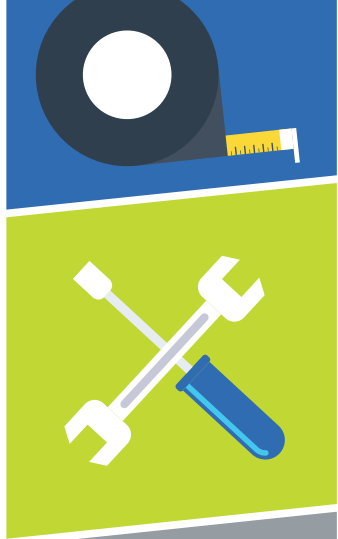


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269 MAGAZINE™

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH
**How do you
spark your
creative juices?**

“Every time I go for
a run, I come back
with an idea.”

“I purposefully think
out of the box. What
would Elvis do?”

“Put on a song.
Close my eyes.
Mentally choreograph
a dance.”

“Extraordinary ideas
come to me when I
mow the lawn.”

“Visiting garage
sales and attending
auctions.”

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@269MAG

Our hope is that the readers of *269 Magazine* will become active participants in the world around them and join our mission to make Southwest Michigan the place to make a home, go to work, and bring dreams to reality.

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BY
HEATHER BAKER
EDITOR IN CHIEF

PHOTOS
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ILLUSTRATION JACOB HANSEN AND
VLADIMIR_KARPENYUK (ISTOCK)



We Are All Creative

HOW TO TURN A PAGE FROM A COLORING BOOK INTO A WORK OF ART

R EMEMBER KINDERGARTEN? I DO.

I remember the bus dropping me off at the front of the school. I followed my classmates down what seemed like a never-ending hall to my classroom. Once inside, I found the hook with my name on it and hung up my coat. Next, I hurried to my spot on the floor by my best friend, Shannon (or Ken, depending on the day). My teacher, Miss Kriviliski, started the day's lesson. After spending time with our phonics books and mastering numbers, it was time for art!

Everybody loves art in kindergarten. No one ever says that they're not good at art in kindergarten.

Why? Because no matter whether we colored a bear in green or brown, it got hung on the refrigerator by Mom and Dad. If we colored outside the lines, it still got hung. If we scribbled all

over the bear because a big rainstorm was getting him wet, it still got hung ... maybe behind the week's grocery list, but it still got hung.

That piece of art was called "terrific," a "true work of art." I bet everyone reading this was praised at least once as a true artiste!

That lasted maybe a year or two, but, by third grade, the green bear didn't quite cut it anymore. Neither did coloring outside the lines. Only neatly colored brown bears made the grade. My guess is that most of us

accepted colors for real bears, right?

And that's when creativity was crushed.

Instead of taking chances, many of us from then on did what it took to make the grade. Rather than testing fate—or rather, Mrs. McGee's patience—and coming home with just "Good" written on our paper, we took the safe road. Green Bear went into hibernation far, far into the woods, where no one would ever find him in his native habitat, where pink trees, a purple sun, and orange grass made his perfect home.

and got coloring ... between the lines, too, for extra credit. No need to stare out the window thinking up new ways to bring Mr. Bear to life.

Fast-forward to today.

In many offices, a few people are deemed the "creative ones." The majority of "noncreative ones" set up meetings with the "creative ones" to make their stuff look good, e.g. reports, PowerPoints, graphs, and digital email campaigns.

Why do the "noncreative ones" do this? Their common answers are: "I'm not as creative as you," "I don't have time," "It's due tomorrow," and "You're so much better at it than me."

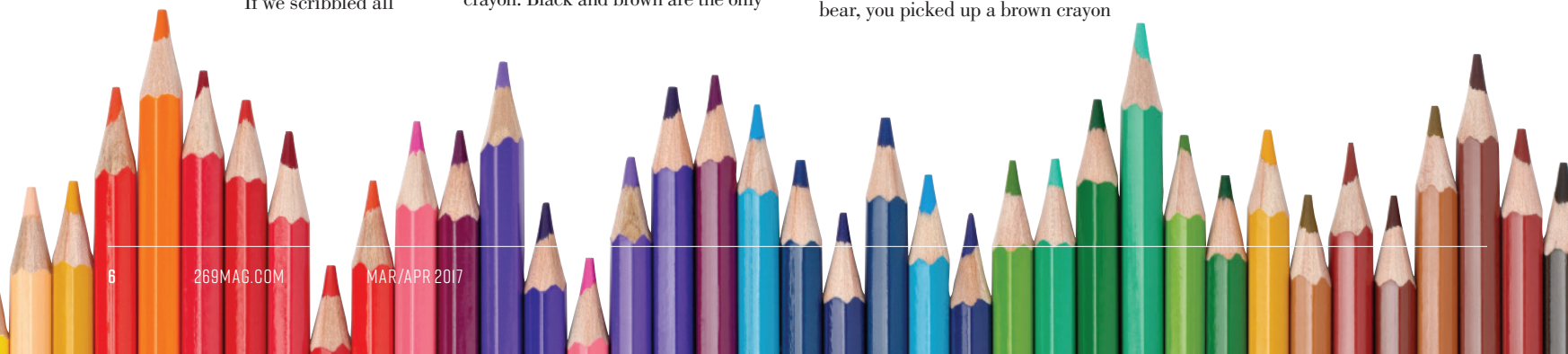
As someone who is considered to be "creative," I don't believe them. I don't think I'm better at it than them ... or you. Everyone can be creative.

Here are a few tips that have worked for me.

“No matter whether we colored a bear in green or brown, it got hung on the refrigerator by Mom and Dad.”

started coloring brown bears ... or only the very brave picked up a black crayon. Black and brown are the only

It took less time, too. From that moment forward, when you saw a bear, you picked up a brown crayon



8 TIPS FOR UNLEASHING YOUR CREATIVITY

1 TRY AND TRY AGAIN.

Did you know that Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* sits on top of 30 layers of paint? Obviously, one of the greatest painters of all time didn't get things right the first time, so why should you?

2 SEARCH UNDER THE 'RUG.'

When you lose your keys, the first place you look is the last place you left them. When they're not there, you start looking under the couch, in the cookie jar, and on the cereal shelf. You get creative. If you have to come up with an idea, read up on the subject. Then read up on some random ones. I always find a new idea among the random ones that makes the original subject more original.

3 GATHER TOOLS.

To create a PowerPoint presentation that wows your board of directors, brush up on your skills with *Presentation Zen* by Garr Reynolds. To give the speech of a lifetime, pick up *Resonate* by Nancy Duarte. Don't wait until you're assigned a project. Do it now!

4 MAKE TIME.

Once you receive a project, especially if it's not in your comfort zone, don't put it off until the day before it's due. Did you know that a Gallup® poll of over 19,000 workers found that 72 percent said that they do not have regular time for creative or strategic thinking? Ignore your email and start researching, reading, and dreaming. On the drive home, think on it some more.

5 PRACTICE.

If it's your PowerPoint skills that are lacking, then take a stab at your presentation and ask to meet with a "creative one" for some tips rather than making a takeout order. If it's a report, ask to meet with a subject matter expert. Then go back to the drawing board. This is a win-win for everyone. Your skills will get better, and the "creative one" can help you take a B attempt to an A much more easily than if it's a last-minute D project.

6 LOOK IT OVER.

Really look at your project. Before you're ready to turn it in, hit the presentation mode button and look at your slideshow as if you're a member of your own audience. Or hop in a cozy chair and read that case study you've prepared as if you are a foundation about to deliver a grant award. Be your worst critic before others are.

7 CLEAR YOUR MIND.

Then head to the gym. Go for a walk. Take the kids to soccer practice. Drop a fishing line in the water. You will be surprised what pops into your mind.

8 SET YOUR ALARM.

If you have two weeks for the project, set some deadlines for researching, storyboarding, creating a rough draft, refining your deliverable, finalizing work, proofreading, and practicing.

**It's time to free that green bear.
Let him run wild!**

READ ON,

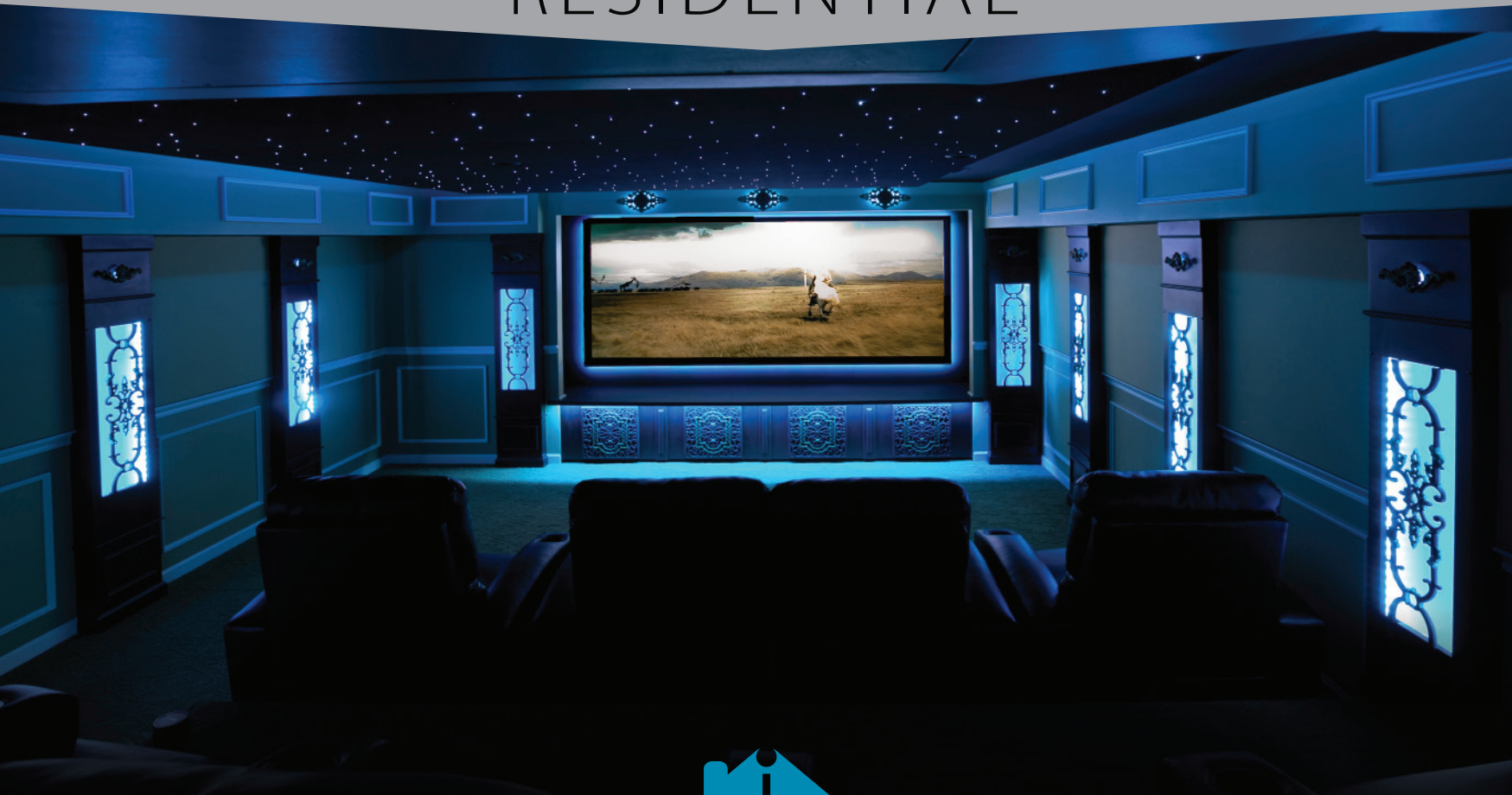
Heather

Tell us how you unleash your creativity @269Mag with #IAmCreative!

“ Ignore your email and start researching, reading, and dreaming. On the drive home, think on it some more.”



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Why is design an important strategy for growing our regional economy?

USE YOUR VOICE @269MAG WITH #COMMUNITYCOMMENT

JOHN M. DUNN / President / **Western Michigan University**



ENTREPRENEUR ROBIN MATTHEW DESCRIBES GOOD DESIGN AS the place “where science and art break even.” There is no spot on the planet better positioned to oversee that blending of science and the arts than Southwest Michigan.

From iconic cabs and coveted guitars to Homer Stryker’s groundbreaking medical products, we’ve shown the world good product design. That ability is inextricably tied to who we are

as a community. We’re devoted to education and the potential of science, and empowered and inspired by the arts.

Now, collaborating with area industry, WMU’s Richmond Product Design and Innovation Institute will train a new generation of leaders prepared to reinvigorate our community’s reputation as a center for the marriage of science, art, and manufacturing best practices.

HEATHER ISCH / President & CEO / **LKF Marketing**



LKF MARKETING BELIEVES IN creating captivating designs built upon strategic goals in order to tell a visual story and move audiences to some form of action. While artful in their presentation, these pieces and campaigns have an underlying purpose. As Donald Judd said, “Design has to work. Art does not.”

For more than 25 years, we have dedicated ourselves to providing thoughtful and strategic design work, which helps our clients grow their businesses and impact the community around them as a result. Good design helps drive jobs, improve profitability, and strengthen employee communication, both internally and with external audiences.

In a world where we are bombarded by messages in various forms, good design also serves as a determining factor in the future of economic development. The right design has the power to cut through fierce competition for the audiences’ attention, time, and resources, catapulting worthwhile messages to the forefront that might otherwise have gone unnoticed without the proper application of artful and strategically placed elements.

