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White Paper

The Impact Study

For the past several years, the Toasters have put together an amalgamation of the outreach and events their team does for the community in a growing dossier dubbed the “Impact Study.” Unsurprisingly, this Impact Study is fairly important to the team, especially the Chairman’s subject, and knowing how to create one, why it is important, and the legacy it leads can be a deciding factor in how a team carries on.

What is it?

In essence, the definition of the impact study is as stated above, but more goes into it than that. It includes a list of benefactors of both money and time, giving them their recognition and thanks. It includes the team’s vision for the future and all of their submitted materials, such as essays and the business plan. Creating this allows the team to have a comprehensive collection of their history and plans for the future, as well as everything that is essential to have in order to compete for the Chairman’s award.

Impact Study



"Giving our goals a path to success."

Why is it important?

Going off of what it is, the impact study is important both because of the information inside of it, and what it can mean for the team. For one, it certainly looks impressive to have all of your team's essential outreach in one area. This details, in one specific place, the relevant things your team has completed: an easy guide. Having everything in one place is integral to passing down information. A huge part of the Toasters is keeping the flow of information going, from veteran to rookie, senior to underclassmen, so that even if someone leaves or graduates, the team is not stunted in that area of expertise. Having to sort through binders and online folders to find all the information of past seasons is not conducive to passing down information; it's only a deterrent. For years, Chairman's has used the previous year's impact study to craft their new one, and to leaf through pages and find old ideas for outreach that the team can continue, and to see in which areas the team is lacking in order to pick up that slack.

Thank You to The Mentors!



Kathy LeFevre

1st Year Mentor
Substitute Teacher
Stay at Home Mom
Chairman's



Carl Grolle Sr

3rd Year Mentor
Golden Refrigerant Reclaim
Business Owner and Management



Ryan Baldi

2nd Year Mentor
Pratt and Miller
Motor Sports Engineering

(Giving thanks)

Furthermore, it can help the team stay organized. Similar to passing down information, keeping everything in one place can stay the oncoming chaos that occurs during the busy build season. We can refer to a page, saying “oh, if you’re curious on FiM Badges, it on page such and such!” and team members are easily able to find what they are looking for. Recently, we took a different take on the impact study, taking all of the pages and compiling them into one document, instead of several. Then, we had the entirety of it bound. Taking this new approach furthered how organized the Toasters are. Having it bound allowed the impact study to look more approachable than a large binder full of loose pages, and keeps everything nicer to look through.

In regard to competition, the impact study is also a wonderful resource. Competitions can be broken down into a few key parts:

- The robot performance
- Pit scouting
- Chairman’s and other related awards
- Pit judges

- Team to team awards

Robot Performance

The robot performance is something the build / drive teams work and prepare for all season-- their machines (lathes, drills, CNCs, etc), materials, and practices are to those teams the same way the impact study is a tool towards the team's performance in chairman's and other related areas at competition.

Pit Scouting

Just as surely as drive teams walk pit to pit asking questions about what the robot can do, there are chairman's teams that do the same and want to know what activities a team does. Since pits are generally smaller spaces, being able to have all the information in one place is great. Also, it is nice to have the ability to share a broad overview of the material the team without worrying about oversharing to a team or not remembering information in the moment. In the past, teams have been stunned with what the Toasters do. Their outreach is made even more impressive when presented in such a cool format.

Chairman's and Other Related Awards

Part of the selection process for important awards is giving a presentation to a panel of judges. In this regard, the presentation team is required to give the judges information in the form of a oral speech, but are allowed to exemplify this information with written materials for the judges to parse through. The impact study contains additional information that wasn't necessarily important enough to be in the speech, but may help in the selection process. We typically make the pages we want to be

noticed labeled or tabbed in some way for the judges to find the information easily. Every small thing counts.

