

Engaging Michigan Community Alumni Networks as Catalysts for Development

*Leveraging People, Platforms and Places
for Michigan's Transformation*

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MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

University Outreach
and Engagement

Purpose

- ▶ Why Michigan alumni?
 - ▶ Necessity of looking for unconventional resources
 - ▶ Value in engaging those outside of Michigan for new ideas
 - ▶ Expanded Internet era notion of community

- ▶ Example:



Catalyzing Economic Development through alumni networks

- ▶ **Engage Alumni Social Capital**

- ▶ Look beyond financial and market resources
- ▶ Tap into alumni networks
- ▶ Crainsdetroit.com/homecoming Sep 17 - 19

- ▶ **Create a Michigan Alumni Ambassadors Program**

- ▶ Foster a sense of pride and responsibility
- ▶ Connect ambassadors to meaningful positive messages and engagement opportunities

- ▶ **Need Organizational Infrastructure**

- ▶ Follow through is critical



Key Questions

- ▶ **Building a Network:** What are the common features among the best practice platforms for non-local to local community engagement and entrepreneurial support?
- ▶ **Building Platforms:** How can we maximize engagement and impact?
- ▶ **Reshaping Michigan's Image:** How do community alumni perceive the 'state of affairs' in Michigan? How might we re-frame Michigan's image in order to attract and sustain alumni investment and engagement?



Methodology

- ▶ **Best Practices**
- ▶ **Existing Research (minimal available)**
- ▶ **Survey**
 - ▶ 105 survey respondents
 - ▶ Notable findings
- ▶ **Interviews**
 - ▶ Business, academia, non-profit, communications sectors



Background & Context

- ▶ States and Cities with Declining Populations have Diasporas
- ▶ Definition of community alumni
- ▶ Colleges and Universities – Birthplace of Alumni Networks
- ▶ Internet Enables Easy and Efficient Cross-Border Communication
- ▶ Mobile Talent Creates Composite Identities
- ▶ Antecedents of Community Alumni Networks in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Across Midwest