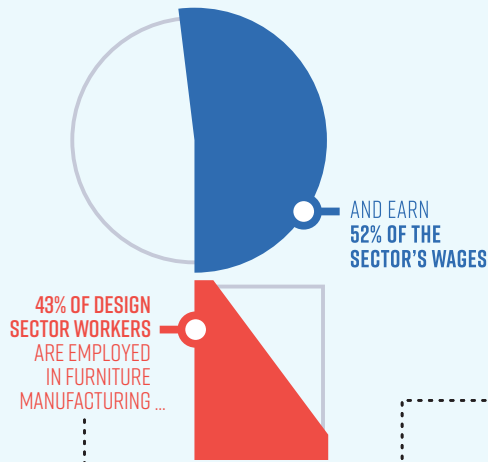
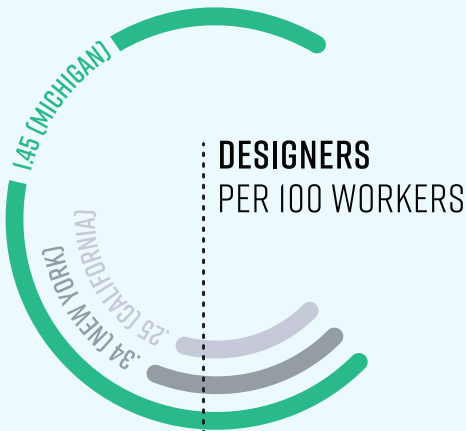
MIKE GERFEN / Executive Director / **VML**



THE IDEA OF DESIGN AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR OUR REGION is one that makes a ton of sense given a core that is already here in Southwest Michigan. With anchors like the Newell Brands Design Center, Kalamazoo Valley Community College’s Art & New Media program, and companies with a high design focus, like Landscape Forms, Whirlpool, and the furniture

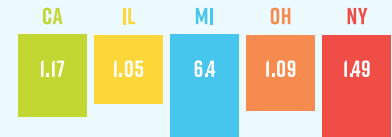
companies in Grand Rapids, we already have a critical mass in this area.

Jobs that are created in design are typically well paying and the candidates for these jobs will often be Millennials who will plant roots here and expand their families for years to come. As critical mass continues to build, spin-off companies are an inevitable benefit over time.



CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN MICHIGAN

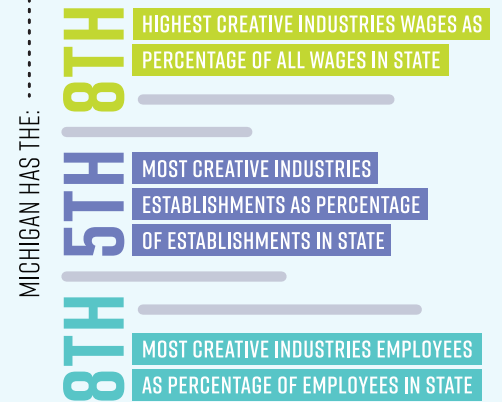
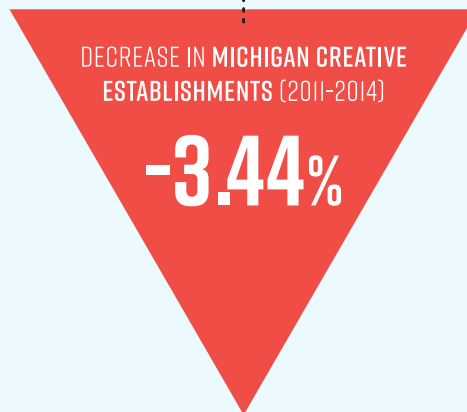
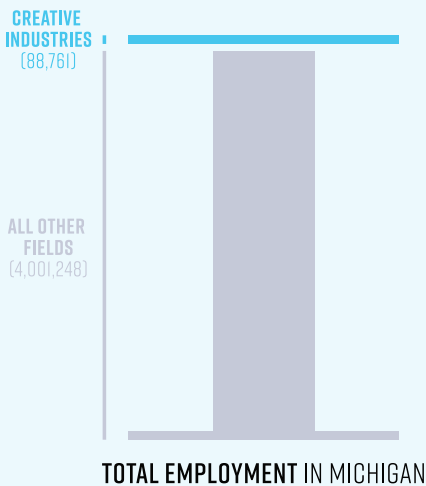
- LITERARY, PUBLISHING & PRINT
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- CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY
- CULTURE & HERITAGE
- DESIGN
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- VISUAL ARTS & CRAFTS
- FASHION, GARMENT & TEXTILE
- ART SCHOOLS, ARTISTS & AGENTS

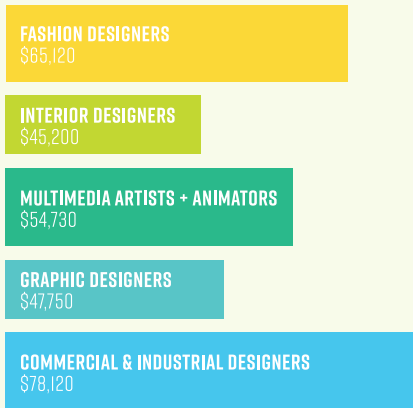


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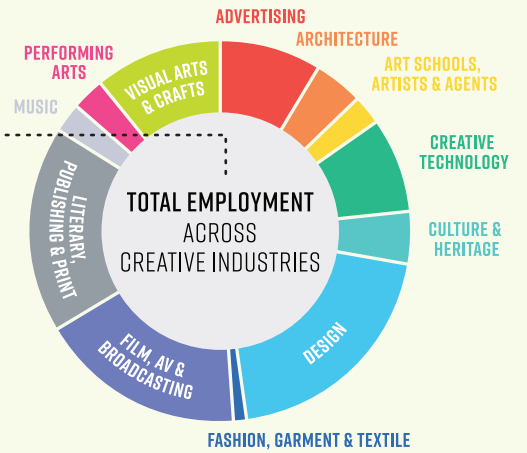
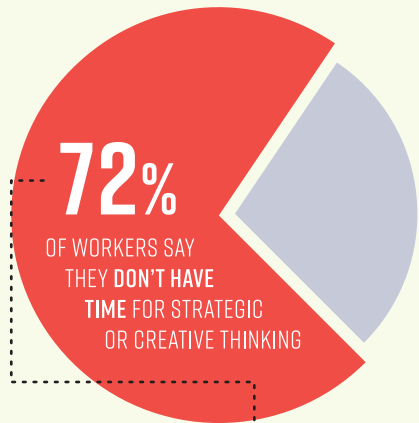


LOCATION QUOTIENT FOR COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS



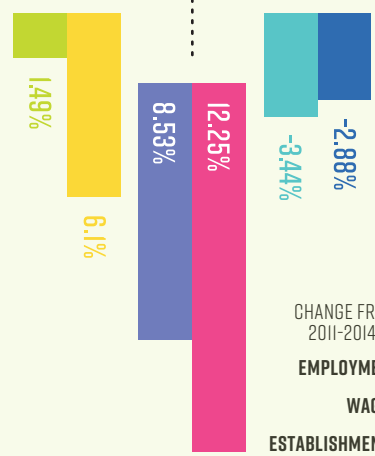
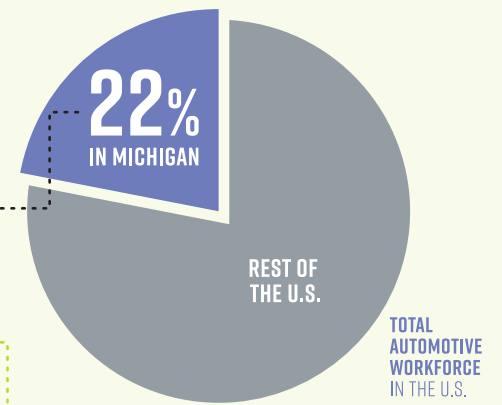


ANNUAL MEAN WAGES IN MICHIGAN



+18.9% WAGES
-1.99% ESTABLISHMENTS
+14.8% EMPLOYMENT

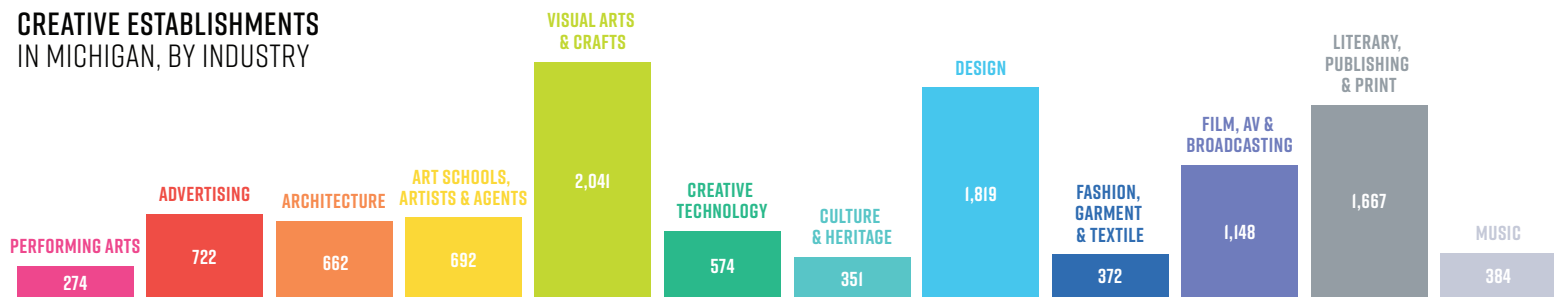
IN
SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN



BY RICK VAN GROUW
ILLUSTRATIONS ADAM ROSSI
PHOTOS SEANPAVONEPHOTO (ISTOCK)
MIX (SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST)

SOURCES: 2016 CREATIVE STATE REPORT, CREATIVE MANY BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

CREATIVE ESTABLISHMENTS IN MICHIGAN, BY INDUSTRY



CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (66,761)

ALL OTHER FIELDS (4,001,246)

IN MAY 2014, EMILY HOFFMAN DROVE FROM SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, TO KALAMAZOO.

She had made the journey before; Bell's Brewery and the local craft beer scene were well known to Hoffman and her student peers at Notre Dame University. But this time, the trip was different. This time, she was on her way to interview for a job at Tekna Inc.

As she pulled into town, the native of Minnetonka, Minnesota, noticed the small-town charms of Southwest Michigan. She saw the presence of arts and culture that she hadn't really appreciated before—and, frankly, didn't expect to see. "I knew nothing about Kalamazoo," Hoffman said. But her interview went well. Afterward, "I was incredibly impressed by the environment that Tekna had. I was really excited by how willing they were to grow talent."

She remembered the people she met in Kalamazoo even as she looked elsewhere for employment opportunities—"I had dreams of the West Coast," she recalls—and she interviewed in the West as well as elsewhere in the Midwest. "I thought I would move far away from home."

After graduation, Hoffman took the summer off and started in October as an industrial designer at Tekna. As impressed as she was with the quality of the Tekna team, she likewise impressed her new employer. Now she intends to stick around for a while.

"I thought this would be a two-year gig, but now that I'm here, I don't want to leave. I have really fallen in love" with the area, she said. "I don't see an end to it. I thought I would have this itch to leave, and I don't."

Mike Rozewicz, vice president at Tekna, appreciates talent such as Hoffman. "Emily is early in her career, but she has taken on a lot of

responsibilities," Rozewicz said, "and delivered hands-down every time."

Tekna is a design and development company that also provides consulting-based services to the likes of Bissell, Stryker, Whirlpool, and Troeger. Tekna also manufactures products of its own. Nearly half the staff works on the creative side of the business, which demonstrates the broad scope and impact of creatives in the workplace. "The creative organization here at Tekna goes well beyond industrial design," Rozewicz said, and includes animators, researchers, and experts in the development of brand strategies.

Tekna isn't the only company to cherish its creative talent. Mike Roeder, president and chief operating officer at Fabri-Kal, likes to think all his company's 1,100 employees are creatives, although, he added, "realistically, between design, process design, marketing, and sales, it's more like 50 percent involved in the creative process. We try to hear what

The Creative Cities:

WHAT THEY'RE DOING RIGHT

According to a 2015 study published by the Center for an Urban Future, a New York-based think tank, these communities are growing their creative economies better and faster than others.

COUNTY	MAJOR CITY	2003	2013	GROWTH
TRAVIS COUNTY, TX	AUSTIN	8,223	11,547	40%
MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OR	PORTLAND	8,759	10,657	22%
N/A	NEW YORK CITY	188,033	216,110	15%
SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY, CA	SAN FRANCISCO	22,745	25,895	14%

AUSTIN

- 50,000 arts-related jobs in areas that span film and television, gaming, and other visual arts.
- A nearly \$1 billion gaming industry.
- One of the top magnets for small business and the much-desired 25- to 34-year-old demographic.
- More than 200 live music venues.
- The South by Southwest Festival (SXSW) attracted more than 370,000 attendees in 2014 and generated more than \$315 million for Austin's economy.

"Keep Austin Weird" became the catchphrase for the city's commitment to creativity—and a reminder that urban growth should not drive out the cultural assets that shaped Austin's identity and appeal.

“WE DEFINITELY HAVE TO RECRUIT NATIONALLY RIGHT NOW, BUT I DON'T THINK IT HAS TO BE THAT WAY. I THINK MICHIGAN IS A BIG DRAW FOR CREATIVE TALENT.”

the customer is saying, and the whole creative part is seeing a need and triggering a solution.”

Creatives “tend to be a curious class,” Roeder said. “They’re looking for a different way to solve a problem, whether those are social solutions or space solutions. They’re vital to the economy because they search for different ways of doing things.”

More companies understand that designers and other creative talent contribute significantly to their bottom lines and to their communities at large. Members of this so-called “creative class” tend to bring urban revitalization, higher property values, industrial and economic growth, an expansion of arts and cultural opportunities—a long list of qualities desirable to communities keen to evolve, to move beyond the industrial and manufacturing ghosts of their past.

The challenge to communities everywhere: How can companies attract and retain—or grow their own—creative talent?

In Southwest Michigan, efforts have been under way for some time to address this challenge. A year before Hoffman moved to Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University (WMU) tasked Daniel Guyette, the new dean of its College of Fine Arts, with developing a multidiscipline curriculum that would feed the hunger for creative talent among local companies. At the statewide level, Creative Many Michigan, a nonprofit arts and cultural advocacy group, was preparing to launch a major investigation into the creative economy in Michigan. And Southwest Michigan First, an economic support organization dedicated to growing jobs in the area, launched its MIX initiative, a way for creatives to share ideas and interact in nonwork environments.

The push to attract and retain creatives to the region is both purposeful and forward thinking.

“We feel in the future these creative jobs are going to be what drive the local economy,” said Petey

Stephanak, a partner at Southwest Michigan First. “Stryker has been here from day one, and other companies were born and raised here. Being a destination for creatives is really a driving force. That’s how we got Rubbermaid (now Newell Brands).”

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Twenty years ago, urban studies theorist Richard Florida coined the phrase “creative class” in his book eponymously titled *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Florida defined this broad swath of the workforce to include “scientists and engineers, university professors, poets, and architects” as well as “people in design, education, arts, music, and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, and/or creative content.”

