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# WE ARE ALL TIRED OF BEING THE BEST KEPT SECRET.

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## BUILDING THE MEP NATIONAL NETWORK BRAND

### WHAT ARE WE DOING?:

#### BUILDING A NATIONAL NETWORK BRAND AND VALUE PROPOSITION

For more than 25 years, MEP has leveraged a national network of world-class resources, top-notch expertise and an unparalleled suite of services for cultivating the growth of small and mid-sized manufacturers. The MEP national network provides a myriad of impacts for U.S. manufacturing, playing a critical role in the growth of the U.S. economy. The **MEP National Network is the only private-public partnership primarily focused on strategically assisting small and medium sized manufacturers, and it's time for us to tell our story.**

Building a cohesive national network brand identity and value proposition will provide opportunities for the national network **to increase awareness, build cohesiveness, strengthen communications, and ultimately enhance the overall performance of the network.**

### WHAT ARE THE KEY DELIVERABLES?

Developing a unified message and vision among the diverse set of voices of the network has to be the foundation of the brand development. This is no small task, there is a lot of due diligence to be done, thoughtfulness, research, and conversations to ensure that **we collectively build it together and choose to go in a direction that encompasses the diversity of the national network** - while allowing the latitude for each center to function within their own framework.

Key Deliverables will include:

- Voice of the Customer / Brand Perception Study
- Brand Promise
- Value Proposition
- Brand Personality, Core Values, Competencies, Aspirations
- Brand Positioning Strategy that embraces multiple stakeholders
- Imagery
- Communications Foundation
- Marketing Plan
- Resources (digital and print), tools, and training to arm Centers to extend and grow.

# WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

**There is a lot of noise about manufacturing, and MEP (national network) gets lost in it.** Whether its inconsistency, confusion and clutter, or lack of brand awareness, we all face the same challenges. In a recent input session, more than seventy five percent of MEP Centers said they want national brand recognition. This is also a client initiative, of the nearly 300,000 small and mid-sized manufacturers in the United States, the MEP national network only served 7,451 last year - a number that has remained flat for 10 years.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Brand recognition becomes critical when you're seeking to create partnerships, when you're seeking other funders, and when you're looking to associate yourself with the industry. A strong brand helps bring greater credibility and trust, and acts as a catalyst for people to want to come to the table.

**Building a cohesive national network brand is critical for long-term survival of the network.** Over the next 10 years we have the ability to establish the MEP National Network as a recognized, valuable, and critical piece of the economic infrastructure. As a network, we must commit to work together to tell our story and demonstrate our vital role in galvanizing American manufacturing and the economy -**so that we can continue to get Presidential, Congressional, State, and local support.**

## WHAT IS THE GOAL?

This brand will be a unified message and vision among the diverse set of voices and should answer two questions: 1) What do we need to do for the National Network to close the gaps and address the needs of each stakeholder; and 2) How do we expand marketing, education, and outreach materials to help build the network? These goals also include, but are not limited to:

- Laying the foundation for and value of the MEP National Network
- Attracting more manufacturers (out of nearly 300,000 U.S. manufacturers, the national network only served 7,451 in 2015)
- Gaining Legislative Recognition
- Empowering Social Impact
- Driving More Business
- Building Trust
- Increasing Efficiencies
- Improving Program Benchmarking
- Increasing Peer-to-Peer Interaction
- Developing Coordinated Marketing
- Enabling Sharing of Knowledge

## WHAT IS A BRAND?

A brand is more than a visual identity: the name, logo, and graphic design. It's an experience. A brand is a name with the power to influence the market. It is the emotional connection between the stakeholder and the organization. It embodies the identity of the organization, encapsulating its mission, values, and distinctive activities.

# MEP BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

In the mid-1980s, the U.S. faced challenges as foreign manufacturing competitors emerged. Congressional debates on trade focused attention on the critical role of technological advances in the competitiveness of individual firms and in 1988, Congress passed the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act establishing the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership, a public-private program geared to assist U.S.-based SMMs in identifying and adopting new technologies.

From its inception, **the program's principal emphasis was on establishing the national network**—making sure there was a center within reach of all the nation's manufacturers and linking those centers to one another so they could learn from and teach each other about how best to work with manufacturers.

The NIST MEP mission is “to enhance the productivity and technological performance of U.S. manufacturing.” The program executes this mission through state and regional centers [that] facilitate and accelerate the transfer of manufacturing technology in partnership with industry, universities and educational institutions, state governments, and NIST and other federal research laboratories and agencies. We are the only private-public partnership dedicated to serving small and mid-sized manufacturers.

## WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS OF THE VALUE CHAIN?

Five categories have been identified and prioritized based on mapping out the stakeholder value chain\*. These categories are defined by their relationship to, or role with the MEP national network.

Stakeholder Category	Type	Ranking
End Users	<input type="checkbox"/> Small and Medium sized U.S. Manufacturers (MEP and Non MEP clients) <input type="checkbox"/> OEM's	1
Service Providers	<input type="checkbox"/> MEP Centers (State, 501C3, 501C4, Universities) <input type="checkbox"/> Third Party Providers <input type="checkbox"/> Sub Recipients <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce Investment Board <input type="checkbox"/> Community Colleges	2
Funders	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Government <input type="checkbox"/> State Government	3
Influencer's	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade Associations <input type="checkbox"/> Advisory Board <input type="checkbox"/> Media <input type="checkbox"/> Government Agencies <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing Community <input type="checkbox"/> Technology based economic development groups	4
Technology Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> NNMI's <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Labs	5

\* Stakeholder Value chain is defined as the whole ecosystem of audiences that work together to create and enhance the value of the MEP National Network

# WHO CAN I CONTACT?

## NIST MEP



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## NIST MEP Steering Committee

- Mark Schmit, Partnerships
- Jose Colucci, System Operations
- Chancy Lyford, Executive Officer
- Gloria Solomon, Center Operations
- Holly Jackson, Manufacturing Policy and Research
- Elena Garuc, FuzeHub, NY MEP Regional Center, [elena@fuzehub.com](mailto:elena@fuzehub.com)

## Industrial Strength Marketing

Founded in 2005, Industrial Strength Marketing is an integrated marketing solutions provider focused on the industrial sector. ISM's industrial marketing solutions ranges from strategic agency of record engagements and turnkey inbound lead generation programs to brand strategy, website development, ecommerce, and integrated marketing campaigns that leverage marketing automation, business intelligence, and award-winning design. ISM also played a vital role in building the Manufacturing Day brand.



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## Brand Council

The Brand Council brings a representation of a diverse range of perspectives across the MEP national network. Their role as an executive level advisor will help enable improved decision making in the development, management and execution of the National Network brand strategy.

- Tom Bugnitz, Manufacturers Edge, Colorado, [tbugnitz@manufacturersedge.com](mailto:tbugnitz@manufacturersedge.com)
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