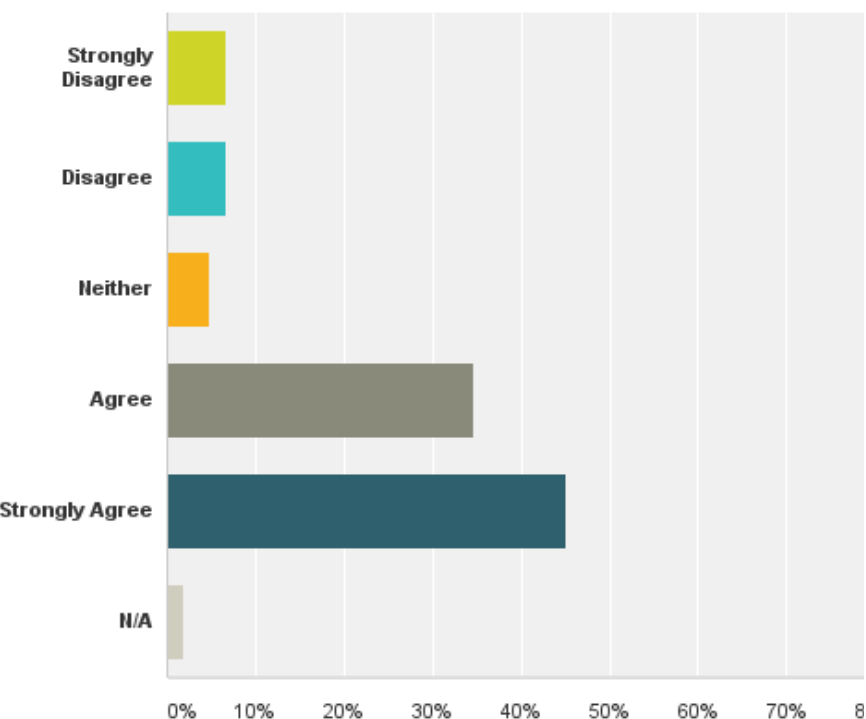
PEOPLE: BUILDING A NETWORK



Alumni affinity for Michigan

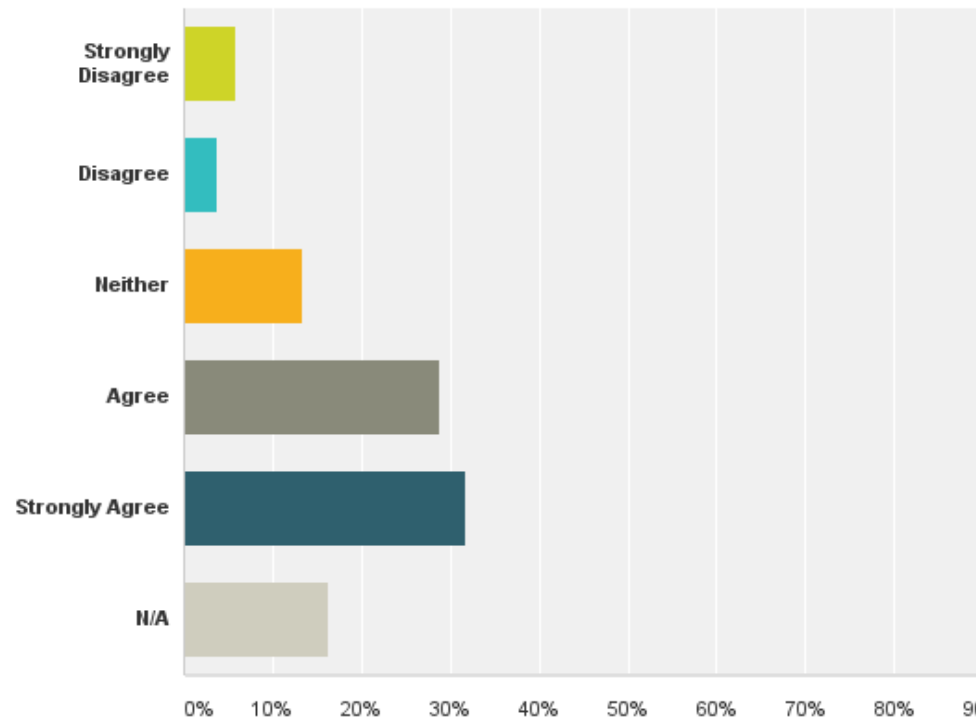
Q1 I feel a strong sense of affinity for my Michigan hometown.

Answered: 104 Skipped: 1



Q2 I feel a strong sense of affinity for my Michigan-based college or university:

Answered: 104 Skipped: 1



Early Platforms: Flint Club



- ▶ Flint Club started before Facebook was created
- ▶ Grew to 1000 members with website and email connections
- ▶ Provided college scholarships
- ▶ Focused on community service
- ▶ Developed emerging leaders



Current Platforms: Michigan Corps

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL www.michigancorps.org/people/founding-corps. The page features a blue background with a white wavy pattern. The main content area is titled "Founding Corps" and lists four members with their photos and biographies:

- Dick Enberg**
Emmy-award Winning Television Sportscaster
Hometown: Armada, Mich.
- Dr. Eric Schmidt**
Chairman and CEO
Google Inc.
- Dr. Larry Brilliant**
President, Skoll Global Threats Fund;
Senior Advisor to Jeff Skoll
Hometown: Detroit, Mich.
- Dr. Sanjay Gupta**
Chief Medical Correspondent
CNN
Hometown: Novi, Mich.

The sidebar on the right contains a "JOIN US" section with the text "BECOME A CORPS MEMBER" and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Below this is a map of Michigan with the text "Michigan Corps is a platform empowering Michiganders to use the web and more to lead change in our home state." and a "Learn more" link. At the bottom of the sidebar is a "KIVA MICHIGAN" logo featuring a stylized tree and buildings.

The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows various application icons including Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, and Microsoft Word. The system clock in the bottom right corner displays the time as 10:56 PM on 6/6/2013.



