

JANUARY 2017

# BRAND MAKEOVERS



MARKETING  
*in the*  
MICROSOFT DYNAMICS COMMUNITY

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC...

# BRAND MAKEOVERS

Articles about rebranding talk a lot about emotion and how people either **love or hate** the new company look, product direction, or bold commercials. As dramatic as **Business to Consumer (B2C) marketing** can be, it is easy to get caught up in the push and pull of it all.

**Business to Business (B2B) marketing** is not as concerned about making an impression with a rebrand; rather, they want it to more **clearly convey** who they are as a company.

Our world of technology is changing faster than ever. Who these companies are is evolving just as quickly to **meet the demands** of technology users and businesses.

Whether branching off into a new market or **simply clarifying** their value proposition with current customers, these **Microsoft Dynamics Partners** share their challenges and successes in this report.



TOM DORAN

Innovia Consulting

# Challenge: Rebranding from the Ground Up

Innovia Consulting was once ABC Computers, and although ABC Computers was well established, they were experiencing difficulty in recruiting new staff. After bringing in consultants to figure out the problem, they realized ABC Computers no longer represented what they did. Tom Doran, Customer Engagement Director, explains, “Once we peeled back the onion, there were a lot of other areas that our name didn’t represent.”

The very nature of IT has changed since Innovia’s inception in 1984. “Back then, computers were hip and cool. Today the word ‘computer’ is dated so when someone saw the name, ABC Computers, it didn’t represent what we want them to think and feel about our company,” Tom continues.

**“With the rebrand, we want to convey innovation and confidence. We strive to be and continue to be people you can depend on, and the new name and brand portray that much better than before.”**

It was no easy task, to say the least. With a new name and look, everything from the ground up had to be updated, including every single document as well as a total redesign of the website. Tom recalls, “I think, in total, we had to update about 1,200 items, and it took us nine months.”

They launched the rebrand at User Group Summit 2015 and have since been very pleased with feedback on their new name. “It has helped in various areas, and our name no longer hurts us,” Tom says.

The challenges they’ve experienced have been more to do with the technical nature of their website. Innovia hired an external consultant agency to handle the entire rebranding project, which included their website, but the consultants did not specialize in web development. Tom shares, “It made total sense to go with the same company for the whole project, but we have experienced enormous challenges in basic functionality of our new website, and this particular agency wasn’t up to the job. We’re still paying for it today.” Looking back, Tom would have separated that work and employed an actual web-development company.

Rebranding has also helped Innovia transition with the launch of Dynamics 365. “Rebranding has provided us with the skillset to set up for major product releases,” Tom concludes. “We’re much more flexible during this big moment of change on Microsoft’s side.”





STEVE DWYER

## WithoutWire Inventory Sciences

# Challenge: Maintaining Brand Equity While Extending to a More Focused Message and Go-To-Market Strategy

While Appolis, meaning “city of applications,” was a very fitting name for Appolis’ past work, they wanted a name more fitting and reflective of the future products and technology that described how they enable their clients’ strategies for mobility.

Knowing customers’ buying habits when purchasing software solutions is changing, and given Appolis was planning to launch its new “Use-it-Free” go-to-market strategy that enabled users to try a full version of their software before making a purchase meant the timing for re-branding was ideal!

For these two reasons, Appolis started the process of re-branding with an improved name and look, now known as WithoutWire Inventory Sciences.

They started the process back in December 2015 by hiring a vendor to assist with everything from go-to-market and sales generation to driving search engine optimization (SEO). The rebrand effort of changing the look, logo, and messaging took a little over six months, but Steve Dwyer, VP of Sales and Marketing, shares it’s an ongoing project. “The biggest challenge to date has been maintaining the brand equity we’ve established over the past 15 years. We’re not running from something. Appolis was a good brand, logo, and message, but our plan was to maintain our brand equity while extending to our more focused target market.” Steve continues, “Our goal is for clients to understand who we were and how we will continue to anticipate their mobility needs for the future.”

