



# Imprint Engine Powers Forward

*DANIELLE RENDA - FEBRUARY 21, 2019*



The creative forces behind Imprint Engine don't view their customers as "clients"—they see them as strategic partners. The St. Louis Park, Minnesota-based distributor has been growing rapidly—192 percent annual revenue growth between 2015 and 2017—which they attribute to their tech-forward approach and uncompromising dedication to their "partners." "We wanted to create an end-to-end solution for our customers that was a true partner relationship as opposed to a vendor-client relationship," says the company's Zach Sussman. And their efforts are being recognized, having landed big-name clients like Target, Facebook, McDonald's, Delta, Budweiser, Uber and most recently, CBRE.

The company, which was founded in 2012, grew out of a need that was fueled by frustration. Founding partners Travis Veit and Caleb Gilbertson were disappointed by the lack of quality distributors available, so they sought to create their understanding of the "modern" distributor while incorporating their enriched backgrounds in marketing, logistics, technology and procurement. The company added Sussman as a third partner and gradually built a diverse team of enthusiastic employees whose creativity powers Imprint Engine's vision. "Diversity is the biggest driver of our creativity," Sussman says.



*From left: Caleb Gilbertson, Zack Sussman and Travis Veit.*

When presented with an order, the team doesn't simply fulfill and move on—they ask all the right questions. “When a client asks for 10,000 pens, we don't just respond back with a list of pen options, we ask the ‘why’ behind the request,” Sussman says. “‘Who are you giving these pens to? Why pens as opposed to something else? What is the event? We rarely end up selling our clients what they initially ask for. We differentiate by adding value to the process as a marketing partner, not just taking orders.’”

After landing Uber as a client—a relationship Imprint Engine values highly—they worked with Uber Eats to create an alluring influencer campaign based around a direct mail kit. The kit included a customizable TV dinner tray, a set of decals and instructions for each recipient to make the tray their own. When finished, recipients were asked to upload an image to social media for the chance to win a grand prize. “It was exactly the kind of project we love to be involved in, where we can provide our creative input and logistics expertise to help elevate a good idea to great,” he adds.

Imprint Engine is also dedicated to its partnerships with local nonprofits—such as Children's Minnesota, Second Hand Hounds and Tickets for Kids—and helping these organizations maximize their savings using tech-based solutions. “We're huge proponents of supporting nonprofit organizations and giving back to the community that has supported us so generously throughout the years,” he says. “It gives our entire team a sense of purpose to help nonprofits accomplish their goals.” Sussman explains that one of their partners was accustomed to distributing t-shirts to participants of an annual race. With Veit, Gilbertson and Sussman as participants themselves, they knew that many partakers would rather the funds be put toward the organization as opposed to t-shirts. Instead of distributing t-shirts at the most recent race, Imprint Engine built a

custom web store where participants could register online and receive points to shop in the online store. Those interested in purchasing a keepsake were able to select from a series of items, and those who weren't donated the points to the organization. The effort resulted in savings of more than \$30,000. Going forward, the Imprint Engine team will continue to invest in new technologies to provide top results for their partners and help their team evolve along with industry changes, Sussman says. "We view innovation as an opportunity. We believe the industry could use a healthy dose of change and we're excited to be on the forefront of that change."

And they're certainly having fun while doing it. "We're a group of people who love what we do and work seamlessly together to make our partners happy," he says.