

SPECIAL REPORT:
2013 MICHIGAN
SOCIAL MEDIA
BRAND INDEX



The Social Network

Our second annual Michigan Social Index, where 50 state-based companies primarily serving consumer markets are rated on their annual Web presence, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and forums. **BY TOM MURRAY | ILLUSTRATION BY JACQUI OAKLEY**

The new marketing slogan from a Michigan entrepreneur was simple and straightforward: “Wednesday is ‘Wink Day’ in New York.” On that designated day, homemakers in the city were encouraged to stop at their favorite grocer, look them in the eye, and then wink — knowing only that something would be conveyed in return.

What they got was a free box of corn flakes with each wink. The campaign took place in the summer of 1907, and the idea sprung from an enterprising food purveyor in Battle Creek named Will Keith Kellogg, who was determined to prove to all naysayers that his new breakfast food idea was viable. The only way to do that was to win over all those housewives in the big city.

Let’s just say the Kellogg’s ‘Wink Day’ concept was effective. Within a year, the entrepreneur was shipping multiple trainloads of Kellogg’s Corn Flakes to New York City on a monthly basis. Soon, his last name became a household word across the nation.

Fast-forward to today and it’s clear that the founder’s innovative and creative spirit still prevails at Kellogg, as it is the top company among 50 major brands that comprise the Michigan Social Media Brand Index. Tabulated for the second straight year by Livonia-based Market Strategies International, the purpose of the Index is to provide an objective and comprehensive view of how various top brands performed in social media for a 12-month period.

“We’ve been doing forms of social marketing since the day the company was founded,” says Jon Suarez-Davis, Kellogg’s vice president of global digital strategy. “At the time, the ‘Wink’

campaign was considered very progressive — but it’s no different than 2013, where we are very relevant.” For instance, when the time came for Kellogg’s to introduce its peanut butter Pop-Tarts to the marketplace, the focus was on engaging teens and college-aged students over the new product.

“We dropped a massive case of peanut butter Pop-Tarts on the campus of the University of New Hampshire, and then we had a whole bunch of students tweet and go on Facebook and talk about (trying to find) it. Next we (told students) to access this crate, send a photo to *foundit*, and that started a rich dialogue with them. So it was about the food, and the content, and the experience that we can create.”

That engagement strategy helped propel Kellogg’s to the top of the Brand Index, says Erin Leedy, Market Strategies’ lead researcher for the project. “Part of what’s really driving Kellogg is

the sponsored presence — in particular the Facebook numbers, which are three times Ford's numbers, the next highest in terms of people liking or connecting with the brand in some way," she says.

Social media marketers at Kellogg utilize the medium to determine almost immediately what their consumers like or, more importantly, don't like. "We've always had focus groups, for decades and decades," Suarez-Davis says. "Ten years ago it took many, many weeks, if not months, to get those results back into the system. Today we have literally crunched that timeline down to 48 or 72 hours."

The Detroit Pistons, with their No. 8 ranking on the list, would seem to belie their recent record of futility on the basketball court: five straight losing seasons, four straight years out of the playoffs, and not one playoff series victory since their loss in the NBA finals in 2005. But Dennis Mannion, CEO of Palace Sports and Entertainment in Auburn Hills, says the advent of social media offers tangible evidence that the win-loss record of a team is obsolete, if not irrelevant, when it comes to marketing the brand.

"Back in the '80s, you'd market a team one way for every fan from age 8 to 80 — this is our team, these are our tickets — and you'd go by wins and losses," he says. "Today our philosophy is built on the three M's — media, memories, and merchandising. You can slice and dice men, women, kids, businesspeople, corporate versus consumers. The idea is to get into that database and do a deeper and deeper dive on the clusters within the clusters of your fan base."

Spearheading that effort is Mike Donnay, the team's senior director of brand networks, who utilizes a social analytics platform called Radian6 to gain valuable insight into all viral conversations — not just on the Pistons platforms, but across the entire Internet.

"In real time, we can start to see the volume of conversations," Donnay explained, "and we measure it on an event-by-event basis so we can say, 'OK, here's the key performer, here's who our fan base is really talking about.' So imagine a small little blog that's out there, maybe they're highly influential. We can actually pinpoint them, which allows us to start developing their social syndication strategy and reaching out to them."

The upshot of Radian6 and other innovative social tools utilized by Donnay and his team has produced impressive results: More than 150 percent growth on Twitter, from 40,000 to 160,000 followers, along with the projection that by Labor Day the team's Facebook "likes" will reach 500,000 — an increase of 100,000 in the last year alone.

