



## AWI / Case Study

Vivid Image Customer Success Story



## Family Owned Business

AWI Manufacturing is a second generation family-owned business in Winsted, Minnesota. What started as Art's Welding, grew into AWI Manufacturing with many diversified products and services from stainless steel components for agricultural and dairy products to custom fabrication. Today, AWI has over 40 years of experience in stainless and mild steel manufacturing.

Since 2004, the company has had tremendous growth and expanded from a 30,000 square foot facility to 100,000 square feet and double the staff - now with about 100 employees and two production shifts. But growing into the company they are now wasn't easy. Brent Johnson, VP of Sales and Marketing at AWI Manufacturing since 2004 admits, "It took a long time to get here, but we are finally where we want to be. Now we have the marketing pieces in place and are getting it streamlined. Our marketing keeps evolving and it's doing great things for our company."

*We have a lot of things in place now and the machine is working the process. The key is to figure out that marketing mix. Vivid Image has been instrumental in the process.*

### Playing Marketing Defense or Offense?

As a lifelong learner and entrepreneur himself, Brent knew that AWI had to do more to stand out in the industry. Even though AWI has had their website and email hosting with Vivid Image for over 10 years, their marketing wasn't up to date with the digital world. It wasn't until about two years ago, that Brent started to get excited about some digital marketing initiatives and started a conversation with Cory Dammann, his Account Director at Vivid Image, to see what else they could be doing in their marketing. Brent remembers, "AWI was not going backwards... we were hiring and doing well, but we were not being intentional with our marketing. Our main methods of promoting our products were trade shows, printed brochures, and catalogs. We had a website which was a step in the right direction, but it wasn't as good as it could be. It was like we were more on defense than offense."

*It's very good that Vivid teaches us how to do a lot of things on our own. They are not just doing it for us. The interesting part is that the more we learn, the more we learn that we need help from them.*

**BRENT JOHNSON, VP OF SALES AND MARKETING**

## Letting the Marketing Machine Work the Process

Today, AWI is using multiple ways to promote and scale their business; from bringing in new leads via GoogleAds, and optimizing their website for search engine optimization, to utilizing email marketing and social media. They also improved their online quote request forms and are better documenting the sales process for their staff. All of these tactics have led to more and better qualified leads and quote requests. "We have a lot of things in place now and the machine is working the process. The key is to figure out that marketing mix. Vivid Image has been instrumental in the process."

## Moo-ving the AWI Brand Forward

The company has also re-evaluated their business offerings, brand, and personality. They took a closer look at the two sides of the business; the custom manufacturing that is more locally-based, and the stainless steel products, which is nationwide. They saw big opportunities in growing the stainless steel product side of their business, and developed branding for it. "Now with our branding in place, customers are asking for a product by name, rather than just specing out a part number." To show their friendly personality to people in the agriculture and dairy markets, they have stress ball cows that make fun appearances at trade shows, events, and social media. The custom fabrication is still a huge part of their business, but by having the stainless steel products as part of their offering, they aren't as limited by the short-term projects of the competitive job shop industry.



## Hire a Marketing Person or Agency?

For a while, AWI Manufacturing considered hiring a marketing person internally instead of hiring an agency for marketing help. But it didn't take long for them to realize that Vivid Image could easily fill the roles of one or more marketing people. Brent remarked,

*"Having Vivid Image on our team is the best of both worlds."*

They understand our business like an internal employee would, and we can lean on their team for expertise in so many areas. Even if we hired two marketing people, they probably would not have the depth of knowledge and experience that I get from Vivid. It is hard to have expertise in so many areas."



## Learning Enough to be Dangerous

Brent has a passion for learning, so he loves being able to glean knowledge from the VI team and put it to work. He works together with Vivid to find out where they can best offer support and take weight off his shoulders. "It's very good that Vivid teaches us how to do a lot of things on our own. They are not just doing it for us. The interesting part is that the more we learn, the more we learn that we need help from them." As a dedicated follower to marketing podcasts and blogs, Brent's advice is to keep learning and lean on your experts. "Go out and learn as much as you can from podcasts, YouTube, Udemy, your agency, and Google. You can learn it without understanding it 100%. Then, when you lean on an agency for help, you can be effective with pushing back and asking the right questions."

## Part of the Marketing Team

AWI has found Cory at Vivid Image to be their go-to guy that they know they can count on. "Cory, being our main contact, has been fantastic. It really feels like he is part of our marketing team. He understands our business, is very natural, and he makes our meetings more effective. He definitely goes above and beyond - everyone at Vivid Image that we have dealt with has been awesome."

Want to chat about how Vivid Image can help generate more website traffic, leads, and sales for your business?

**Contact us to get started!**

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