To make that permanent transition, Steve and his marketing team have co-logged their listings in places like The List and The ERP Software Blog. They also consistently send out monthly messaging stating, “formerly Appolis, now WithoutWire” to help bridge that concept with customers and prospects.

This isn’t Steve’s first rodeo in the world of re-branding. Twenty years ago, he was an integral part of moving the 3M brand to Imation and during that time, the shift was very gradual. “Today, we have to be much more aggressive and decisive in our messaging to make the concept stick as we establish customer mindshare. Repetition is essential in bridging to our new company brand.”

Bridging the brands is one challenge, but bridging their websites and living online documents was another piece that has caused a few hiccups along the way. Not only did WithoutWire launch a new website, they were changing the way people

## EVOLUTION OF A *brand*

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came to their website, including redirects from old website links. “There was a definite loss of the traditional way people found us,” Steve shares. “We updated, rewrote blogs, and redirected as much as possible, but some of it is simply lost momentum in terms of SEO.”

This prompted Steve’s first knowledge of “Google slap”, which is essentially a penalty for changing something you were gaining momentum on. “You get points if people are clicking on your blog posts, but when you change your website with new terms, you have to in some ways start over,” Steve explains. Google slap was created to punish advertisers trying to send people who click their ad to a page that is not related, is poor in quality, or even loads too slowly. Read more about Google slap and how to avoid it here:

**[blog.iweb.com/en/2010/05/what-is-the-google-slap-and-how-to-avoid-it/4237.html](http://blog.iweb.com/en/2010/05/what-is-the-google-slap-and-how-to-avoid-it/4237.html)**

In WithoutWire’s effort of focusing on their new go-to-market strategy of “Use-it-Free,” Steve and his team highlighted the immediate experience of using their system in minutes and really lowlighted the “contact us” form on the new website. “The contact us form was much easier to use on our old website, and we overlooked that. If you’re re-branding, make sure to clearly recognize what was working well in the past and bridge that into moving forward,” Steve advises. “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.”

Despite that little oversight, WithoutWire is seeing benefits internally and with existing customers across the board. The branding change is almost overlooked because of the new go-to-market experience. “Our prospects are now so engaged with us, it hardly even matters that our name changed. There is so much new excitement, and immediate engagement, that it stands on its own,” Steve shares.

The marketing and sales cycle is really falling into place today for WithoutWire. They’re seeing evidence of quality prospects that come prepared to talk about their solution and experience it. Steve explains, “Rather than having me present to their executive management, in many cases my prospects are presenting our solution themselves to management and overcoming their own internal objections – this has definitely shortened our sales cycle!”



NATALIE ARMSTRONG

Encore

# Challenge: Piecing Together a Fragmented, yet Growing, Brand

Encore has experienced an eventful four years, acquiring two companies, tripling their team size, as well as adding new product lines such as Microsoft Dynamics NAV, Power BI, and an entire cloud practice. Natalie Armstrong, VP of corporate communications, knew the time for a re-brand was looming, but it wasn't until she chatted with an Australian Partner/customer of Encore's that she realized the time had come. "He mentioned that the experience we'd given and the professionalism by which we operate is far higher than what comes across online," Natalie shares. "It was my lightbulb moment. Our business had become so complex, and things were so out of sync, that we needed a refresh."

In September 2015, marketing budget and support began to fall into place for a re-brand. The teams at Encore underwent a complete "self-exploration" to find the new tone of their company. Natalie explains, "We have undergone a ton of changes in a short timeframe and had kept tacking different things onto our brand. It was fragmented and didn't match the realities of Encore today. So we took time to analyze our company culture, team dynamic and customer experience, and gather requirements to make sure our re-brand would match the tone of our company."