"Over the past year, we've doubled our social

2013 Michigan Social Media Brand Index

MORE AND MORE COMPANIES are using social media to increase their market presence and to engage existing and new customers. How are they doing? For the second year, Market Strategies International in Livonia has ranked 50 Michigan companies (among the 200 largest public/private companies), as well as the Big Three automakers, on how well they performed in social media from the second half of 2012 through the first half of 2013.

The Index measures social media interactions — both consumer-generated social media as well as the brands' sponsored content — and net sentiment, which represents the ratio of positive and negative feelings expressed about a brand based on posts, comments, and mentions collected from millions of social media sources including Facebook profiles, Twitter accounts, YouTube, blogs, and forums.

RANK	BRAND	NET SENTIMENT	SPONSORED PRESENCE		
					
1.	Kellogg Co.	▲	▲		
2.	Domino's Pizza Inc.	▼	▲	▲	▲
3.	Carhartt		▲		▲
4.	Detroit Tigers		▲	▲	▼
5.	Detroit Red Wings		▲	▲	▲
6.	Little Caesars Pizza		▲		▲
7.	Detroit Lions		▲	▲	
8.	Detroit Pistons		▲	▲	▲
9.	Whirlpool Corp.			▲	▲
10.	Herman Miller	▲		▲	▲
11.	La-Z-Boy Inc.				
12.	Hungry Howie's				
13.	Quicken Loans/Rock Financial			▲	
14.	The Dow Chemical Co.	▼			
15.	Faygo				
16.	Better Made Snack Food Co.	▲			
17.	Art Van Furniture				
18.	Steelcase Inc.				
19.	Kelly Services Inc.				▲
20.	Penske Automotive				
21.	DTE Energy	▼			

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RANK	BRAND	NET SENTIMENT	SPONSORED PRESENCE		
					
22.	Spartan Stores				▼
23.	Perrigo Co.			▼	
24.	Shinola	▼			▼
25.	The Suburban Collection	▲			
26.	Gentex Corp.			▼	
27.	Belle Tire				
28.	Mercantile Bank Corp.				
29.	Plante Moran	▼			
30.	Garden Fresh Salsa Co. Inc.	▲			
31.	Ambassador Bridge	▼	▼	▼	▼
32.	Masco Corp.	▲	▼		▼
33.	Stryker Corp.	▼		▼	
34.	Flagstar Bancorp Inc.	▼			
35.	Valassis Communications Inc.	▲			
36.	CMS Energy Corp.	▼	▼	▼	▼
37.	Wolverine World Wide Inc.				
38.	Macatawa Bank Corp.	▲			▼
39.	Universal Forest Products Inc.		▼		
40.	ABC Appliance Inc.		▼	▼	▼
41.	Atlas Oil Co.	▼			
42.	Absopure Water Co.	▲		▼	▼
43.	Guardian Alarm				
44.	Barton Malow Co.	▲	▼	▼	
45.	Soave Enterprises LLC		▼	▼	▼
46.	Kar's Nut Products	▲			▼
47.	Sherwood Food Distributors LLC	▲	▼		▼
48.	Ideal Shield		▼		▼
49.	Innovation Ventures LLC	▼	▼	▼	▼
50.	Walbridge Aldinger Co.		▼	▼	

media revenue from direct ticket sales,” Donnay adds. “Many people say you can’t sell tickets through social. But we found a way to do it. We’re on pace to increase that number by 200 percent this calendar year alone.”

While both the Pistons and Kellogg are well-established brands both locally and nationally, Shinola has been in business for barely a year. Even so, the company ranked 24th in the Index. Headquartered in a sparkling new space in Detroit’s Midtown District, Shinola boasts an eclectic lineup of products — watches, hand-made bicycles, fine leather goods, journals, books, and other goods. One of the primary selling points is authenticity: not only *what* they’re making and marketing, but *where*.

“We felt strongly that there was a consumer out there who was interested in American-made products, in products made in Detroit, even if they’d never been here before,” says Bridget Russo, Shinola’s marketing director. “That resonated with people. It’s not just an age group, it’s a psychographic. Our customer probably is around the 30 to 45 age range, and really passionate about what we stand for.”

By utilizing social media tools like hashtags and Twitter, Brian Ambrozy, Shinola’s community manager, is able to identify groups of potential customers that may not have heard of the Shinola brand any other way.

“We found there’s a surprising cache behind Detroit,” Ambrozy says. “There’s a fascination with any company that’s doing positive things in Detroit. Tapping the Detroit hashtag opens you up to a whole bunch of new people that you may not be connected to, but who are posting interesting images.”

“And through that medium, you can identify people that you want to connect with. So we’ve identified certain hashtags and we’re also creating some of our own to build a network that crosses different social media boundaries to introduce people to the brand through different interest areas,” Ambrozy says.