In 2016, Creative Many Michigan issued a statewide assessment and summation of the creative class in Michigan. The report examined economic sectors including “advertising, architecture, art schools, artists and agents, creative technology, culture and

PORTLAND

The plan to develop Portland’s central city as an arts and cultural hub goes back to the 1972 Downtown Plan, the 1988 Central City Plan, and the follow-up Action Item Assessment in 2006.

There are 1,500 firms employing 14,000 “creatives” in Portland.

The average salary in creative industries is \$66,600, compared to the regional average wage of \$40,600.

Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations represent a \$318 million industry in the Portland metro area, supporting over 10,300 full-time-equivalent jobs. State and local governments have collected more than \$27 million in taxes and fees as a result, more than three times what they invested.

NEW YORK CITY

Sharp increases in city capital funding and private philanthropy and a record rise in tourism have spurred major expansions of museums and theaters.

Employment in film and television production soared by 53 percent over the past decade, while architecture (33 percent), performing arts (26 percent), advertising (24 percent), visual arts (24 percent), and applied design (17 percent) all outpaced the city’s overall employment growth (12 percent).

While an ambitious artist may have had two choices 30 years ago—New York or Los Angeles—cities such as Portland, Austin, Nashville, Philadelphia, and Detroit are attracting and recruiting young artists.

SAN FRANCISCO

Digital media positions increased 31% from 2009 to 2014.

It’s a hotbed for freelance creatives, who totaled 70,280 in the Bay Area in 2013.

A vibrant independent filmmaking industry has taken root in San Francisco, with film schools, incubators, film grant programs, and internationally renowned film festivals.

San Francisco is also home to a significant number of fashion designers and is earning recognition as a fashion center in its own right.

San Francisco ranked fourth in global talent in Global Cities (2014) Top 10 city ranking, behind New York, London, and Paris.

“YOU’VE GOT TO START BUILDING A CULTURE AROUND A HIGHLY CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT, A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN COME AND HAVE THINGS TO DO.”

heritage, design, fashion, garment and & textile, film, AV & broadcasting, literary; publishing and print, music, performing arts, and visual arts and crafts.”

Michigan has a long history with designers and other creatives. The auto, furniture, and boating industries—pillars of the state’s economy historically—have always relied on design for success. Even today, according to Creative Many, the largest sector of the creative economy in Michigan is design. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in May 2015, Michigan had more—and a greater concentration of—commercial and industrial designers than any other state, including California and New York, and not just by a modest

margin: Michigan had more than 6,000 designers (1.45 designers per 1,000 workers), compared to California’s 4,100 (0.25 per 1,000 workers) and New York’s 3,000 (0.34 per 1,000 workers).

“Creative people add tension to a system. They provide counterpoint to the corporate stiffs. Without that tension, you don’t get good products,” said Leif Norland, director of global design for cooking at Whirlpool. His role is self-described as “basically, if it’s a box that gets hot,” I’m responsible for it.

“When I build a team, I follow the seven samurai model, which says that if you have strong individuals, together they’ll be great, and each person has a specific skill. Creatives are an important part of the community, providing that tension. You need creative people to ask why not, not just why.”

THE NEED FOR CREATIVE TALENT

But around 2010, industries in Southwest Michigan realized they had a problem.

Even as companies continued to expand in the region, they were having a hard time hiring good industrial designers. They couldn’t find talent locally, and they struggled to woo designers to the region. And it wasn’t

just designers—employers were having a rough time finding creatives of any sort.

For Whirlpool and other companies, Norland recalled, “The challenge was always, ‘How do you get creative people out of college to come to Whirlpool?’ As a company that makes white boxes, traditional commodities, a lot of times, folks coming out of college have experienced our products only through their parents’ homes. They would much rather go to a place that does fashion, that’s about their own lives, not their parents’ lives.”

Bill Fluharty, director of design at Stryker Medical, agrees. “We definitely have to recruit nationally right now, but I don’t think it has to be that way. I think Michigan is a big draw for creative talent.”

Fluharty’s perspective is simultaneously cerebral and matter-of-fact. “We need to understand the meaning of what we do, and we need to do meaningful things. Historically, the big debate has been, ‘Which came first—form or function?’ But today, form and function don’t matter so much if you don’t understand why you’re doing it in the first place. What problem are we really solving? If you’re not solving an end-user problem, you’re not going to stay in business.”

Norland suggests that once the creative tinder catches, it becomes a self-fueling fire. “In the past, it’s been hard to recruit someone out of school, he said. “But as you have more and more younger people around, that really helps you draw in more. They come in and see the place; there’s a lot of stuff going on and stuff to do. We’ve learned you have to get a certain volume of people, a critical mass. Then it starts to really work.”

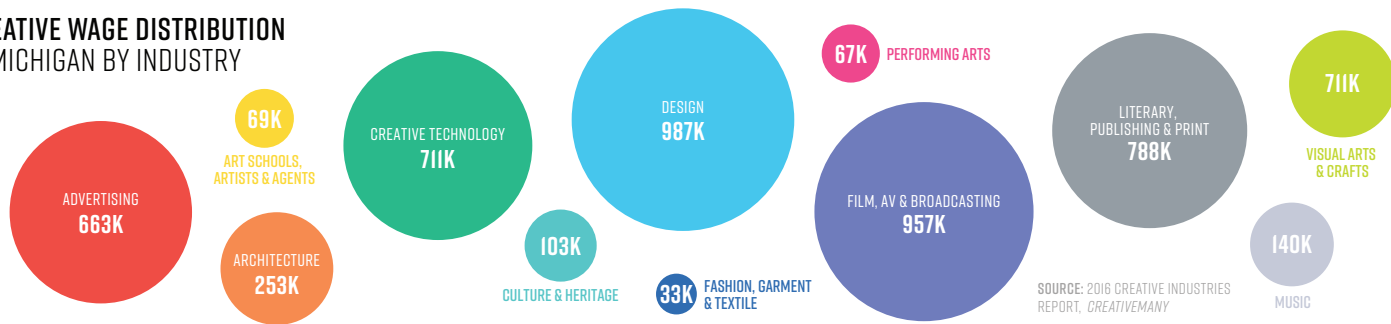
GIVE THE CREATIVES WHAT THEY WANT

To reach that critical mass, companies and communities must work together to give the creatives what they want.

“You’ve got to start building a culture around a highly creative environment, a place where they can



CREATIVE WAGE DISTRIBUTION IN MICHIGAN BY INDUSTRY



come and have things to do,” Norland said. “If they come into this community and the only thing to do was to join a country club and golf and sit inside, it wouldn’t work. For Whirlpool, West Michigan helps us out. You’ve got the whole beer culture, the wine culture, the water—and then you need restaurants and a focus on art creativity. You have to have more than one or two tricks in your community.”

According to Tekna’s Rozewicz, creatives like Emily Hoffman are “looking for flexibility and the ability to grow not just financially, but in making a true impact on the community, in their own ecosystem, their own organization. That’s something we’re very conscientious of as a company—finding different ways for folks to impact and grow. We see a lot of staff members doing things outside their daily work—some volunteer in their spare time, and it’s great how that comes back, how they roll it into their work life.”

Jennifer Goulet, CEO of Creative Many Michigan, also identifies certain ingredients in the recipe to attract creative talent. “Number one, the community and community leadership need to have an understanding about the power of creativity and talent, industry as part of the fabric of the community, the future possibilities of the place, the economy, and education,” Goulet said. “Diversity and inclusion are also a really critical dynamic that all of us and all of our communities need to be providing by focusing our attention in terms of how do our communities and business communities and schools intentionally embrace opportunities for all. That is a tremendously critical factor. Creatives do value—as we all do—to be in a place where they can network, learn with, and dream with other creative minds and talent. The focus on how a community or a region can intently work to cultivate opportunities, to grow the creative forces and talent, is very smart.”

On the other hand, “There’s no secret sauce” for attracting and retaining creatives, Goulet

added. “First and foremost, communities need to recognize and own what’s unique about their place, how they can build off that as a framework for moving forward. What are the creative assets and resources and players already on the scene? Where does that open opportunities to further strengthen that scene? There is no one-size-fits-all answer to all that.”

But there are steps communities can take, Goulet said. One of the key elements: “Is there affordable housing and studio space? Artists and creatives are looking for home space for creation and production. Is there good space? Can they afford it? Do the available spaces accommodate the kind of work they’re focused on?”

Whirlpool’s Norland said efforts to attract young creatives are gaining traction. “We’re starting to have a community that inspires people. Then the dominos start to fall, and it gets better and better—more talent imported from elsewhere, and more creatives,” he said.

At the same time, much work remains. Stryker’s Fluharty put it this way: “Even though we’re a design-rich state—with lots of equipment manufacturing, business to consumer, famous companies—we need more. We need companies to understand that the creative class in general and designers specifically are problem solvers. We need to amp up creative competencies within organizations.”

These efforts are catching the attention of creatives such as Emily Hoffman. “When you look at the creative culture in Kalamazoo and throughout Southwest Michigan, you see a thriving entrepreneurial spirit in Tekna and Rhino Media and Art Hop and ArtPrize in Grand Rapids,” Hoffman said. “You have influence coming from Chicago and Detroit. You have an entrepreneurial spirit and you have well-established, multibillion-dollar companies that are really investing in design. You have Newell Brands building a new

large design center. Stryker is hiring designers and investing in design. You want a community that is attracting top talent.”

A GOOD MIX FOR CREATIVES

Hoffman said another piece of the puzzle is a chance to mingle with and learn from other creative talent. She pointed to MIX, an initiative launched in 2014 by Southwest Michigan First and powered by some of the region’s biggest creative players—Fabri-Kal’s Roeder, Whirlpool’s Norland, and others. Periodically, a MIX member hosts an event that can be a half-day seminar or a multiday conference. These gatherings offer opportunities to learn and share ideas.

“MIX is about attracting people—pretty much all of the creative aspects around Southwest Michigan,” Norland said. “That’s a pretty audacious task, but we didn’t want to be exclusive. What we realized is that it’s not about one group of people. It’s about a culture of people that want our community to be a better place to live. Our premise was that an infusion of different perspectives as a creative group would make us stronger. Our goal was to build a community around where our teams and our staff would feel like they’re a part of something. If you just have industrial designers hanging out with other industrial designers, it’s not going to take long before it’s not that interesting. It’s important to bring in people who are creative—people in the arts, culinary arts, industry, creative marketing. The question we asked was, ‘How do we start to link people together where the sum is greater than the individual parts?’”

MIX is “just being able to sit at the table and have a conversation about what the vehicle is to get these people together and talk and come up with new ideas and have a great conversation,” said Robb Smalldon, vice president of Studio 431, the custom division of Landscape Forms. “What inspired me to be involved in MIX and continues to inspire me

“THERE ARE MORE OPPORTUNITIES THAN EVER, AND WE WANT TO SCREAM FROM THE TOP OF THE BUILDING THAT THIS IS WHAT WE DO. WE ARE DESIGN LEADERS.”

is that we are trying to create a creative group and a creative presence, a vehicle for the creative folks to get together.”

The spirit of collaboration fostered by MIX events extends into the workplace as well.

“One of the cool things about design thinkers is that they don’t think of themselves as competitors. They’re just passionate individuals,” Fluharty said. “Designers, for one thing, love to learn and share what they do. Maybe it’s because creatives are partially ego-driven and we want to show off. But I think the creative class realizes that creative approaches to the way we do things are not a strategic advantage in and of themselves, but what you do with what you learn—that’s strategic. We can share processes and methods, new research techniques, ethnographic research, creative ways to design prompts to get the end-users to cocreate solutions—we can share those techniques with our competitors, and we improve our industry, our ability to solve huge problems. But then how the company uses those techniques is private. I think the creatives understand that. We’re more open to sharing things, and it’s healthy, and it’s a heck of a lot of fun.”

KEEP LOCAL TALENT LOCAL

In addition to all this work to attract creatives to Southwest Michigan, a parallel effort is under way to train locals and keep them here. Industry leaders are working very closely with schools and colleges, primarily WMU, to train and educate local students to remain in the area to work and raise families after they graduate.

Robb Smalldon came from the east side of the state in the early 2000s to study at WMU. At that time, the university was phasing out its longstanding industrial design curriculum, and Smalldon was one of the final students to matriculate in the program. “There was not a lot of design thinking going on,” Smalldon recalls. “It was a sign of the times, too—problem solving and creative thinking were not popular at that time.” The university shuttered the program entirely in 2006.

In August 2013, the university was looking for a new dean to head its School of Fine Arts. Daniel Guyette, the candidate chosen for the job, recalls sitting down with Jim Richmond, vice president of Stryker Corporation, who was on the search committee.

“Jim said [hiring creatives] was a great unmet need in this area. We identified 56 jobs that a small group of local companies could not fill at that time,” Guyette recalled. “That’s among a small group of companies, just local companies. We said, ‘How do we take this forward? Let’s use consultants and partners in industry and design employees to develop a curriculum.’ The question was, ‘How do we distinguish ourselves in a crowd of product designers?’”

The result is the nascent Product Design and Innovation program, currently recruiting its first cohort of 20 students to start the program in the fall of 2017.

The distinguishing characteristic of the new program, Guyette said, is its inclusion of three different academic arenas. “It’s a combination of form, function, and manufacturing,” he said. “No one is doing that. Others will do two of those and maybe a piece of the third, but the manufacturing business piece is a more modern leg of the three-legged stool. Other schools have added a business graduate degree to cover that piece. It took us the better part of three years to get where we are.”

The institute is a combination of the university’s schools of Engineering, Fine Arts, and Business, complementing each other’s strengths. “It offers a bachelor of arts degree and a balanced curriculum, the three-legged stool,” Guyette said.

In 2018, the institute will move into its own 28,000-square-foot space—emblematically, the same space where the arts college T-junctions with the university’s former engineering building.

“Industrial design, product design, is not just the object-based design that our fathers and grandfathers knew,” Guyette said. “It really is more interfacing humans with technology, the ghosts that live within

the machines, that seamless interface of humans with technology. So at Whirlpool, they don’t just design a better toaster, but they ask how to integrate it with other appliances and the view of the humans who use that house. It’s not just styling, it’s about going in and saying, ‘What do you need?’ I see a need in terms of mothers and children that may result in a better bassinet, but it’s about meeting the needs of society instead of selling them more stuff.”

