

MEMBER FEATURE



Powell Fabrication & Manufacturing LLC

St. Louis, MI

Who is Powell?

Powell is a manufacturer specializing in the design/build of custom chemical processing technology, including chemical production systems, complementing process components, and safety solutions.

- ★ 2017-2019: *Central Michigan Manufacturers Association Safety Award*
2017, 2018: *Safety MVP*
2019: *No Lost Time Injuries*
- ★ 2021: *John G. Thodis Michigan Manufacturer of the Year – Small Tier* awarded by the *Michigan Manufacturers Association*

About Powell Fabrication & Manufacturing LLC

Number of Michigan employees

41

What are some of the products that your chemistry enables?

- Sodium Hypochlorite (Bleach)
 - Approximately 80% of North America's Bleach production is done using Powell Technology.
 - Powell technology is present in 40+ countries, and on every continent (except Antarctica).
- Other liquid chemical production, typically in the water treatment, cleaner/disinfectant, oil/gas, food/health/beauty industries, and more.



What is something interesting or unique about the site or its history?

Powell has a rich history. In 1964, Dow Chemical (now DOW) sold chlorine and caustic, with some of it being sold to bleach manufacturers. To improve the chlorine and caustic sales, Dow Chemical wanted to create a continuous bleach production process they could give to chlorine and caustic contract customers.

During this time, Powell (operating under the ownership of Clarence and Evelyn Powell) was used as a contract manufacturer. Later, in the early 1970's, Dow Chemical decided to discontinue the chlorine and caustic contracts,

allowing Powell to continue manufacturing the skids for sale to other companies. Duane Powell, son of Clarence and Evelyn, joined the company after college and expanded Powell's product offering to include a complete product line for sodium hypochlorite production, including scrubbers, valve closures, and eventually, blending and dilution systems.

When Duane passed away in 2016, ownership transferred to his three direct reports, Brent Hardman, Norm Winterstein, and Robert Bebow who have continued to lead Powell successfully.



What are some notable community involvement or support initiatives?

Powell is committed to the growth and prosperity of the Central Michigan and Great Lakes Bay Regions. Focused on creating educational and employment opportunities, Powell actively participates in initiatives to strengthen the local manufacturing talent pool while providing opportunities that attract and keep talented professionals in the area. These initiatives include:

- Supporting area STEM initiatives by donating to the Hemlock Public School District's Lockwood STEM and Robotics Center, a facility where students can practice robotics in a regulation-sized arena.
- Partnering with the Gratiot-Isabella RESD on several initiatives, including the production of a video showing area manufacturing facilities and opportunities to high school students.
- Providing opportunities for area high school students, including participating in area school career fairs supporting several area schools, and hosting a co-op program for high school students enrolled in the Gratiot-Isabella RESD Mechatronics program.
- Ensuring college students gain real-world experience by sponsoring a Central Michigan University Manufacturing project and offering college co-op and internships, often providing full-time employment opportunities at the close of the program.



Powell also supports the community by encouraging employees to serve on the Community Committee, an internal team that supports various philanthropic efforts such as:

- St. Louis Sharks Technology Fund
- Habitat for Humanity
- Lane Walker Foundation
- American Cancer Society
- United Way

Feature Questions

What are some innovations the company has made to improve performance, safety, etc?

- For Powell Clients:
 - Powell has diversified the line of products and services, incorporating systems that boost overall efficiency and safety to chemical processors.
 - To meet the demand for remote monitoring, Powell developed Powell Data Solutions™, a highly efficient cloud-based Industry 4.0 IIoT (Industrial Internet of Things) platform that captures real-time data from production equipment and transforms it into easy-to-read dashboards that can be accessed anytime, from any device.
- Internally
 - Powell Leveraged Lean Six Sigma to improve processes across every department of the business while committing to the continuous improvement of new processes.



How has the company worked to improve its sustainability performance?

The chemical processing equipment produced by Powell is designed to reduce overall waste and eliminate toxic chemical releases. For example, Powell sodium hypochlorite technology has the unique ability to recycle water, ultimately reducing the total amount of water wasted by the chemical plant.

In addition, Powell manufactures scrubber systems that neutralize and contain leaked chemicals, as well as Valve Closure systems that ensure harmful chemicals, such as chlorine, do not escape their storage containers.

How has the company or site worked to develop and elevate new and diverse talent?

- Powell transformed the company culture from manager-driven to a leadership-driven organization that empowers individuals and teams. As part of this, company leadership developed the Powell Principles (Resilient Curiosity, Assist Leader, Do the Right Thing, and Humble Confidence), which guide the hiring process and set the tone for company culture.

- Powell actively places emphasis on the continuous professional development of employees, including offering a tuition reimbursement benefit and education/training budget for each department.

- Powell embraced the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS), which is a proven set of tools that synchronize how people in the organization meet, solve problems, plan, prioritize, measure, structure, lead, and manage.





Member Feature

Brent Hardman

CEO

Your Professional Achievements or Recognition

Brent has served in several professional, community, and philanthropic organizations throughout the years, and continues to do so as CEO of Powell. Below is a synopsis of Brent's past and current involvement in different organizations:

- The Chlorine Institute
 - Technical presentations detailing technology improvements and updated production and safety standards.
 - Pamphlet creation and review. Pamphlets are 10-100+ page guidance documents that detail chemical properties, safe handling, use, and transport, and are used to formulate industry standards and best practices.
- Central Michigan Manufacturing Association
 - Board
 - Co-Chair of Executive Roundtable Special Interest Group
 - Education Special Interest Group
 - Best Practices Tour Host
 - Hosted Creation of Safety SIG Video

What led you to your current career field?

Brent began his career at Powell as a high school co-op. He later began working full-time in the CAD department, earned his Professional Engineer (PE) license and MBA, and advanced within Powell to CEO.

Brent has always had a passion for leadership, with a personal motto of, "leaving everything better than how you found it". His commitment to education, mentorship, and advancing the chemical industry has profoundly impacted the lives of Powell employees, community members, and industry professionals.



What do you like most about living in Michigan or your community?

As someone who was raised and continues to live in Central Michigan, Brent enjoys living in a tight-knit community and loves that you can be virtually anywhere in Michigan within a couple hours.

Brent enjoys Michigan's four seasons and takes advantage of any chance to get outdoors. He and his family enjoy summer weekends in Leelanau, University of Michigan football in the fall, and travel sports in between.

How do you think your job will be most different in 10 years?

The chemical industry itself is changing by seeking greater efficiencies, especially along the lines of technology and in labor reliance.

The most powerful trends are:

- Increased automation
- Remote monitoring
- Decreased reliance on employees as labor costs increase and staffing remains challenging



Why do you work with industry groups like the MCC?

It's important to work with groups like MCC to advance the entire industry. Sharing best practices, challenges, successes, ideas, and resources with other Michigan companies in the chemistry space is essential in making chemical handling safer and more efficient.