The exploration stage took longer than Natalie thought it would, but they hired a great company from Vancouver with strong roots to Winnipeg (same locations as Encore) to help "save them from themselves". Making a dramatic change like this re-brand is an emotional one. That emotion came into play especially during their logo change. "Our logo meant a lot. It was a difficult change to make because it was who we have been for so long," Natalie explains. After a number of unveilings and bringing in different opinions, Encore came to a decision, making sure to highlight the "E", which was significant with their legacy.

A year later, Encore was ready to launch their bold new look at User Group Summit in Tampa. "It came down to celebrating our legacy while exploring what's next for Encore. We hope this rebrand will encapsulate that success and show it in a bold new way," Natalie shares. While focusing on this, Encore realized that their secret sauce has been their people. Everything from their website to proposals captures the fun and personal feel of their team with their new brand now in place.



Encore  
Business Solutions



encore

## NUGGETS OF *advice*

Natalie recommends surrounding yourself with the right people, especially when it comes to your website. “SEO is an ongoing art. It is no longer possible to have people teach us so we can manage it,” she says. “We have money set aside to consult with SEO firms. In that area, we take our own advice that we give customers and admit we can’t do it alone.”

Encore’s website URL ([encorebusiness.com](http://encorebusiness.com)) remains the same, but everything on that website has been updated. The website is now a lead generation machine, creating a connection with prospects online before they even pick up the phone to talk with Encore. “Back in the day, we knew everyone coming to us. Today, the sales cycle has changed, and there are so many more people coming to learn about us that we don’t know who they are or where they come from,” Natalie says. “Now, our website is a 24/7 storefront that we can be proud of.”

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Today, Encore is seeing amazing results. They were told to expect at least six weeks for website traffic to stabilize, but they were seeing better traffic and more quality leads in just three weeks. “We used to average about one sales qualified lead every three days, and now we’re averaging one every two days,” Natalie shares. Since it’s still early, they expect that to continue to increase.

Not only are they improving revenue margins, but Encore has also internally benefitted from the entire branding experience. Natalie explains, “It really gave us something to celebrate and a good reason to reconnect everyone. The entire team loved being part of the process, and now that our look actually represents how we do business, it’s rejuvenated us as a team.”



ROCHELLE COLEMAN

## Concerto Cloud

# Challenge: Achieving Complete Brand Separation

The concept of Concerto Cloud Services began at Tribridge nearly 10 years ago. After offering managed services for applications and infrastructure, Tribridge executives recognized the growing cloud trends and the vast market opportunity to help customers quickly embrace the cloud. In 2011, Tribridge launched its fully managed private cloud under the name Concerto Cloud Services.

Tribridge spent multiple years analyzing, researching, and interviewing customers before putting together the business strategy and plan that would eventually become Concerto. And by taking the time to grow a new offering internally before branching out a separate brand, Concerto in its own right is now a unique (and successful) brand in the cloud services provider market.

Rochelle Coleman, director of Partner strategy and marketing, shares, “We realized that to ensure our cloud business was meeting the market demand, having Concerto Cloud Services as its own brand was essential for fueling growth.”

Concerto has now been operating independently of Tribridge for nearly three years and is recognizing the benefits of having a standalone brand. Rochelle explains, “Brand separation has given us greater flexibility with our customers and Partners, allowing us to drive innovation focused solely on being cloud experts every day. Tribridge is a valued Partner of Concerto, and we’ve been able to build a broad ecosystem of partnerships who serve many markets and industries.”

For other companies deciding whether to branch off into a separate brand to provide value, Rochelle shares these three pieces of advice:

1. Developing a brand is not just about a shiny new logo. It comes with a defined personality, holds key values, and penetrates throughout the organization and out to your customers. Be clear that these values are enough of a differentiator to warrant the creation of a separate brand.
2. Make sure to focus on internal change management with any re-brand. What do your team members think of your brand? Implement that culture into the re-branding process every step of the way.
3. Finally, make sure the economic model works for you. Branching off is a calculated risk. Does it make financial sense to separate the books? Think all of that through before you go down the path of developing a unique brand.





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