The inclusion of manufacturing into the design process makes sense to Mike Rozewicz at Tekna, who helped develop the new WMU program. “We have the opportunity to retain products, to look at the broader map of what’s happening in the industry, and our ability to design and manufacture. Having a manufacturing arm—you don’t see that very often. The manufacturing part represents a huge potential for us. Consulting is cyclical, but manufacturing is a steady stream. And when you mesh those two things together, you create a very stable organization. That future growth for us is huge.”

SHOUTING FROM THE ROOFTOPS

How does Southwest Michigan get the word out to the creative class in other parts of the world?

How about manning a booth at the South by Southwest (SXSW) Conference & Festivals, the annual extravaganza of film, media, and music held in Austin, Texas? For the past three years, Michigan House, a pop-up space that promotes Michigan, has attended SXSW. This year, a team from Southwest Michigan held a panel discussion titled “Clogging the Drain: Creative Talent Attraction.” With Petey Stephanak of Southwest Michigan First serving as moderator, the panel consisted of Mike Roeder from Fabri-Kal, Bjorn Green of architectural firm Tower Pinkster, and Leif Norland of Whirlpool.

“We’re trying to make sure we expose people to a lot more about Southwest Michigan,” Roeder said. “It’s

CONTINUED ON PAGE 51

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COVER STORY VIEWPOINT

Tyler Smith

VICE PRESIDENT/PRINCIPAL,
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DESIGN: ITS INTENT

When you think of design, what comes to mind? Maybe a clever logo, a detailed architectural blueprint, a sleek new virtual reality experience, or perhaps the perfect midcentury chair. Well, that wouldn't be wrong, but you'd also be thinking only of the end result. Design is a process. As a business, design is about being intentional with your decisions, both in how you operate and how you present yourself and your offering to the world. With the proliferation of user-centered technology and social media, customer expectations for good design are higher—and the actions of your business are more visible than ever before. Investing in design means investing in intentionality and control of your own narrative. Conversely, failure to recognize the value of good design can mean leaving your success as a business to chance.

BE STRATEGIC

Good design is good business. It's not about creating something beautiful and compelling and hoping that people like it—design is about delivering meaningful solutions to your audience. Chances are you're already using design principles in your business every day. Take the lean process for example; here, businesses are creating more value for their customers by continuously and strategically optimizing operations and eliminating waste. The same concepts of function, context, and meaning apply to other areas of design, and it all starts with a healthy dose of curiosity. What problem are we solving? Who are we solving it for? How can we do something differently? What does success look like? Good design creates a clear path to success based on real business objectives.

RETURN ON INTENTION

Although studies have shown that companies that invest in design outperform those that don't, many business owners still struggle with proving return on investment (ROI) on design projects. One could argue that success may not always have a clear ROI—sometimes the value of design is in risk mitigation. Take a logo design process, for instance. What is the value of a good logo? Phil Knight spent \$35 on the Nike swoosh back in 1971, but

Investing in design means investing in intentionality and control of your own narrative. Conversely, failure to recognize the value of good design can mean leaving your success as a business to chance.

today, it's arguably worth billions. Perhaps a better question is: What is the cost of a bad logo? How many customers and prospects will be exposed to it? What must be spent on public relations and reprinting if the design is off target or inadvertently offensive? Similar questions can be asked in other design disciplines. How many manufacturing hours are wasted through inefficient processes? How many customers are switching to competitors because our product isn't ergonomic? What is the cost of not investing in good design?

EMBRACE THE PROCESS

With any creative process, there are bound to be plenty of bad ideas. This is a reality, and it's also a good thing. As a business, you must be willing to allow all types of ideas to surface—and use them to discover unique needs and preferences among customers and employees. Every idea is an opportunity to learn, or a doorway to something new, exciting, or unexpected. And while allowing those ideas to come out is important to the design process, filtering them based on what aligns most with your strategic objectives is absolutely critical. Successful designers must constantly toe the line between wild creativity and ruthless editing; successful businesses must do the same.

CURIOS CULTURE

Trial and error is OK. Failing is OK as long as we learn from it. Being intentional is everything. In leadership, many people talk about the importance of communicating a shared purpose to your team in order to build a strong culture. Design is about finding a purpose in everything that you do and in everything that your business puts out into the world. Business leaders must encourage their teams to ask the tough questions and embrace curiosity as a core value so that employees can find purpose in their everyday work, not just on a sign in the break room.

Healthy curiosity leads to the “whys” and “what ifs” that can change the way a business is run and ultimately increase the value that it provides to its customers. Curiosity may have killed the cat, but apathy may kill your business.

BE A SPONGE

One of the best ways to embrace design is to absorb it on a regular basis. Yes, good design has many practical benefits, but there is a lot to be said for simply living in a world that's more beautiful, meaningful, and intentional. We are extremely lucky to belong to a community that values design

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COVER STORY VIEWPOINT

Daniel Guyette

DEAN, COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS,
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
KALAMAZOO, MI



with Scott Ireland

ASSOCIATE DEAN, COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS,
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

WHAT'S IN A NAME? THAT WHICH WE CALL PRODUCT DESIGN, BY ANY OTHER NAME...

Soon after I was hired as the dean of the College of Fine Arts at Western Michigan University (WMU), a group of regional corporate leaders and I gathered in downtown Kalamazoo to discuss the dearth of homegrown design talent available to them. They were most interested in how WMU might partner with them to resolve the issue. The conversation that day was the start of something important as both sides recognized an opportunity to work together on this real-world problem. I was clear before we all left that working with large universities on such partnerships was not for the impatient. I remember telling them, "It might take us some time to get to market, but when we do, we will have it right." That was

nearly four years ago, and the partnership continues to advance in some exciting ways.

The three questions that continue to guide our work together remain: (1) How do we distinguish ourselves in the marketplace of ideas? (2) How do we engage the rich design culture in Southwest Michigan in the training of new talent? and (3) How do we provide a value-added education to our graduates as they enter the highly competitive world of product design? Our answer: bring together form, function, and manufacturing to address 21st-century challenges inherent to moving ideas from mind to market. For WMU, that means engineering, business entrepreneurship, and art and design faculty and administrators working with corporate partners to address the fluctuating demands of industry and society. We continue to talk about how we are creating a "three-legged stool" that stands on its own, does not wobble, and will last for years.

Admittedly, there are notable industrial design programs at universities and colleges in the state, most with strong reputations. Yet these have not been able to meet regional demands, and as the world has changed, not all programs have kept up. Interestingly, WMU had an industrial design program. It had to close down over 10 years ago for a variety of reasons. We knew that if we were going to start up again, our approach would have to create something that could anticipate future need rather than simply address the current state.

"The world does not need more stuff or cooler-looking stuff. It needs creative, sustainable solutions to real-world problems, and we plan to train the best product designers to address that need."

Why product design? Most established programs still use the term industrial design. For many, when those words are used, images of big factories and dirty jobs often come to mind. Conversely, what we will be preparing students for are not the industry jobs of our fathers and grandfathers. Tim Brown, CEO and president of global design company IDEO, explains it this way: "The things we interact with are leaving the

simple and physical world and becoming virtual and complex. ... Today, industrial design is as much about designing systems and software and applications as it is about designing objects. We are designing machines, but also the ghosts that live inside them." With this as a guide, our consultants from Carnegie Mellon and the University of Cincinnati, two of the most prestigious industrial design programs in the nation, first uttered the words product design as a way to further distinguish the program focus. They stuck.

Actually, the consultants were convinced that a forward-looking program had to be about more than designing objects. "It's not about designing more stuff," one of them reminded us. "The world does not need more stuff or cooler-looking stuff. It needs creative, sustainable solutions to real-world problems, and we plan to train the best product designers to address that need."

Today, the undergraduate curriculum is written and approved. On paper, it is one of the most dynamic and exciting programs anywhere. The first class of product design students is nearly recruited. They are driven, creative, and ready for the challenges before them. The first faculty candidates to run the program recently visited campus. They confirmed that they applied because they wanted to be a part of something new, exciting, entrepreneurial, and innovative.

Entrepreneurial. Innovative. Those words are being used a lot today in business and industry. If a business can achieve that dual stamp of achievement, success likely follows, or so we are told. Everyone working on this project believes that to be true. Jim and Lois Richmond believe it

so much that they recently donated three million dollars toward the renovation of the middle section of Kohrman Hall, where the new product design program will be housed. It is seen as a good omen that the space being renovated for this new program was the home of the original industrial design program on campus. We anticipate the friendly ghosts of the past will be inside our new machines as

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ARCHITECTING SOLUTIONS

Landscape Forms' Outdoor Designs Solve Problems and Shape Strategy

BY HEATHER BAKER
PHOTOS COURTESY OF LANDSCAPE FORMS



RICHARD HERIFORD
PRESIDENT

HUNGARIAN INVENTOR, ARCHITECT, AND PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE ERNŐ RUBIK INVENTED THE RUBIK'S CUBE 40 YEARS AGO. What has become one of the world's top-selling puzzle games was originally created to build Rubik's students' problem-solving skills at the Academy of Applied Arts and Crafts in Budapest. How could they get the pieces to move without falling apart?

The job of an architect is to design and construct something. But it's so much more, according to an actual architect or product designer: it's more about problem solving. In the case of a six-sided, six-colored cube, it's more like getting cubes to move in harmony or getting similar colors to appear on the same face.

Landscape Forms, the industry leader in integrated collections of high-design site furniture and advanced LED lighting headquartered in Comstock Township, approaches its business model based on superior product designs in that manner.

"You see a problem to solve, whether it's how people sit outside or how people interact in outdoor environments, and then you come up with the most artful way of problem solving. That's really what our company is all about," says Richard Heriford, president of Landscape Forms. "Design, to Landscape Forms, is not just about product design or graphic design or brochures. It's really about creative problem solving in every aspect of the business."

Kirt Martin, vice president of Design and Marketing, confirms, "Product design is getting out in the field. It's understanding behaviors and troubles and having some empathy for what's happening out there."

Design and its accompanying creativity are at the heart of the company's founding principles. The company itself was started in 1969 with the intent to solve a problem: landscape architect John E. Chipman got tired of having to lay off his production crew during the wintertime. He came up with the idea that they could make furniture as opposed to plowing snow, which wasn't very creative. With his wish to do something creative and keep his people employed

“YOU SEE A PROBLEM TO SOLVE, WHETHER IT'S HOW PEOPLE SIT OUTSIDE OR HOW PEOPLE INTERACT IN OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS, AND THEN YOU COME UP WITH THE MOST ARTFUL WAY OF PROBLEM SOLVING. THAT'S REALLY WHAT OUR COMPANY IS ALL ABOUT.”

in the winter, Chipman essentially formed the commercial outdoor furniture industry.

Today, Landscape Forms' products are found in some of the world's most iconic outdoor places. Locally, it supplies the product standard for the Kal-Haven Trail, Bronson Park, Bronson Methodist Hospital, and Western Michigan University. You'll find its products on almost every Big Ten University campus, on New York City's Fifth

through a process, a fairly formal process of design, which starts with understanding what the customer, who in our case is most likely an architectural landscape architect, is trying to solve.” The idea then flows throughout multiple departments.

“Look at our IT department or our finance department. In a lot of companies, those would be looked at as service departments,” he continues.

Jodi L. Havera, vice president of finance and chief operating officer, agrees. The design focus of the company has made her department more “creative in how we report information, making it more user friendly.” When other departments better understand the financial data her team puts together, that information allows them to achieve higher profit margins, allowing the company to invest and grow more.

And grow it has. According to Heriford, Landscape Forms has doubled its revenue every six to seven years since he joined in 2000, when sales revenues were \$23 million.

Over the past four years, Landscape Forms has expanded its regional footprint to accommodate its more than 400 employees. At its original site in Comstock Township, it retrofitted 97,000 square feet to house material storage and metal fabrication and provide expanded capabilities for the custom products of Studio 431, its in-house custom provider of products and services for high-profile public and private projects nationwide. On campus, it created an outdoor Customer Experience Center, an industry first that combines its award-winning site furniture and LED lighting in a natural setting. The company has repurposed a 165,000-square-foot

“I really look at them as strategic departments. How do we use the creativity of technology to create a better customer experience? Or how do you use the art of money, if you will, finance, to create a better customer experience? Could you lease products? Could you do payment plans for customers? It's that constant push, no matter what your job is at Landscape Forms, to take the work that you do to the next level.”



Avenue and in its Central Park, at the Portland Transit Authority and Disney World in Orlando, and in Chicago's Millennium Park. It supports the corporate needs of familiar brands such as Boeing, Cisco Systems, Google, Sprint, American Airlines, Herman Miller, and Nike.

DESIGNING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS MODEL

The company's success lies in how its team intertwines design into its business model.

Heriford explains, “Ideas can come from anywhere—from our salespeople, our strategy team, our marketing team. That idea has to then go



“OUTSIDE DESIGNERS BRING A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OR LOOK AT MATERIALS AND PROCESSES DIFFERENTLY. WHERE WE MAY THINK WE CAN ONLY BEND A PIECE OF METAL 120 DEGREES, THEY MAY FORCE US TO BEND IT AT 170.”

facility at Midlink Business Park, the historic General Motor's Fisher Body Plant, to serve as the center for powder coat finishing, assembly, and shipping from its strategic location adjacent to the I-94 East/West transit corridor. And it has constructed a new 17,000-square-foot production facility for ultra-high-performance concrete in Richland, dedicated to the production of Meldstone™, the company's proprietary concrete composite.

The sales team, usually considered to be left-brained or analytically inclined, also finds its roots heavily invested in design. Jamie May, vice president of global sales, shares that "Our jobs are to build relationships with the design community, turn those relationships into specifications, and those specifications into orders.

"Probably over 95 percent of our sales force has a design degree of some sort. Whether it's interior design, mine's in graphic design, landscape architecture, or architecture, they are all really sensitive to design and are used to speaking about design. When I say sensitive to design, I mean it means something to them. Whether it's what they like to do in their free time or how they organize their lives, design is very front and center with everything that they do.

"For me, personally, when I was going to the arts school in Chicago, I thought being a curator would be the coolest deal in the world. However, I always found myself in the sales of something. I realized I didn't want to be a starving artist. Being in this role, I still get the ability to work with architects and interior designers on projects, and we provide a product that is part of a solution. I don't have to be the part (of the solution) that was drawing



or designing, but being a part of it, for me, is still very important."