Providing Entrepreneuers With Resources To Grow



Characteristics of Effective Community Alumni Network Platforms

- ▶ (1) Open Networks
- ▶ (2) Clear Purpose
- ▶ (3) Evolving Technologies

“When considering what constitutes meaningful engagement among expatriates for individuals like me, I think of creating a set of tools that make it easy to engage my skill set and network to advance a specific segment of issues in Michigan. I think about democratizing access to resources and expertise for local resident entrepreneurs through building a network of Michigan expatriates with a knowledge basis who are engaged as part of a network principally through virtual platforms.”



Barriers & best practices in building a strong community network

Complexities arising from personal experiences related to job loss, decline in quality of life, racial and socioeconomic tensions

“Michigan has been torn apart. The folks who will be needed to put it back together have been abandoned by corporate interests, and are disheartened. JOBS. Good paying jobs are needed to get folks enthusiastic about living in Michigan again. Most folks I know just feel trapped.”

“I want to see tangible, direct results of time and money I invest in the state. With the collapse of the cities I'm associated with (Flint and Detroit) that's often difficult to achieve”

“The negative perception perpetuated by Michigan residents of Detroit and Flint has become a very large obstacle in their economic recovery”

“Michigan's government is doing bad things to good people. You need to look in on that and clean your house”



PLATFORMS: DESIGNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT



Designing opportunities for engagement

71.25%	• I really like to talk about Michigan with others.
50.00%	• I am always interested in learning more about opportunities to support Michigan's economic recovery/progress
27.50%	• I am proud to have others know I invest in Michigan
56.25%	• I like to read stories about entrepreneurship and innovation in Michigan
58.75%	• Compared to other people, I closely follow news about Michigan
25.00%	• I prefer to remain connected with Michigan only at a distance
2.50%	• I prefer not to remain connected with Michigan in any way



Michigan Corps Expat Members: interest in various projects

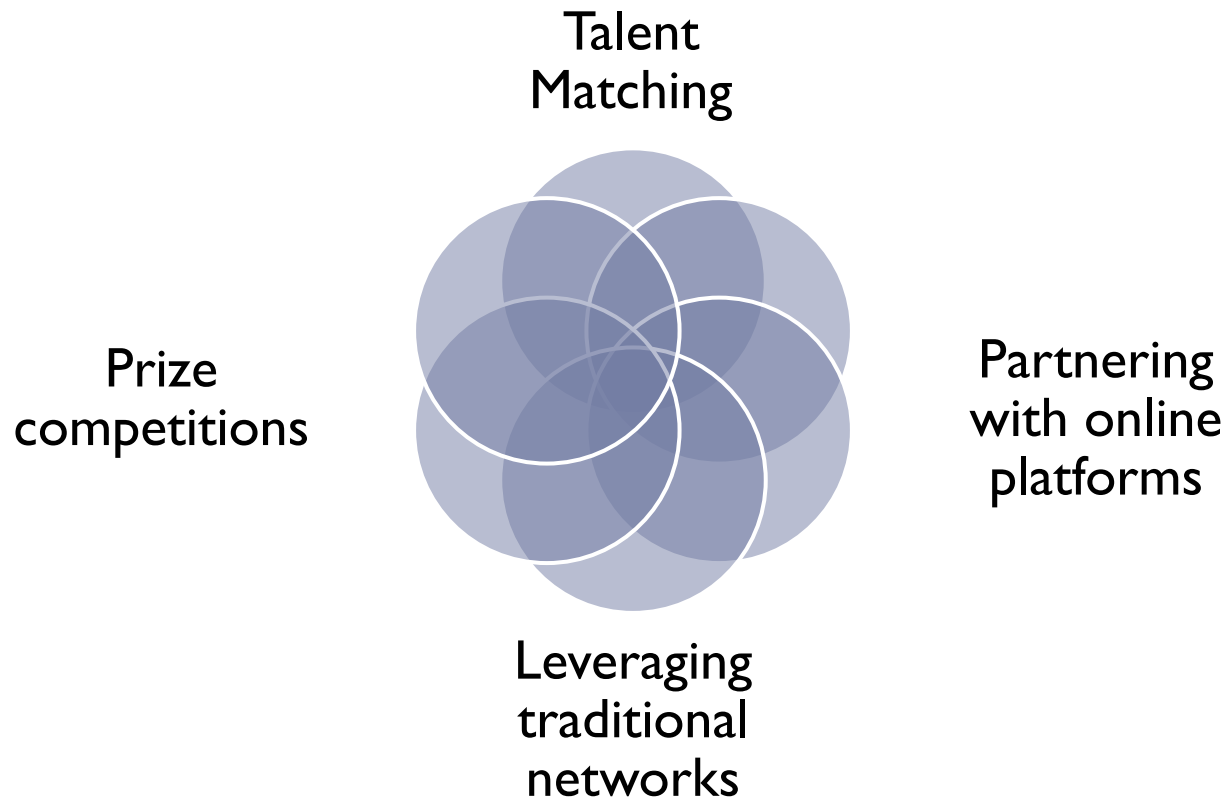
Question	Interested	Very Interested	Tier	Engagement Level
Nominating a Michigan-based entrepreneur for a microloan	50%	14%	1	L
Signing a social change-related petition online	43%	11%	1	L
Lending money to an entrepreneur on Kiva	46%	21%	1	M
Donating school materials to classrooms throughout the state	25%	7%	1	M
Voting on youth ideas for social change projects in their communities	50%	25%	2	M/H
Connecting with other Corps members online to discuss project ideas for the state	32%	29%	1	M
Connecting via the internet in order to participate in community projects	36%	25%	1	M
Connecting with a local nonprofit for volunteer opportunities	41%	11%	1	M
Submitting a concept for a social-impact driven idea for the state	22%	19%	1	M
Working with students to generate ideas for community change	43%	36%	2	H
Judging entrepreneurship youth contests	43%	32%	2	H
Mentoring a social impact entrepreneur in Michigan	29%	25%	2	H
Hosting an event for other Corps members to connect and respond to a call to service	33%	4%	2	H
Helping other social change organizations enter Michigan	48%	4%	2	H
Fundraising for a Detroit-based non profit	26%	7%	2	H