Pit Judges

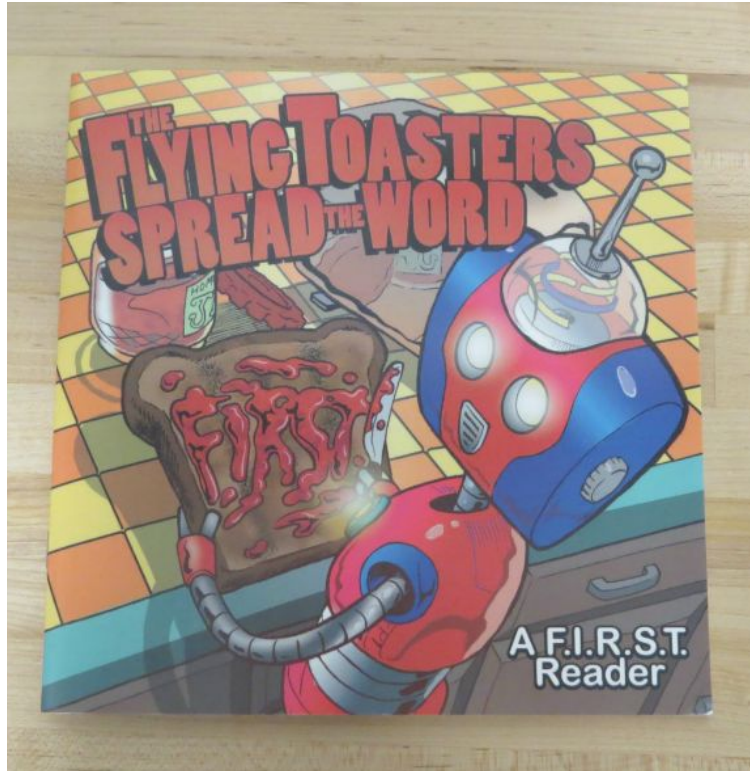
Judges will come to the pits during competitions to ask similar questions that the presentation team faces in their interview. Akin to the student scouts, the benefit of having the information easily accessible for anyone on the team makes a better impression. It allows anyone to answer the questions, as information is available and not relegated the memories of a select few.

Team to Team Awards

Though they may not be as important to a team as FIRST given awards, an award from another team can still be important in further team to team relations. Sharing and expressing a love for outreach, volunteering, and spreading the message of STEAM through the community is something that is detailed in the impact study and would be something another team would admire.



(Pumpkinfest, Families Building Faith, and Girl Scout Night outreaches included in the impact study)



(Some important outreach events that would be included: children's book, Bloomfield Girls competition, Maxey Boys Outreach)

How is it crafted?

A lot of work goes into a final edition of that year's impact study. Having a previous year's example to go off makes the process easier, as much of the information can be reused.

Updating Last Year's

The process mainly starts off as updating last year's product: changing the theme, taking out things that no longer apply, and changing dates so that you aren't handing off a product that says "Last year, during the 2012 game..." when it's 2017. The Chairman's award also specifies that anything older than five years will not be considered, so taking out old topics is part of the process as well.

In updating the previous year's impact study, changes to the style of writing or correcting missed errors comes up. This year, the Toasters switched from first person to third to keep it more formal and uniform throughout the impact study, a change in style from previous years.

Adding in New Pages

Each year, there should be something new going on in the team. This requires drafting new pages for the impact study. Much of this is writing up a small summary of the task, finding the correct section to put it under, and adding a classy and relevant photo to the page as well.



(Examples of new pages for this year: Crumble Rumble and Assisting FRC teams during 2018 Detroit Worlds)

Looking for Consistency and Organization

After all the pages are crafted, someone has to go through and read them. This ensures that the font, the perspective, the theme, etc., is the same throughout. If someone, such as judge, were to flip through it, would the pages all follow a similar theme? If they were to read it, does it all flow together?

These are some questions to consider. Organization is key as well. There is a table of contents at the beginning that categorizing the pages into sections (i.e building the robot, spreading the message of FIRST). We have to double check that the progressions of these sections make sense, and that the information and pages within are in the correct section. To be easy to find the information, it has to be placed in a logical place.

Editing

Any good product goes through some sort of review or editing process. That is the same here: grammatical errors, incorrect information, or misleading information needs to be taken out or rewritten so that the impact study is kept professional and informative.

Binding

This year the Toasters looked into binding the impact study into an actual book. This was a reasonable thought, as the impact study can reach 65+ pages. It was previously organized into a binder, but it was decided that it would look more professional (and frankly, lighter and easier to carry about) as a bound book. After some research, I decided on blurb, a website that allowed us to have a professional looking, glossy paged, hardcover copy of the impact study for relatively cheap. This proved impressive to several other teams and even judges.

blurb

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(Example of the site used to bind book)

Updating the Information

Turns out, new opportunities can come during competition season! This year, new pages were added and a new book had to be ordered after the first competition and before States. Due to the cost of the book, this was doable, and helped the team's case during the State competition.

Its Legacy

This ties into why the impact study is important. Having a copy for future members to look back on is highly crucial. Without last year's impact study, crafting one for this year would have been immeasurably harder and without the information from several years ago written down, none of the current members would have known about it. Having a copy can provide a resource to reference, base new product off of, and to dislodge creativity in thinking of new opportunities.

The impact study is more than just an impressive looking book or a scarily-packed binder, but a pathway to the future, and a bridge to the past. It is a large part of competitions, awards, and planning events for both outreach and team advancement. It logs the team's history and allows for improvement.

Works Cited

2017 Impact Study by The Flying Toasters

Blurb.com