If you were to look in Landscape Forms' catalog, you would find complete product lines offering more than a hundred different products, including litter receptacles, bike racks, benches, tables, chairs, planters, shelters, outdoor power sources, stools, lounges, bollards, sun shades, LED lighting, and more.

"For the size of the company we're in, that's quite a few. So we're really set up like a job shop as opposed to a Toyota production system. We're driving a lot of continuous improvement activities," says Daniel Waugh, vice president of group operations. "We have a very simple process for people to make suggestions on how we can improve business, and then we have our continuous improvement team, basically it's our lean quality team, that vets and investigates them, along with the people who made these suggestions. In our company meetings, we celebrate and recognize the people involved and what it means to the organization."

"Our customers tell us the reasons they select Landscape Forms are really four distinct reasons. The first one is design. The second

one is the product quality itself. The third is the customer experience in working with our company. And the fourth is price," says Heriford. At the heart of the customer experience are the people who work at Landscape Forms.

"Ever since day one, our founder believed that culture is this critical, magical thing that makes everything else work," divulges Jim Marshall, vice president of culture.

Marshall continues, "We have an information technology system. We have systems of how we order stuff. We have systems of how we get stuff out to our customers. Those are all these pretty tangible systems, but the people system is a pretty intangible system for every organization. Great leadership tends to get great contribution from the people who are doing the work and maximize the creativity, innovation, or imagination that people bring to their work. My job is really to maximize that people system."

Empathy, or the ability to put oneself in the shoes of another, is a big part of day-to-day operations at Landscape Forms. For Marshall, empathy is found in activities such as taking a class at the company's on-site Welding

“PROBABLY OVER NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF OUR SALES FORCE HAS A DESIGN DEGREE OF SOME SORT... WHETHER IT'S WHAT THEY LIKE TO DO IN THEIR FREE TIME OR HOW THEY ORGANIZE THEIR LIVES, DESIGN IS VERY FRONT AND CENTER WITH EVERYTHING THEY DO.”





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Academy. “I had no idea the level of technical intelligence that goes into welding and the understanding of electricity and amps and bolts and all these things that I really don’t know very well,” he says. And it’s not just Marshall taking a lesson in empathy; 243 employees showed off skills earned in their lessons in welding empathy by competing in the company’s annual welding competition in 2017.

KEEPING THINGS FRESH

To stay at the top of its problem-solving game, Landscape Forms regularly adds a dose of crossover knowledge by collaborating with renowned industrial designers and consultancies, landscape architects, and architects. Think names such as frog design; Designworks, a BMW Group Company; and Robert A.M. Stern, that work side by side with Landscape Forms designers to problem solve for emerging needs and create a sense of place. MultipliCITY is one such grouping of outdoor public furniture elements mass produced for a global market. Celebrated design innovators Yves Béhar and fuseproject weighed in on that collection.

“Outside designers bring a different perspective or look at materials and processes differently. Where we may think we can only bend a piece of metal 120 degrees, they may force us to bend it at 170. It’s very inspiring, and it also keeps our product portfolio fresh,” says Heriford.

Keeping things fresh is one of the tasks of Studio 431, a department named after the number in the street address of the company’s original Comstock location on Lawndale Avenue. Robb Smalldon, vice president of Studio 431, highlighted a few projects. “We just shipped out for Central Park in New York City. We did a Google rooftop in New York. We just finished a huge plaza for the

You’ll know exactly where you’ve been. The experience—that’s really what we go for.”

CHANGING TIMES; CHANGING SPACES

Landscape Forms is witnessing an interesting time in its industry with its move to opposition of space. Hotel lobbies, such as the Summerfield Suites and Marriott properties, are now starting to look like living rooms. Offices are trying to look like kitchens or family rooms. Outdoor spaces are trying to look like indoor spaces. With more people moving into urban areas than ever before, what does that mean for outdoor space?

“BEING OUTDOORS IS IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE. SOMEHOW, IN OUR PRIME WORKING YEARS, WE FORGOT ABOUT THAT.”

Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. Past projects are the Olympic Village in Vancouver, Barclays Center in New York, and the Bryant Park 34th Street Partnership,” says Smalldon.

“We’re also working on the future, the next iconic places, with these top firms. If you’re familiar with the London Eye, that big, huge Ferris wheel in London, they’re building one in Staten Island, New York. It’s called the New York Wheel. We were just awarded the New York Wheel Plaza with all custom, specific design. The brand is going to make it very iconic. If you’re standing in New York Wheel Plaza, if you walk away from it, you’ll remember it.

“We were just recently at Google. People are taking their laptops and sitting on a bench or picnic table and doing their real work. It’s not just emails to friends; they’re actually doing real work. People are actually trying to create rooms outside as opposed to just decorating with benches,” explains Heriford.

Martin adds, “Look at the square footage cost of any building and then compare it to the outdoors. When you stack up all of the costs, starting with concrete through carpet up to building the building, by the time that’s done, you still have to build the furniture to create space. We can offer product solutions, put them outside, and instantly create space.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52



MADE IN (269)

WHERE YOU'LL FIND
PETERSON COMPANY PRODUCTS:

WALK THROUGH A PET SUPPLY STORE
SUCH AS PETSMAST OR YOUR LOCAL
GROCERY STORE PET AISLE – ONE OR
MORE OF THEIR INGREDIENTS WILL LIKELY
BE IN EVERY FOOD THAT'S THERE.

STORY: HEATHER BAKER PHOTOS: MITCH CONRAD + TATOMM (ISTOCK)

FINDING THE PERFECT BLEND

INSIDE EVERY GREAT PET IS GREAT FOOD

The Peterson Company & Blendco

THE COMPANIES

The Peterson Company,
Kalamazoo, MI

Blendco,
Stevensville, MI

THE RELATIONSHIP These co-companies offer complementary services. The Peterson Company develops custom ingredient solutions for the pet food industry. Blendco manufactures those solutions.

YEARS FOUNDED 1947 and 2009, respectively

WEBSITE thepetersoncompa.tpgsolutions.com

REGIONAL FOOTPRINT 30,000+ square feet

EXECUTIVE Leigh Ann Sayen,
president and owner

HISTORY By the mid-20th century, mink fur trapping largely gave way to fur farms. In captivity, most mink consumed commercially prepared feed from makers such as the Kellogg Company and Purina. The Kellogg Company spun this portion of its business out to an employee who purchased it. As mink became less popular in the 1970s, the now Peterson Company transitioned its focus into dog and cat food ingredient applications. This shift made sense, since cats and mink are similar in their nutritional needs.

ITS WHY To develop ingredients meeting special nutritional needs for animals. These diets might require sources high or unique in protein, or contain specialty fibers that prevent hairballs in cats.

CAPABILITIES

Ingredient Optimization, Development and Design Testing, Product Platforms, Custom Blends, Yeast Products, Specialty Proteins

MARKET North American Pet Food Manufacturers

ANNUAL PRODUCTION

100,000,000 Pounds of Product

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES 17

TYPES OF JOBS

Administrative, including Business Development, Finance and Customer Service, Food Service, Logistics, Product Development, Sales, Plant Manager, Production



BEFORE SHIPMENT, SAMPLES FROM EACH PRODUCTION LOT UNDERGO SIX TO NINE DAYS OF TESTING TO DETERMINE IF CONTENTS CONTAIN MICROBES WITHIN APPROVED RANGES AND ARE SALMONELLA NEGATIVE.

BLENDCO IS CAPABLE OF FILLING BULK CONTAINERS WITH **2,000 POUNDS OF PRODUCT EVERY 20 MINUTES.**



a conversation with

Mike Rozewicz

VICE PRESIDENT AT TEKNA

BY REGAN DEWAAL | PHOTOS BY HANNAH ZIEGELER

“We have the ability, every single day, to improve or change the way that people view their daily life.”

WHAT DOES TEKNA DO?

From a product development perspective, we are constantly looking at opportunity and hoping to provide solutions. We do everything from innovation to realization.

WHAT DOES A PRODUCT DEVELOPER DO?

A product developer looks at opportunity and hopes to realize where there are challenges or difficulties within industry or in a particular space. True product developers are constantly looking at the human as the object that we're solving for.

WHAT DOES YOUR TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE?

From a leadership perspective, I'm constantly looking at the growth of individuals and helping to aid in not only their individual growth, but in our organization. How can we be better every day?

WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT?

My grandmother worked at Ford Motor Company. She worked at (the) design center in Dearborn. As a child, I got to go there and see things that no one else got to see. I was fascinated by the automobiles. It's a product; it's a thing that humans use. Ford Motor Company became kind of a focus for me. At some point, I said, "I want to do what they do."

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

My first actual job was in telecommunications. I ran fiber optic cable and set up systems for, ironically, the automotive industry. My first run-in with a major executive was with Bill Ford. I actually got to set up his office at Ford Motor Company.

you're designing a drill for an orthopedic surgery, you may feel like you have to focus just on that environment, when it's really not true. If you think about the human element—the surgeon that's in that room using that drill—he actually leaves the surgical site. He goes home. He goes out to other parts of the world, where he's experiencing things in vastly different ways.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE CREATION OR PROJECT THAT YOU'VE WORKED ON?

I would have to say, most recently, we had a product that we developed for the labor and delivery industry for the mother/baby unit: a baby bassinet that really, truly revolutionized the way that babies are treated in the hospital. We took an industry that really has been untouched for forever—60 years—and created a product that treated the baby equally like a patient.

WITH ALL THOSE ASPECTS IN MIND, HOW DO YOU BALANCE CREATIVITY AND BUSINESS?

I think without creativity, you don't have business. Creativity is the key to success in every business. The ability to be strategic, to see around corners, and to understand true opportunity takes a lot of creativity.

IF YOU COULD USE YOUR CREATIVITY IN A DIFFERENT INDUSTRY, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

A restaurant. I love entertaining. Food brings people together. You have all these wonderful ingredients, and you have to navigate through the processes to develop or transform those ingredients into a result.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AN ASPIRING PRODUCT DEVELOPER?

The key to great success in any industry is amazing mentorship. Utilize the people around you to get to the place where you want to be. My view is that I want to be surrounded by successful people in every industry. They all have an influence. They all have a method. They all have a philosophical viewpoint or a method that has helped them in their career.

FOR THE FULL INTERVIEW,
PLEASE VISIT 269MAG.COM.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST LESSON THAT YOU'VE LEARNED SINCE YOU BEGAN YOUR CAREER?

“Patience.”



WHY DID YOU BECOME A PRODUCT DEVELOPER?

I was going to be an orthopedic surgeon, or at least I thought I wanted to do that. I had an art instructor in high school that led my path to industrial design. He took me aside and said, "There's more to you than just art, and you need to realize what other opportunities there are in that field." He actually introduced me to industrial design while I was still in school, before graduation. It was something that I could be really great at, and that's what I wanted: I wanted something that I was passionate about.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING A PRODUCT DEVELOPER NOW?

I think it comes down to making people's lives better. We have the ability, every single day, to improve or change the way that people view their daily life: their daily experiences, how they work, how they play.

WHERE DO YOU FIND INSPIRATION FOR THE PRODUCTS THAT YOU CREATE?

When we think about the environments that we have to design in, we often look at other areas. If



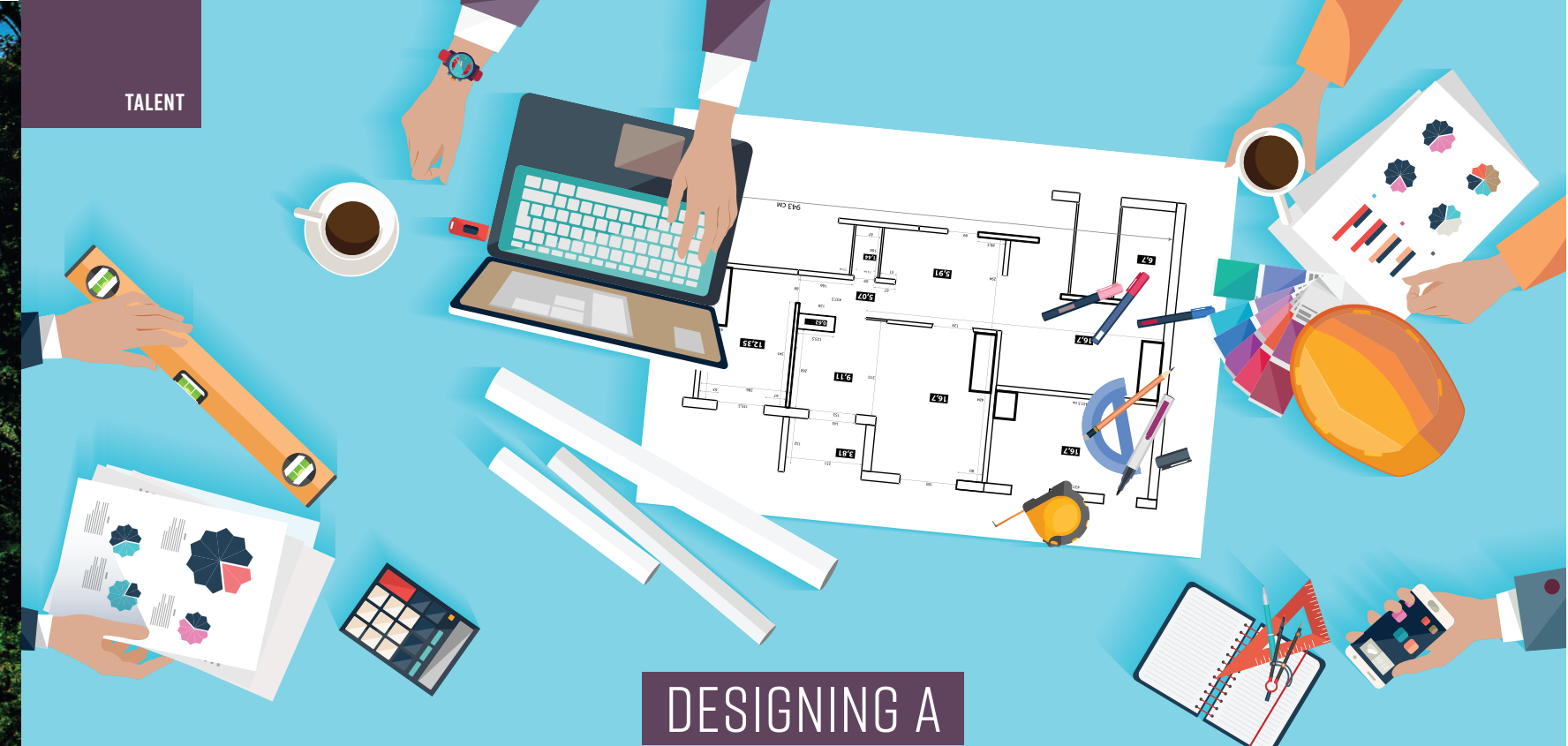
We make meeting times, lunch times and conference times.
But what we'd rather be making are tee times.

