for operational improvements

WMEP analyzed Carbide’s value stream from order entry through product shipment and identified how to streamline and improve each process. As a result, Carbide saw a significant decrease in reworks and scrap and a 33% increase in throughput, capacity and on-time deliveries.

Understand what good looks like

Key performance indicators, or KPIs, were the third element of Carbide’s transformation.

WMEP worked with the leadership team to identify key processes, created an interdependent process map,



and pinpointed leading (future) and lagging (past) KPIs for each. “It’s a collaborative, iterative process to take all the indicators and boil them down to a meaningful few,” said Crawford. “We used the KPIs we agreed on to create a scorecard the leadership team reviews every other week.”

“Honestly, none of us knew what KPIs were,” said Cranker. “But once they were explained to us, we started to think about what is important for our growth and what we needed to do to get known on a national level.”

A real transformation — and an enduring partnership

The results of Carbide’s transformation journey have been impressive on multiple levels. The company has seen a jump in profits — from 3-4% net to around 12% — and 100% growth in sales.

Even more important? The change in attitude.

“I have had people come in here and say, ‘Man, I saw you before. Now,



you guys are a completely different company,” said Cranker. “We’re thinking national; we’re thinking growth, strategic. And everything just runs smoother. There’s no way we could have done that without WMEP.”

“I was leery about a consulting group wanting to change who we are,” Cranker added. “WMEP saw what we were, allowed us to be who we are, but polished us to become better. We have a great future ahead of us, and we are going to continue with WMEP because there’s so much we still need to learn.”



Company: Carbide Grinding-Gorilla Mill

Innovation: WMEP’s transformational productivity assessment

gorillamill.com

Icon Marketing: building industry icons with innovation and ingenuity



The promotional marketing industry has always been rooted in fun and creativity, but innovation and invention have become critical components of success for promotional marketing companies today. Icon Marketing, a top tier promotional products distributor located in Northeast Wisconsin for more than 20 years, has evolved with the changing business landscape to continue to provide value and innovative services to its clients across the United States. Today, Icon Marketing heavily utilizes e-commerce and warehousing technologies with its clients to provide cost-effective solutions to managing brand merchandise. In addition, Icon Marketing leverages its unique leadership position within the industry to offer premium brands and products not offered elsewhere and help its clients stand out in the marketplace.

appreciated beyond the event date. In some cases, individual departments within the same company ordered their own branded merchandise with little regard for corporate brand standards. This led to inefficient purchasing, branded items that did not align with corporate brand standards and items that languished well beyond their useful life only to be thrown away unused.

Icon Marketing was among the first promotional distributors to recognize the power of e-commerce solutions within our industry. From corporate storefronts to gift redemption storefronts to pop-up shops, Icon Marketing helps clients better manage their branded merchandise through targeted e-commerce solutions.

Corporate retail storefronts, designed exclusively for large

shopping experience unique, while also ensuring all elements are brand compliant. These corporate retail storefronts offer many benefits, including streamlined ordering, better inventory management and less waste, even while expanding the product offering.

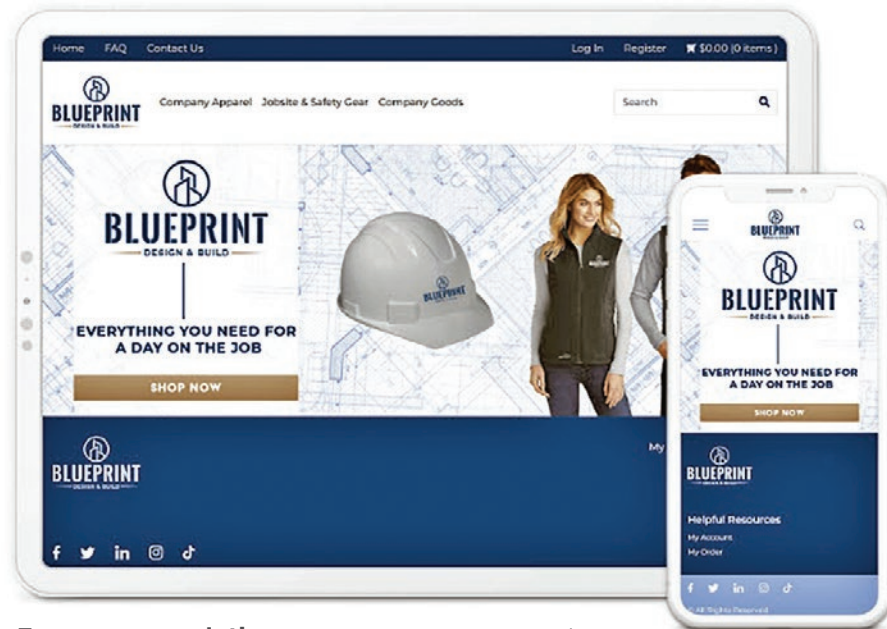
Gift redemption storefronts offer clients a superior way to gift employees, prospects or customers. Gift recipients enter codes to choose their gifts instead of having to make payments. Gift redemption storefronts can offer tiered categories of gifts to truly customize the experience for a large audience. These redemption storefronts offer an elevated way to reward employees for a job well done or to commemorate employee anniversaries or life milestones such as weddings or the birth/adoption of a child.