No matter how diverse these groups may be, Ambrozy asserts they all share at least one quality when it comes to any interactions in social media. “These people expect a very high level of honesty and genuineness,” he says, “and they can spot BS a mile away and they won’t have it. We have to be perfectly transparent so they feel they can approach the brand because of our honesty, up-front nature, and consistent messaging.”

All of those elements are important components for the social media department at La-Z-Boy Inc., No. 11 on the Index — a company that’s been producing comfortable chairs for nearly 90 years and, more recently, has been creating happy man-cave memories.

2013 MICHIGAN SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND INDEX: THE BIG THREE

1 FORD
MOTOR CO.



2 CHRYSLER
GROUP



3 GENERAL
MOTORS CO.



As it turns out, a little bit of whimsy doesn't hurt when it comes to grabbing the attention of consumers. Joe Morden, senior account director

"Our real focus is the larger market," says Matt Targett, La-Z-Boy's director of interactive and product marketing, "and that is women (aged) 35 to 54 who are making those overall decorating and design decisions in their home. We're not a Starbucks. People are not visiting our stores every day. It's a purchase that happens after a long consideration period, so we realize that we don't want to kill people with a bunch of ridiculous posts in their timeline, asking poll questions and other superfluous things. We really want to engage when we think it's right, and spend that time with them and pop up in their timeline when we think it will be useful to them."

La-Z-Boy centers a lot of its social media on design, utilizing bloggers in one campaign to create the "room of their dreams" in a 48-hour period as they work with experts in the field. The content and designs live on the company's Facebook page, where consumers vote for their favorite design from soon-to-be released furniture and decor. At the end, one consumer will win the entire room.

"What we wanted to do is to appeal to women when they're not looking to buy," Targett says. "We don't want the, 'Hey, we're giving something away and would you be our fan.' They don't stick around. We have very little slippage in our fan base, and we appreciate that because it means they want to be there."

at TMV, a boutique advertising agency in Birmingham, is in charge of social media for Faygo, the beverage company ranked No. 15.

"Historically, Faygo is aimed toward moms," Morden says, "but one thing we wanted to do through social media was to be able to talk to everyone. And we wanted to create a character that would resonate with all those different demographics."

Enter the Flavor Master. "He's an older gentleman, but he's kind of a fun, quirky guy who spits out Faygo jokes and clips," Morden says. "The main thing we wanted was to be sure it was all original content. And we wanted to create a two-way conversation with the audience."

The Flavor Master fields an array of questions on Facebook and Twitter from an audience that ranges from teenagers to grandparents who share their Faygo memories with other Faygo "fanatics" in rural Montana, for example, who lobby to get more of Faygo's 52 flavors in their remote towns.

"It's really that engagement that you want," Morden says. "Because it doesn't matter if you have 100,000 likes on Facebook but no one's engaging with your brand. You're just going to be a small blip on a news sphere or a Twitter feed. The real power of social media is that it allows these brands, like Faygo, to have a conversation and be in these people's lives on a daily basis." **db**

Pizza POWER

» **WHILE** some companies use social media as an outlet for free advertising, Little Caesars and Domino's have a different mission.

"A social media campaign, sweepstakes, or even a single status update doesn't just happen," says Jon Gunnells, social media manager at Little Caesars in Detroit. "Like any other form of marketing, we create a strategy with key performance indicators and then execute tactics and measure against those indicators."

The result is that Little Caesars doesn't focus on "like" counts. "While it would be great to have 15 million Facebook fans, it really doesn't matter if they're ignoring your brand," Gunnells says. "It's like having a conference room full of empty chairs. We're proud that

we've been able to achieve equal or higher Facebook engagement rates than brands with three, four, or five times as many fans as we have."

At Ann Arbor-based Domino's, a team of customer care specialists trained in social media provide quick updates on the company's Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube pages. One distinction Domino's pursues is having a real person — namely Phil Lozen, a social media specialist — respond to consumer comments and questions.

"It's really important to know what you're going to talk about before you go out and start talking," Lozen says. The company utilizes a cross-functional approach, combining the efforts of various departments to represent the brand. "It takes time to learn how to plan properly, and a good plan is only good if it's adaptable and free-flowing. It

can't be too rigid," Lozen says.

At Little Caesars, consistency is the order of the day. "We want to make sure we're growing our social communities but, more

importantly, that we're engaging those fans and continuing the conversation after they join 'Caesar Nation,'" Gunnells says.

— Lia Grabowski



» **THAT'S AMORE** On May 8, 1959, Mike and Marian Ilitch invested their \$10,000 life savings to open the first Little Caesars store in Garden City. The store, which is still operating, includes numerous historical photos and an honorary plaque.