Tee times are the official start of what we love to do.
The time for shots we'd rather forget
and the ones we'll talk about forever.

In Michigan, long days, relaxing weather
and more than 650 pristine courses make for the perfect tee time.

Because being able to play all day is Pure Michigan.

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Your trip begins at michigan.org



DESIGNING A COLLABORATIVE WORKFORCE

Make Your Mission Your Company's Best Engagement Tool

BY HEATHER BAKER
IMAGES COURTESY OF
TOWERPINKSTER AND ROGOTANIE (ISTOCK)



WITH
BJORN GREEN
PRESIDENT & CEO

HOW MANY OF YOUR EMPLOYEES OR COWORKERS WOULD SHOW UP TO WORK THE DAY AFTER WINNING THE POWERBALL JACKPOT?

If your answer is a resounding “no one,” then your company might need to rethink that mission statement hanging on the wall behind your door. Companies that fully align their mission with their business strategies experience dramatic doses of creativity, innovation, and commitment from team members. These companies also find themselves a “sticky” place to be, meaning they easily attract and retain high-performing workers.

Just ask TowerPinkster, with locations in the heart of downtown Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids, Michigan. Recently named the “Best Firm to Work for in the Nation” in the Architecture Category at the Zweig Group 2016 Hot Firm & A/E Industry Awards Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, this regional firm offers services in architecture, engineering, interior design, landscape architecture, and master planning. The Zweig award follows a number of other culture-based awards TowerPinkster received in 2016, which include the When Work Works “Flexible Workplace Award,” Engineering News-Record’s “Midwest Top Design Firms,” and the American Heart Association’s “Gold Fit-Friendly Worksite Award.” What sets TowerPinkster apart is its collaborative approach. Its passionate mission statement proclaims its team to be “design leaders creating unique environments with clients and communities.”

The *269 MAGAZINE* team recently sat down with **Bjorn Green**, TowerPinkster’s president and CEO, to snag some how-tos for our readers on how to connect a mission with engagement practices.



BUILDERS OF A CHANGING WORLD

As a full-service construction company, we're helping industry leaders in Southwest Michigan transform the ways people work, live, shop, learn, and heal. We're Rockford - builders of a changing world. And what we do is *groundbreaking*.



Our team has enjoyed an Appalachian Trail hike steps competition, a Halloween costume contest, a homebrewers contest, Pictionary during team lunches, and office scavenger hunts. As a result, we have a group that is focused on championing these culture efforts.

HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR MISSION STATEMENT RELEVANT?

Our original mission statement was created many years ago, yet we consistently review it every two to three years. We believe that part of keeping it relevant is allowing every employee across the organization to have an opportunity to provide input into our mission statement, vision statement, core values, and strategic plan. We have lively discussions as an organization and as small groups to review, refine, and hone (the) exciting process.

HOW DO YOU RELATE THAT MISSION TO YOUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION?

Our mission defines who we are and provides the foundation for every employee to understand and move forward together. The decisions we make as a firm are always filtered through the lens of our mission and our strategic plan. In that way, we can be confident that the decisions we make support our vision.

HOW IS YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) TEAM LEVERAGED TO IMPLEMENT STRATEGY AND OVERALL COMPANY PERFORMANCE?

One of the five goals (of our strategic plan) is “Culture and Teamwork,” which lines up directly with the importance that we place on our people. We have an awesome team, and this will sound clichéd, yet it is true that our strength is definitely our people. Our overall HR strategy is personalized for each individual and parallels the company strategy. The variety of rewards, our performance process, and our focus on teamwork are all aligned to mesh with our desired business outcomes.

WHAT ARE SOME OF TOWERPINKSTER'S INITIATIVES TO BUILD A MORE ENGAGED WORKFORCE?

Our positive, fun work environment is a major factor in our ability to keep our top talent, produce quality work, and exceed our clients' expectations. Our leadership team has made sustaining this family culture a top priority and is supported by our Culture Advisory Action Team. This group plans initiatives such as our incentive-based wellness program, employee feedback surveys, monthly team luncheons, contests, activities, and

more. We provide a mixture of activities for our team and their families, such as a trick-or-treat office event for our employees' children, a summer family picnic, and a kids' day event watching the Kalamazoo Wings Hockey team. It is through these activities that our team members form strong bonds and foster personal connections. Additionally, we invest in teamwork training for each and every member as part of lifelong learning, which I attribute to our successes over the past 10 years.

WITH TWO OFFICES 50 MILES APART, HOW DO YOU ENSURE EVERYONE SPEAKS WITH THE SAME VOICE?

There may be offices in two locations, but we intentionally have created a unified atmosphere, referring to ourselves as a single West Michigan company and promoting identical communication and culture in each location. We are fortunate

that our locations are reasonably close, so our leadership team is able to spend time each week in each location, and many of our projects include team members from both offices.

Beyond ensuring that our locations work together, we hold many opportunities throughout the year for all our staff to interact, get to know each other, and have fun together. We have a variety of training and social events, which we try to alternate between the cities or have at fun locations in between. Our engagement and wellness programs and contests include teams company-wide, with team members from each location working or competing together.

One of our favorite events is our annual team training. We close the office for the entire day and select an off-site location, like Western Michigan University's (WMU) Heritage Hall, a golf course, and Michigan State University's W.K. Kellogg Biological Station, to focus on communication, learning, team building and what it looks like to contribute in a team environment. We showcase one of our team's projects, like Heritage Hall, providing an opportunity for the entire team to see the finished project; it creates a stronger sense of pride.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT TOWERPINKSTER'S RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND ORIENTATION PRACTICES?

More and more, employees are looking for an engaged, flexible, and fun work environment where the culture is the center to everything. We pride ourselves in our collaborative work environment. Currently, 75% of our new hires come from internal staff referrals. We believe that says a lot for our culture. Our employees tell us they are proud to refer their friends to work here. I know this is a statement we have all heard before, yet it remains true today—talent really knows talent.

Once selected, new team members experience a unique 90-day orientation and onboarding process. Some of the highlights include





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orientation to our history, mission, and strategy, as well as an introduction at our staff meetings. We also hold a welcome lunch for them, to get to know the new employee and welcome them to the family. The new employee receives mentorship interaction with each team member in their

recognized. This is accomplished formally at staff meetings and within department meetings where folks share ideas and best practices each month; it also occurs informally through daily interaction within our open office environment, which stimulates this type of engagement.

going and if more support or mentorship is needed to achieve the goals. Our leaders lead by example and support the culture through empowering others and providing resources to make it all happen.

Each one of us, through our daily interactions with each other, creates the culture and strengthens our

bonds. To ensure this happens, we provide opportunities for people to engage with one another, whether it is at our monthly lunch, a contest, a game, an activity, or team training.

Our team has enjoyed an Appalachian Trail hike steps competition, a Halloween costume contest, a homebrewers contest, Pictionary during team lunches, and office scavenger hunts. As a result, we have a group that is focused on championing these culture efforts.

We take a proactive approach in getting to know each person as an individual and promote their growth and development. It is this caring approach, coupled with high integrity in all actions, which fosters the family environment.

discipline over the course of the first 30 days to learn the TowerPinkster way.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES IN ACTION?

We place value on our culture, and we place it at the center of everything we do. We actively build a collaborative environment where the exchange of ideas is promoted and positively

We take a proactive approach in getting to know each person as an individual and promote their growth and development. It is this caring approach, coupled with high integrity in all actions, which fosters the family environment. Each employee has a personalized performance review to set goals to accomplish each year, as well as check-ins along the way to gauge how things are

Know a world-class teacher, principal or school?

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Teachers, principals and schools work tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of the children under their care, making our community smarter and stronger. By preparing our young people to thrive in education and employment, our teachers are building a world-class workforce of the future! The Catalyst Education Awards' mission is to recognize these educators for their transformational work.

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TRAVIS CREE

BY HEATHER BAKER
IMAGES MITCH CONRAD
AND MATT CARUSO

SENIOR ASSOCIATE II OF BIOMETRICS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT AT ZOETIS

DEFINE LEADERSHIP.

Leadership is mobilizing others to make a change, process, or environment.

WHO HAS HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER?

My boss in college, Dr. Damon Arnolds, was the first adult in a position of power that would sit down and challenge how I thought about things. A lot of our conversations were based around racial inequality or socioeconomic inequality. He was the first guy who really got me opening my eyes to something that I didn't know or see.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS YOU MAKE AS A LEADER OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?

The most important decisions are the ones that don't waste people's time. I prefer to go with the best information we have and move forward with the best possible solution.

WHAT IS ONE CHARACTERISTIC THAT YOU BELIEVE EVERY LEADER SHOULD POSSESS?

Empathy. People overlook the fact that the people that they're leading are human, and they have real-world stuff going on. The best leaders that I've seen have the ability to focus on business when business is needed and social when social is needed.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST PRESSING CHALLENGE FACING LEADERS TODAY?

I don't think it's unique to our society now: over the last two hundred years, two thousand years, the leaders in societies have always been older folks. That will be a continuing challenge until we embrace the fact that some people under the AARP level can lead, and empower those folks.

It is the most challenging piece, because the folks that are in the positions of power typically have the most experiences.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN?

I golf a lot. I don't really know why besides that you can do it by yourself. You don't have to have a team. I always played team sports growing up, but golf you can play with a buddy; you can play by yourself; you can play with tons of folks. It's always challenging. Every day's different, so that's been a cool concept.

WHAT'S YOUR "GO-TO" SPOT TO EAT LUNCH IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN?

The Union.

IF YOU COULD GO TO DINNER WITH THREE PEOPLE, WHO WOULD THEY BE?

Bill Gates. Warren Buffett. Derek Jeter.

WHAT ARE THREE THINGS THAT YOU CANNOT TRAVEL ON BUSINESS WITHOUT?

My iPhone charger, noise-deadening headphones, and my golf clubs if I'm able to get away. If I'm going to somewhere where it's going to be business only, then the third thing would be my computer.

BRIEFCASE OR BACKPACK?

Backpack. It's easier to travel.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

I would say seeing others' successes. I don't try to model myself on their best days, but I do try to model myself on their general progression.

WHAT ARE YOUR DAILY ROUTINES THAT KEEP YOU DEVELOPING AS A LEADER?

Either reading a blog, listening to a podcast, or asking someone questions. It's a general information process.

HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN YOUR AND YOUR TEAM'S DAILY MOTIVATION?

By general communication. I like to make jokes. I like to have a good time. We're a very serious society, and we need to remind ourselves that people are people. They like to have fun.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ENSURE YOUR CONTINUED GROWTH AS A LEADER?

I've been taking folks out to lunch to get to know them and network with them. I listen to podcasts; I listen to books. I'm trying to be a knowledge sponge.

WHAT'S ONE MISTAKE YOU WITNESS LEADERS MAKING MORE FREQUENTLY THAN OTHERS?

Micromanaging. A lot of folks are very, very smart and know what they're doing. If you allow them to go through the process, they will succeed.

WHAT WAS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ THAT HAD AN IMPACT ON YOU?

I'm actually currently reading *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, or I'm listening to it. It's been my podcast replacement for the drive. It's been interesting, as some of those companies, I've been involved with, including Upjohn, which is the father company of my company now, to hear some of the comparisons of what people wouldn't see from behind the scenes and peeling back the curtain.

WHAT IS YOUR "LIFE QUOTE?"

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

—Martin Luther King Jr.

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PLEASE VISIT 269MAG.COM.



DENISE CRAWFORD

PRESIDENT AND CEO AT FAMILY HEALTH CENTER

DEFINE LEADERSHIP.

The ability to inspire and motivate others toward a common goal.

WHO HAS HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER?

Dr. Allen Kogan. He was my first real boss in the professional world out of school. He took me under his wing, mentored me, and was a really, really solid good person. The most profound part was just having the ability to watch him and see how he interacted with others as a leader. He would say, "Never forget the true focus. Never forget the patient." He left me his lab coat. If I ever have a really, really difficult day, then I always slip it on.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS YOU MAKE AS A LEADER OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?

For me, it's the ability to impact literally thousands of people's lives from a healthcare perspective. We currently have 36,000 active patients. I take and make those decisions very seriously.

WHAT IS ONE CHARACTERISTIC THAT YOU BELIEVE EVERY LEADER SHOULD POSSESS?

You got to have vision.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING LEADERS TODAY?

I think multitasking, work-life balance, and ethics. The higher you go up, the more you're presented with various aspects and various opportunities. It's important that you stay focused and stay true to yourself, stay true to your values, stay true to the mission, stay humble.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN?

I love to spend time with my family, simple stuff like walks, running, jogging, hanging out on the lake, playing with the dog, watching movies.

WHAT'S YOUR "GO-TO" SPOT TO EAT LUNCH IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN?

Food Dance during the week. On the weekends, I'm a Chinn Chinn girl.

IF YOU COULD GO TO DINNER WITH THREE PEOPLE, WHO WOULD THEY BE?

President Obama. He is a phenomenal leader and I'm extremely, extremely impressed with him in a number of different facets. I've always been fascinated by Oprah. Oprah Winfrey would be at my dinner table. I'd bring Dr. Kogan.

WHAT ARE THREE THINGS THAT YOU CANNOT TRAVEL ON BUSINESS WITHOUT?

Definitely my purse—have to have the purse. Have to have the cellphone. You cannot leave the cellphone. And I have to wear my lipstick.

BRIEFCASE OR BACKPACK?

Definitely a purse. I'm a purse kind of gal—a big purse.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Definitely making a difference. Being true to who I am and remembering that. I believe in giving back and making opportunities and ensuring equity for all people.

WHAT ARE YOUR DAILY ROUTINES THAT KEEP YOU DEVELOPING AS A LEADER?

My ability to check in with my staff. It's important for me to stay connected to what I refer to as boots on the ground. I take it on myself to make sure that I am regularly downstairs. I'm out at the various sites. It shapes my work and keeps me grounded. It keeps me connected. It keeps me fresh.

HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN YOUR AND YOUR TEAM'S DAILY MOTIVATION?

I'm really big on gratitude. We celebrate our successes in small ways. We're big fist bumpers around here. When a positive act happens, when people go above and beyond or we get positive feedback, we are really, really focused on celebrating. People will tell you all the time that this is the hardest place they've ever worked and the best place they've ever worked.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ENSURE YOUR CONTINUED GROWTH AS A LEADER?

I hugely center myself around people who I admire, who I want to be like—leaders who are far more advanced, far more skilled than I am.

WHAT'S ONE MISTAKE YOU WITNESS LEADERS MAKING MORE FREQUENTLY THAN OTHERS?

Forgetting your true purpose. What I mean by that is taking things personally and believing that it's about you. One should not forget about whatever they're representing—it truly should be about either the organization or the stakeholders and, in my case, the community—the patients.

WHAT WAS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ THAT IMPACTED YOU?

There were a couple. At work, we read *Strength Finders 2.0* by Tom Rath. We followed that up with *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements*, which was his sequel. Probably my third one was, because I was reading all three at the same time, *The Unstoppables*, about professional women.

WHAT IS YOUR "LIFE QUOTE"?

"Never, never, never give up."
—Winston Churchill

THE LIFE LIST

the Life List

A collection of who's good to keep up with on Twitter



Bob Goff @bobgoff

20.8K TWEETS | 1,315 FOLLOWING | 212K FOLLOWERS

Bob Goff @bobgoff
None of us really fall in love, we just stop making everything about ourselves, and love floods into the space selfishness leaves behind.

Bob Goff @bobgoff
Quit playing it safe. We were born to be brave.



Jon Acuff @JonAcuff

47.4K TWEETS | 76.6K FOLLOWING | 291K FOLLOWERS

Jon Acuff @JonAcuff
It's like my grandfather used to always say, "Now, what y'all wanna do? Wanna be ballers? Shot callers? Brawlers?"

Jon Acuff @JonAcuff
To the 2,200 people who signed up for my new Writer's List resource in



269 Mag @269Mag

382 TWEETS | 221 FOLLOWING | 175 FOLLOWERS

269 Mag @269Mag
Cold weather means enjoying regional winter ales & more. 269 MAGAZINE's Issue 7 gives recommendations: <http://bit.ly/2gDqNTV>

269 Mag @269Mag
Students at @WesternMichU prep tiny spacecraft for launch by a @NASA rocket



John Crist @johnbcrist

19.4K TWEETS | 285 FOLLOWING | 19.9K FOLLOWERS

John Crist @johnbcrist
"Hey you know how every cup holder known to mankind is circular? Yeah let's go ahead and make our water bottles square tho." - Fiji Water

John Crist @johnbcrist
What idiot named this place Alteration Express and not Tailor Swift?



Frank Luntz @FrankLuntz

16.4K TWEETS | 174 FOLLOWING | 229K FOLLOWERS

Frank Luntz @FrankLuntz
Is the new GOP bill a step forward for America's healthcare system? Join my focus groups to say what you think: <http://FocusWithFrank.com>



Malcolm Gladwell @Gladwell

298 TWEETS | 58 FOLLOWING | 460K FOLLOWERS

Malcolm Gladwell @Gladwell
Adam Alter's brilliant book on digital addiction is out today! One of my favorite books of the year. <http://bit.ly/2mVUykS>

Malcolm Gladwell @Gladwell
Money can't buy you love. But it can buy your kid into Stanford.



Charles Duhigg

19.7K TWEETS | 4,764 FOLLOWERS

Charles Duhigg
A Behavioral Ecology to Make Email L <http://dlvr.it/NZNI>

Charles Duhigg
Is Donald Trump the president? My late



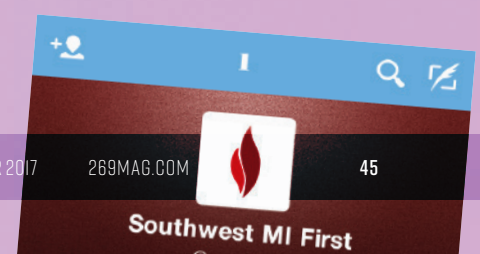
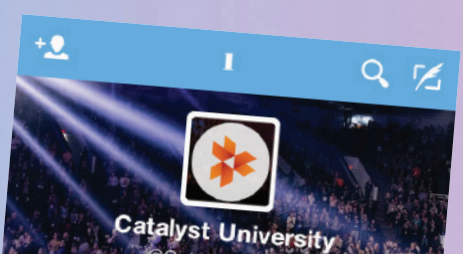


[269] QUOTE

DESIGN CREATES CULTURE. CULTURE SHAPES VALUES. VALUES DETERMINE THE FUTURE.

— ROBERT PETERS

GOT SOMEONE WE MISSED? LET US KNOW @269 MAG!



“Wherever I was traveling, whether it was Baton Rouge or Boston or Bangkok or Beijing, I’d always make it a point to visit a local brewery to sample their beers.”

Tim Suprise

FOUNDER AND CEO OF ARCADIA ALES
STORY HEATHER BAKER PHOTOS HANNAH ZIEGLER



1957 / BORN IN BURLINGTON, VERMONT

I was adopted at three months out of a home to Corydon and Priscilla Suprise—an absolutely delightful couple. They lived in South Glens Falls, New York, which is where I grew up. I was an only child.

1962 / ATTENDED ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL SCHOOL IN SOUTH GLENS FALLS, NEW YORK

I am the proverbial jack of all trades, with just enough knowledge to survive the diversity of investments I’ve made.

1971 / ATTENDED ST. MARY’S ACADEMY IN GLENS FALLS, NEW YORK

I emerged out of those two schools with a sense of leadership that began with the Columbian Squires, a fraternal, youth organization associated with the Knights of Columbus. My affiliation with that organization helped shape me profoundly, as it relates to my ability to participate in an informed way on boards of directors. I had to learn parliamentary procedure and Robert’s Rules of Order in order to conduct our meetings.

1975 / ENTERED ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY IN ALLEGANY, NEW YORK

While there, I was in the U.S. Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, which gave me the opportunity to become exposed to and develop my leadership skills.

1980 / ATTENDED THE NEW YORK STATE POLICE ACADEMY IN ALBANY, NEW YORK

Again, my sense of public service continued. For a period of time, I was very fulfilled and enjoyed the challenge of law enforcement. The last year and a half, almost two years, I worked with the Saratoga County Sheriff’s Department canine team. I seem to gravitate towards the fraternity of things in life. In high school, it was the Columbian Squires. In college, it was the army. Out of college, it was law enforcement.

1982 / PLAYED CORNERBACK FOR THE GLENS FALLS GREENJACKETS

Law enforcement can take its toll. You’re exposed to a lot of human suffering and tragedy and not always the best in human nature. I got a string of months of enough bad stuff that would make anybody take pause. I decided to make a change. At the

time, I felt it was necessary. So for six months, I played semipro football. We went on to play in the championship game of the Empire Football League that season, and I was voted the team's defensive rookie of the year.

1983 / HIRED AS A PART-TIME JANITOR BY ALBANY ENGINEERED SYSTEMS (AES) IN GLENS FALLS, NEW YORK

AES was among the industry's leaders in highly engineered manufacturing equipment for the paper industry. I didn't have an engineering background, but I wanted to get a job at that company. I bugged a guy I played basketball with for a month. He called me up and offered me a part-time job as a janitor. I hung up the phone (hard). My dad, who had come home for lunch to make a sandwich, said, "You'd better call him back right now and say, 'Absolutely, I'll be there. What time do you need me?'"

That started a career that lasted almost 10 years. After about six weeks, AES posted a job for a field service technician in the southeastern part of the country—servicing and starting up the company's equipment at over 100 paper mills between Virginia, North and South Carolina, east Tennessee, Georgia, northeastern Alabama, and northeastern Florida. That posting wasn't up less than five minutes when I took it off the bulletin board, walked into the personnel director's office, put it on his desk, and said, "Your search is officially done." I was based in Augusta, Georgia, and met my wife Mardy there.

Those years taught me that I could teach myself just about anything. Maybe not medicine or nuclear fusion but, who knows, enough to take a stab at beer.

1992 / RECRUITED BY DURAMETALLIC CORPORATION IN KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

This period of time for me, from AES to when I got recruited by Durametallik Corporation, was important to me starting a manufacturing business of my own. Mine may be beer and not equipment for the paper industry, like it was for Albany Engineered Systems, or mechanical seals and engineered fluid sealing products for Durametallik Corporation, but the same good continuous improvement, process improvement, and relationship improvement lessons of the '80s and '90s helped create the culture that we're trying to build into what we're doing here today.

1995 / INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND A CROSSROADS

We secured, during my tenure, a couple of international milestones that I'm very proud of,

one of which was the largest pulp mill in the world, in Medan, Indonesia. Then we opened up China, in 1994, before it was common to have western businesses there. In 1995, Durametallik was in need of a vice president of international sales and marketing. I kind of metaphorically pulled the posting. I walked into the owner's office and said, "You don't have to search anymore because I'm the guy." He found a way to say, "I can't. I wish I could."

I tried to read between the lines, and it was that moment when I said to myself, "You know what, as long as I'm working for somebody else, the next step that I think I should have or that I think I've earned, that I've worked so hard for, may not be there, based on circumstances." What I didn't know at the time,

I got a string of months of enough bad stuff that would make anybody take pause. I decided to make a change.

but was later confirmed, was that the company had been acquired by the Fluid Sealing Group of Duriron Company, now known as Flowserve.

1996 / FOUNDED THE ARCADIA BREWING COMPANY IN BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN

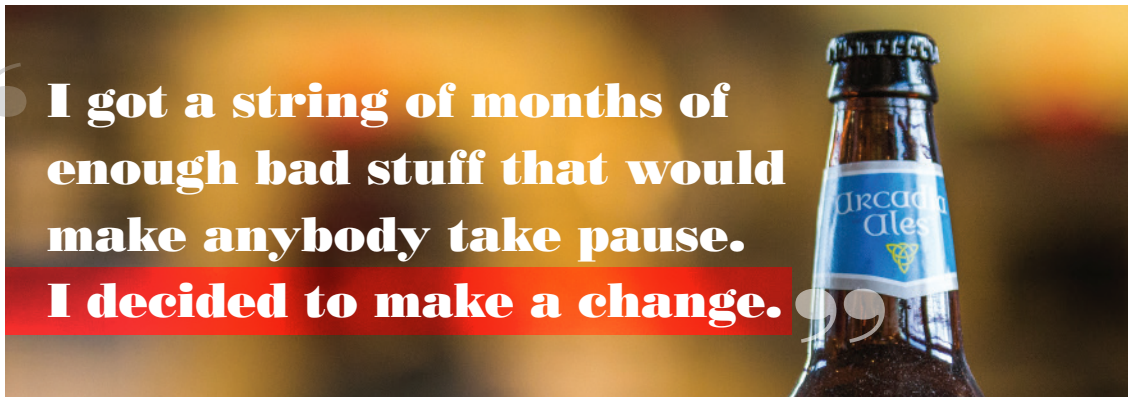
When I was flying all over the U.S. and overseas with Durametallik, I had to have some kind of hobby. I tried to stay in shape, so I would go to YMCAs. And I started visiting local breweries because I had interest in opening my own brewpub or making beer one day. Wherever I was traveling, whether it was Baton Rouge or Boston or Bangkok or Beijing, I'd always make it a point to visit a local brewery to sample their beers. Along the way, I just got a little bit more comfortable and a little bit more enthusiastic about locally made beer as opposed to the mass-produced American premium lagers.

The original Arcadia Brewing Company was going to be where the Kalamazoo Beer Exchange is now, but our initial stock offering came up (more than a million) short. One of our investors introduced me to Battle Creek Unlimited, and we substituted an SBA loan and some economic development loans.

One could make the argument that my timing, or at least making that kind of a jump to a completely different industry, was probably pretty good, at least for my personal career options at the time. I am grateful we hit that curve ball.

2014 / ARCADIA BREWING COMPANY EXPANDS TO KALAMAZOO

I've been someone that's been preaching the gospel of regionalism for a long time. When we expanded into Kalamazoo, we made a profound commitment to the community in Battle Creek that we weren't going anywhere. We would maintain our presence not only because of how much it mattered to us where we got our start, but also for what we represent to



that community as an employer, as a destination, and as a hospitality-based business in downtown Battle Creek. Having the chance to expand on the Kalamazoo riverfront felt like it was completing the circle of what we tried to get going in '96.

2016 / "ACROSS THE POND"

One of the most meaningful times I've had in the industry is our participation last year in this international craft brewer's showcase in England. Two of our beers were brewed and served at two different times in England in 2016. That's a pretty cool thing for our team, because there were 950 J D Wetherspoon pubs that served Angler's Ale in February for two weeks. In September, those same pubs served Thunder Trail ESB.

2017 / TO LANSING AND BEYOND

We've entered into a licensing agreement with a group in Lansing. The Arcadia Ales and Smokehouse on Michigan Avenue will open in late spring. And we're dabbling a little bit in the export market—another manifestation of my prior (international business) experience. There are a lot of beer drinkers throughout the world, thank God!

A Dress

TO REMEMBER

BY KEITH KEHLBECK
PHOTOS MITCH CONRAD

Perhaps nothing is more personal—or more of a rite of passage—than choosing a prom or a wedding dress.

To many prom-goers, as with prospective brides, the process is one fraught with anticipation, expectations, and emotions.

Memories Bridal & Evening Wear aims to make the experience a joyful—and painless—one.

“Styles have changed quite a bit over the years, but what we do has stayed fairly consistent,” says Adrienne Wissner, owner of the bridal and evening wear shop on Michigan Avenue in downtown Kalamazoo. “We want our clients to have an amazing experience.”

A PASSION FOR UNIQUE DRESSES SHOWCASING PERSONAL STYLE

Adrienne always wanted to own her own business, but she didn’t know exactly what that business would be. “I went to school for biology and chemistry and wanted to go into environmentally friendly agriculture, but I also had a passion for unique dresses, so I ended up opening a dress resale side business while I was pursuing a degree, and that business grew and became my vocation and my husband’s vocation.”

Prom style 2017

The prom business is Adrienne Wissner's favorite. "Most of what we do is bridal," she says. "The prom is where my passion lies, however."

