

## Dick Maggiore: Johnson Controls-Hall of Fame deal is brand-building genius

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Agreement announced Nov. 18 becomes day when excellence met excellence in Stark County.

By Dick MaggioreSpecial to The Canton Repository

Chances are, most readers of The Canton Repository hadn't formed much of an image about the Johnson Controls brand before last week, but that most certainly will change soon.

Milwaukee-based Johnson Controls, reporter Todd Porter wrote last week, "might be the biggest company you've never heard of." Porter nailed it. That is exactly the point of today's column.

Johnson Controls and our Pro Football Hall of Fame are now partners for at least 18 years in the ambitious \$600 million Hall of Fame Village, thanks to a naming rights deal they announced Nov. 18 that will deliver more than \$100 million to the Village.

With dollar signs flying like leaves in the November wind, it's easy to be impressed by the magnitude of the deal. Hall of Fame President David Baker described it as 1 plus 1 equals 10.

Baker's analogy is right on, and not merely because of the huge investment it will bring to build and promote Hall of Fame Village. The Johnson Controls deal is a win for the corporation, the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Stark County and its

people, the National Football League and its global audience, and all who will some day visit, work, play, get well or even live in the Hall of Fame Village development.

Companies like Johnson Controls have many obligations — to their customers, shareholders, employees and communities. To meet those obligations, they need to continue to grow the value of their brands. Without growth, they will fall behind. This new partnership is a tremendous opportunity to grow the brand.

You might not have known Johnson Controls prior to Nov. 18, but it certainly is not an unheard-of entity. Its work in creating and executing building-efficiency technologies is world-renowned. Johnson Controls is the go-to resource when businesses and institutions want to make their buildings smarter, safer, more secure, more comfortable and more efficient.

While it is well known in the business-to- business world, Johnson Controls is hardly a household name. There is a huge benefit to reversing that situation. Recognizing this, CEO Alex Molinaroli and his staff decided to find a way to elevate their brand in the minds of more people.

Fortunately for Stark County, they found Baker, the Pro Football Hall of Fame and Hall of Fame Village, and master developer Stuart Lichter.

Molinaroli's decision to come to Canton is the most recent example of a business principle I have long touted: The No. 1 job of the CEO is to grow his or her brand. I believe so strongly in that principle that I focused on it directly in my 2009 book "The CEO's Number One Responsibility: Identifying and Articulating Your Brand's Position." Johnson Control's CEO is doing exactly that — in a very decisive manner.

As the specialist in building-efficiency technologies, Johnson Controls, by virtue of its partnership with the Pro Football Hall of Fame, will showcase for the world all of its amazing capabilities and executions. What's more, it selected the perfect partner and now will become indelibly linked to the HOF's "excellence" position.

Johnson Controls will benefit, the HOF will benefit, and certainly Stark County will benefit. Johnson Controls now has a springboard to get its name in front of millions of consumers, especially NFL fans (and they are legion here in the U.S.

and around the world), including its business-to- business prospects and customers.

The partnership will result in magnificent branding opportunities: the Johnson Controls Hall of Fame Village, the Enshrinement Weekend Powered by Johnson Controls and Johnson Controls Hall of Fame Experience.

All who come to Canton will see and experience the excellence that Johnson Controls adds to our lives. The partnership will result in construction of the first sports and entertainment "smart city." From a marketing perspective, the Nov. 18 announcement of the Pro Football Hall of Fame and Johnson Control alliance was a landmark moment. It's safe to say that no place in the world other than Canton will corporate leaders be able to see and experience all that Johnson Controls can deliver.

Put another way, Nov. 18 was the day when excellence met excellence.

*Dick Maggiore is president and CEO of **Innis Maggiore**, founded in Canton in 1974 and today the nation's leading positioning agency, building strong brands for companies in competitive markets here and across the country.*