Pop-up shops are the perfect solution for clients who want to offer their employees a high-impact storefront filled with a limited selection of branded merchandise at a nominal cost. Pop-up shops are perfect for those clients that are not ready for a full company store but want to offer the option to purchase branded merchandise on a short-term basis.

Warehouse technology & fulfillment

Icon Marketing offers a full range of warehousing and fulfillment services to include packing/kitting and bulk shipping, ongoing subscription fulfillment and e-commerce management. This breadth of services is available in part thanks to our state-of-the-art warehouse facility and dedicated warehouse team. We carefully manage inventory and fulfill orders using the latest technology, and we are extremely proud that our order accuracy and fulfillment times often exceed industry standards. Every project, big or small, receives the same careful attention and is double checked for accuracy.

corporate clients, allow for the sale of branded goods internally to employees or externally to the general public. The Icon team works closely with each client on everything from product selection to marketing strategy to store design. These storefronts offer a great deal of customization to truly make the



E-commerce solutions

Just a few short years ago, many corporate marketers managed their promotional product and corporate apparel inventory internally. Branded merchandise was kept in a closet or spare office. Corporate apparel was ordered in bulk and distributed to staff as needed for events with the hopes that it fit or would be



Kits are among our favorite projects to complete and really allow our team to showcase innovative products and packaging. From new hire welcome kits to celebratory gifts, to trade show or event-based gifts, our team works with each client to identify the specific objective for the kit and then makes product and packaging recommendations accordingly to ensure the individual needs of the client are met.

Eco-friendly/retail brands

If there is one thing that is constant within the promotional products industry, it is change — especially product changes. Items such as keychains, can koozies, pens and t-shirts still remain a vibrant part of the promotional products industry

today. While these products are classics and will undoubtedly stand the test of time, there has been a recent movement toward putting an emphasis on quality over price and focusing on sustainability and socially conscious items. Product innovation within the promotional marketing industry looks different today than it did just a few short years ago.

Brands that traditionally were only sold at retail have been entering the promotional products industry in large numbers the past few years. This could be because brand recall can be a challenge for advertisers, while promotional products average an 88% recall rate with consumers. These high recall rates are for “average” promotional products like t-shirts, totes or pens. Imagine how much higher that recall rate

is for a branded premium retail item. Furthermore, consider the life cycle of a promotional product. If customers keep a can koozie for an average of eight months, imagine how much longer they would hold onto a branded Sony speaker, HydroFlask bottle or Brooks Brothers apparel? Clients are

recognizing that they can create very positive brand associations by paying attention to the items on which they promote their brand.

Another innovation within the promotional products industry is a renewed focus on sustainable products and products sourced from socially responsible companies. Last year, sales of sustainable products surged 20% from 2021 figures, and the 2023 projection for sustainable product sales growth is just as robust. Clients continue to demand products that have a minimal effect on the environment. Similarly, 58% of clients today indicate that they are more likely to purchase from (or support) brands that align with their values. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) primarily centers around environmental, ethical/human rights, philanthropic and economic responsibility, and an increasing number of promotional product companies are expanding their product offerings to include items that resonate with this demand.

The promotional products industry has evolved over the past few years as clients continue to demand brand-focused solutions to drive business forward. Icon Marketing has been leading the way with innovative responses to these changing market needs. Every day, Icon Marketing helps customers identify the appropriate branded product portfolio to include retail brands and sustainable products and creates online solutions to better promote and manage our clients’ branded merchandise through a variety of e-commerce solutions. Icon Marketing is building industry icons. 📌



Company: Icon Marketing

Innovation: Managing brand merchandise utilizing e-commerce and warehousing technologies

iconmarketinginc.com



CHAMPIONS OF INNOVATION

CHAMPION SPONSORS



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