Why is that? "I love the variety,"

she says. **"Pretty much anything goes with prom."**

Girls can really showcase their unique style. That's what I'm most passionate about in the store—helping girls feel like they can really be beautiful, and showing them that they can embrace their personal style and be proud of how they look."

For proms, Adrienne notes that trends do vary quite a bit. "For prom this year, it's going to be a lot of two-piece dresses, which have been big the past year or two. Floral prints are also popular. That started hitting last year, and it's going to be really big this year. For the prom, I'm seeing more dresses with long and very sophisticated sleeves."

"From popular designers throughout the country, our prom dresses typically range about \$250 to \$550. We have different ends of the spectrum, but that's where most of our dresses fall in terms of price."

On the lookout for that perfect dress?

For two-piece dresses, dramatic backs, fun prints, and more, visit dresslikeyou.com for hot 2017 trends in proms, weddings, and pageants. The website also offers a Frequently Asked Questions section and a 360-degree virtual store tour.



The original Memories started in Adrienne's hometown of Stevensville. "Then, we opened this one ten years ago, and Kalamazoo is the main shop now. We've since closed the one in Stevensville, because this is where everyone wanted to go," she says. During prom season, which starts in January, the Wissners open a seasonal prom store in the RiverTown Crossings Mall in Grandville, and this year, they will also be opening one in Portage at the Crossroads Mall.

At the flagship location, Memories does everything: bridal, prom, pageant and tuxedos, with bridal being the main focus.

HERE COMES THE BRIDE

When brides-to-be come in, Adrienne notes that they usually have something in mind, but they sometimes end up going in a different direction. Memories' staff works one on one with the customers, seeing how clients react and sometimes suggesting a different style. The goal? Finding the right dress for each woman.

How much time does it typically take for a prospective bride to come up with the right dress for the occasion? "Most of the time, we'll be working with them for at least two hours during their first appointment. A lot of girls do choose their dress during that first appointment, but some like to see all of the options, and they want to have more time to think about

things. Usually three appointments are the most that we'll do. We'll help them narrow down their options until they feel good with their decision."

The most unusual wedding dress request? "Probably our most unusual requests are for full-color dresses or for camouflage-print dresses," says Adrienne. "Some girls love hunting and embrace the country lifestyle. Sometimes, they want to show that with their dress, too. We haven't actually done a full camouflage dress, but we have done beautiful dresses with added camouflage accents for girls and then outfitted their guys in camouflage vests and ties to go with that outdoor feel."

COMPETITION AND REPUTATION

"Our business is all about reputation. There are other competitors in our market. There are big-box stores for prom. We compete with stores at the mall. And there are also some smaller independent shops. For a designer wedding dress or prom dress, girls will drive to find the right store. We will pull clients from an hour, hour-and-a-half radius in to come and shop at our store because they've heard we have a great selection and are fun to work with."

FOR THE FULL INTERVIEWS,
PLEASE VISIT 269MAG.COM.

the
**Always
Forward
Leadership
Podcast**
with Ron Kitchens



Do you desire to lead big?

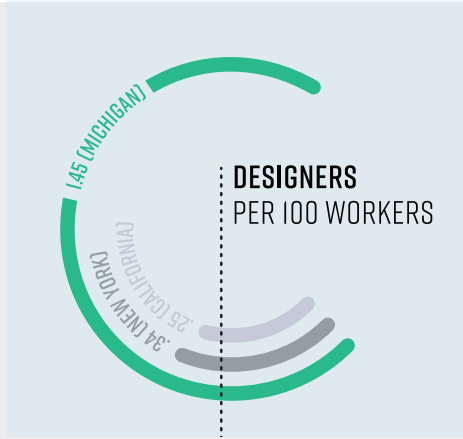
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RON KITCHENS
ALWAYS FORWARD



Creative Economy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

about how to keep talent here rather than raise them and ship them out, and also to unveil some of the cool music, all the arts and all of the creative output, as well as the companies that are collaborating.”

Will all the effort to train, attract, and retain creative workers create real and lasting opportunities for the regional economy and the communities of Southwest Michigan?

Mike Rozewicz, for one, remains optimistic: “At the end of the day, I think we’re extremely proud of our community and what it offers—the natural beauty of Michigan, obviously: the lakes and the environment. We’re a smaller community, very closely knit to each other and concerned about what is happening in the community. It’s different than what you find in bigger communities—Chicago, Detroit. People with families see these values, and the millennials are starting to gravitate to this area. They can personally have an impact.”

Robb Smalldon of Studio 431 puts it this way: “There have always been creative people here, but the awareness is tremendously different now than it used to be. There are more opportunities than ever, and we want to scream from the top of the building that this is what we do. We are design leaders. The awareness and the willingness to talk about it is a lot better. There’s so much momentum right now, including the innovation program and WMU, such a cool thing. It’s not far off to say more design leaders are coming to (Southwest Michigan) wanting to set up shop here because there’s a really good human capital here.”

Tyler Smith

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

and also offers plenty of opportunities to appreciate it. Whether in the 269 area code or beyond, I would encourage everyone to get out there, keep your senses open, and reflect on everything that you experience. Put yourself in the shoes of the architect, graphic designer, chef (and the like), and try to decipher their intentions—you’ll likely find some new questions to ask yourself along the way.

Tyler Smith is vice president/principal at Newhall Klein. You can learn more about how the company helps businesses build better brands through intentionality, strategic thinking, and inspired design at newhallklein.com.

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS (ISTOCK)

- RAWPIXEL | PG 4
- ALEXBRYLOV | PG 9
- GEMENACOM | PG 25
- SANNEBERG | PG 25
- MAGONE | PG 25
- OKSANAKIIAN | PG 25
- COGENT-MARKETING | PG 26
- JUSAKAS | PG 26
- RIDOFRAZ | PG 45
- DINEGUE | PG 45
- MONKEYBUSINESSIMAGES | PG 53

Daniel Guyette

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

we press into the future with the renovated building opening in 2018.

The Richmonds’ generosity and passion have inspired others to contribute to help make this happen. Today, 90 percent of the funding needed to complete the renovation project has been raised, and the architects are hard at work designing a space that will become home to new students, faculty, and staff joining the program as members of the Richmond Institute for Product Design and Innovation.

Despite a recalibration of manufacturing since the great recession, Michigan continues to be the center of design in the country—furniture, automotive, medical device, and appliance design leads the way. Importantly, our market research indicates that there are more designers in Michigan than any other state in the nation; not just per capita, but also the most overall. These jobs can pay \$70,000 or more, well over the national average. Accordingly, both the program and the institute are meant to meet the needs of our community, help drive economic development, and provide wonderful careers for the youth of Michigan who want to go to school, work, and raise their families right here. We know we will also draw students from beyond our borders, which will bring more talent to our region, hopefully to stay.

We look forward to doing our small part to make Southwest Michigan the place to make a home, go to work, and bring dreams to reality.

Daniel Guyette, dean, and Scott Irelan, associate dean, lead WMU’s College of Fine Arts. To understand how passion meets practice at the college, go to wmich.edu/finearts.



The Art of Problem Solving

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

EXERCISING A WATCHFUL EYE

Landscape Forms finds the art of observance key to providing solutions. Here are a few problems solved.

PROBLEM: According to a February 2017 press release by the American Public Transportation Association, nearly eight billion trips were taken via U.S. public transportation in the first nine months of 2016. These travelers demand safety.

SOLUTION: Landscape Forms' transit shelters "use LED lighting, and we're doing simple things like lighting the curb or lighting behind the shelter at night so if you're approached, you know who's back there. Simple stuff, but it makes a big difference," says Martin.

PROBLEM: Workers on corporate campuses want to work outdoors. Access to the outdoors can even cut absenteeism; 10% of employee absences can be attributed to architecture with no connection to nature, according to Terrapin Bright Green's *The Economics of Biophilia*.

SOLUTION: Featured in the January 2017 issue of *Metropolis* magazine, the Go Outdoor Table is "an on- and off-grid LED table, with a solar panel on the top. It has power, so you can

put monitors on it. It's based on our learnings from what we're seeing happening in corporate campuses. When you connect (people) to nature, it reduces stress and makes people more creative. People need a destination," says Martin.

"Its canopy is not really about keeping wind and rain off. It's really about reducing glare from the sun for personal electronic devices, and more importantly, we want to offer a spatial anchor. If you look at human behavior outside, if we were to put this table out in a wide-open space without the canopy, almost no one will use it. The minute the canopy is on, and we've observed this, people use it. They'll make personal phone calls, they'll eat lunch, and they'll have meetings. Something about being in an open space offering spatial anchors makes people feel comfortable."

PROBLEM: Soliciting open discussion during meetings must be a priority. Among its How to Conduct an Effective Meeting training tips, Vanderbilt University's Human Resources Department says leaders should "manage discussion and encourage participation, even explicitly inviting everyone to participate."

SOLUTION: "Standing-height (tables) promote informal social interaction. Just think about a house party or a holiday party. People gravitate toward the kitchen, and they tend to stand in there. Even though you may have a beautiful living room with really comfy furniture, they like to be anchored to something that's standing height to bar height, which is interesting," Martin observes. "If we have meetings at the Go Outdoor Table, people will walk up and interrupt us because it's standing height. There's something about it that signals it's informal. If the same table were lower, almost no one interrupts you."

PROBLEM: Comfortable spaces must be created for people who don't know each other. Humans all tend towards isopraxism, or mirroring, when they find themselves in unknown situations. Fear of

saying "hello" and eliciting no response breeds silence or the reluctance to speak unless spoken to.

SOLUTION: "When we look at human behavior in public space, if we want strangers to sit together, (a space should) use a rectangular table. If you have a small space, fill it with round or circular tables, and expect a lot of strangers to use it, it's not going to work. When's the last time you sat down at a table with a stranger that was round? It's just uncomfortable. Now, they may not know each other, but you'll find that strangers will sit on each end of a (rectangular table) and won't think anything of it," explains Martin.

PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT

Looking forward, Landscape Forms sees a strong future for itself and its products. Why? As people retire from colder regions, many typically move south, drawn by the outdoors, nature, and weather. In the U.S. alone, 2016 population estimates show that 27.9% of the population, or 89,905,767 citizens, are 55 or over. The potential for matching a whole lot of snowbirds with a whole lot of park benches is definitely real.

"Being outdoors is important to people. Somehow, in our prime working years, we forget about that. We don't forget about it, though, when it's our premium time, meaning vacation or retirement," says Martin. "Think of fond memories. If you've been to New York or Paris or Chicago or wherever, let your mind's eye take you there, and then tell me what you see. When I ask that (question), people (usually) say, 'I'm standing outside. I'm smelling it. I'm seeing it. I'm feeling it.' They never say, 'I'm standing in a beautiful space on interface floor tile under floss lighting looking (out the window) at this beautiful pasture.' They almost never connect good memories or human experiences with indoors." And Landscape Forms is more than ready to provide a memorable place to sit or to light a path to foster those experiences.





Where the New Jobs Are

AS REPORTED BY THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS OF BATTLE CREEK UNLIMITED, CORNERSTONE ALLIANCE, SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST, AND SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN ECONOMIC GROWTH ALLIANCE.

Are you a growing business in Southwest Michigan? Let us know @269Mag / 269Mag.com.

Stryker Corporation

PORTAGE, MI
KALAMAZOO COUNTY

stryker.com

NEW JOBS: **105**

Bostik

MARSHALL, MI
CALHOUN COUNTY

bostik.com

NEW JOBS: **20**

International Paper

THREE RIVERS, MI
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY

internationalpaper.com

NEW JOBS: **25**

W-L Molding

PORTAGE, MI
KALAMAZOO COUNTY

wlmolding.com

NEW JOBS: **10**

Ameriwood and Dorel Home Furnishings

DOWAGIAC, MI
CASS COUNTY

dorel.com/eng/ameriwood-industries

NEW JOBS: **87**

G&W Display Fixtures, Inc

BRONSON, MI
BRANCH COUNTY

gwdisplays.com

NEW JOBS: **10**

Depatie Fluid Power Company

PORTAGE, MI
KALAMAZOO COUNTY

depatie.com

NEW JOBS: **5**



BY
RON KITCHENS
PUBLISHER

PHOTOS
JIRI HERA (SHUTTERSTOCK)
PAMELA_D_MCADAMS (ISTOCK)



Recognizing a Great Design

ONE KID WHO REVERED A CEREAL BOX LIKE A REMBRANDT

W

HEN I WAS A KID, WE TRAVELED BY CAR. No iPads. No DVDs. Just

AM radio and our imaginations. Breakfast and lunch were always served out of a cooler in the trunk. One of the real treats on those trips was Kellogg's cereal variety packs in the individual boxes that converted into bowls. The cereal was and is still very good, but the boxes were, as Tony the Tiger would say, "Great!"

For years, I used those boxes as an example in the speeches I gave of how a company listened to the needs of customers and created a simple solution. For me, those boxes are the essence of design. They created additional value (it was the only time we every used single-serve anything at the time) by incrementally changing a product or process.

"Design" has become one of those words that is used almost daily

without a clear definition of what it means. We dedicated this issue to design in an attempt to bring clarity around our belief that a focus on design is the future for our

“Design” has become one of those words that is used almost daily without a clear definition of what it means.

region. The hard concept for design is that it encompasses so much of our daily lives. Like my cereal box, it is easy to recognize “design” when you see it, but it is equally as easy to miss it. I have a new car, and my favorite feature is that the headlights automatically go from high to low beam; no more blinding other drivers. While the feature is amazing, no one's first thought is “Wow, I wonder what the design process looked like on that?”

In Southwest Michigan, we have hundreds of companies producing products and services that have design at their core—from medical devices to yogurt cups, video games and auto parts; from advertising, podcasts, and architecture to sports equipment; and from financial services to software. If we as a region are to thrive, we must become one of the centers of design in the world. This means

investing in design education: thank you, Western Michigan University for creating community facilities and services that meet the needs of creative people! Think amazing urban centers and the best schools in the country too. We must foster an environment that helps companies to grow in our region. Sometimes, this will mean expanding: thank you, Stryker Instruments! Sometimes it will mean moving here: thank you, Newell Brands!

So the next time someone asks you why design matters, ask them if they ever ate cereal directly from the box. Thank you, Kellogg's!

ALWAYS FORWARD,

Ron

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