Preferred activities



Dimensions of effective engagement platforms

“I’d love to see mentorship opportunities come up for us expatriate Detroiters in DC. Some of the most successful people leave the state [of Michigan], and that removes intellectual exchange and mentorship. I think being able to engage in that way would allow expats to feel as though they are making a meaningful contribution.”



Case Study: Michigan Social Entrepreneurship Challenge

MICHIGAN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

CHALLENGE

Forbes

Oracle



Capital Flows
Contributor

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Guest commentary
curated by Forbes
Opinion. Avik Roy,
Editor.
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'Shark Tank' For Social Good: Michigan's Innovative Plan To End Poverty

+ Comment Now + Follow Comments

By **Rich Tafel**

The popular reality TV show "[Shark Tank](#)" highlights innovative start-ups pitching to investors. This past year, Michigan piloted a real-life version of this show, but instead of making profit, the idea was to demonstrate an innovative way to address poverty.

In 2013, Michigan created a competition to attract more than \$1 million in new financial commitments to fund unknown change agents—people with innovative solutions to addressing joblessness, environmental problems, urban vacancy, and other issues.



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Barriers & best practices in designing opportunities for engagement

‘What concerns to you have about (re)engaging in Michigan?’

- ▶ I don't have any major concerns: **27.50%**
- ▶ Michigan is not ready for change: **13.75%**
- ▶ Michigan has a poor business climate: **33.75%**
- ▶ Michigan's core cities are filled with corruption: **47.50%**
- ▶ Michigan is divided and people don't know how to work together: **38.75%**



PLACES: RESHAPING MICHIGAN'S IMAGE



Reshaping Michigan's Image

Core themes



When I hear Michigan, it evokes...

A word cloud shaped like a map of Michigan, featuring various words associated with the state. The words are arranged in a way that they roughly follow the outline of the state, with some words being larger and more prominent than others. The colors of the words include shades of green, brown, blue, and yellow.

History
polluted
Gritty
Loyal
beautiful
perseverance
family
heartwarming
stagnant
sentimental
potential
Fishing
nature
backwards
hardworking
Gloomy
Traditions
Stubborn
behind
dilapidated
Trips
water
reinvention
humble
home
managed
Fun

“...one thing that has bothered me is that there is more nostalgia for Michigan rather than what Michigan is and can become. And that manifests in all sorts of ways.

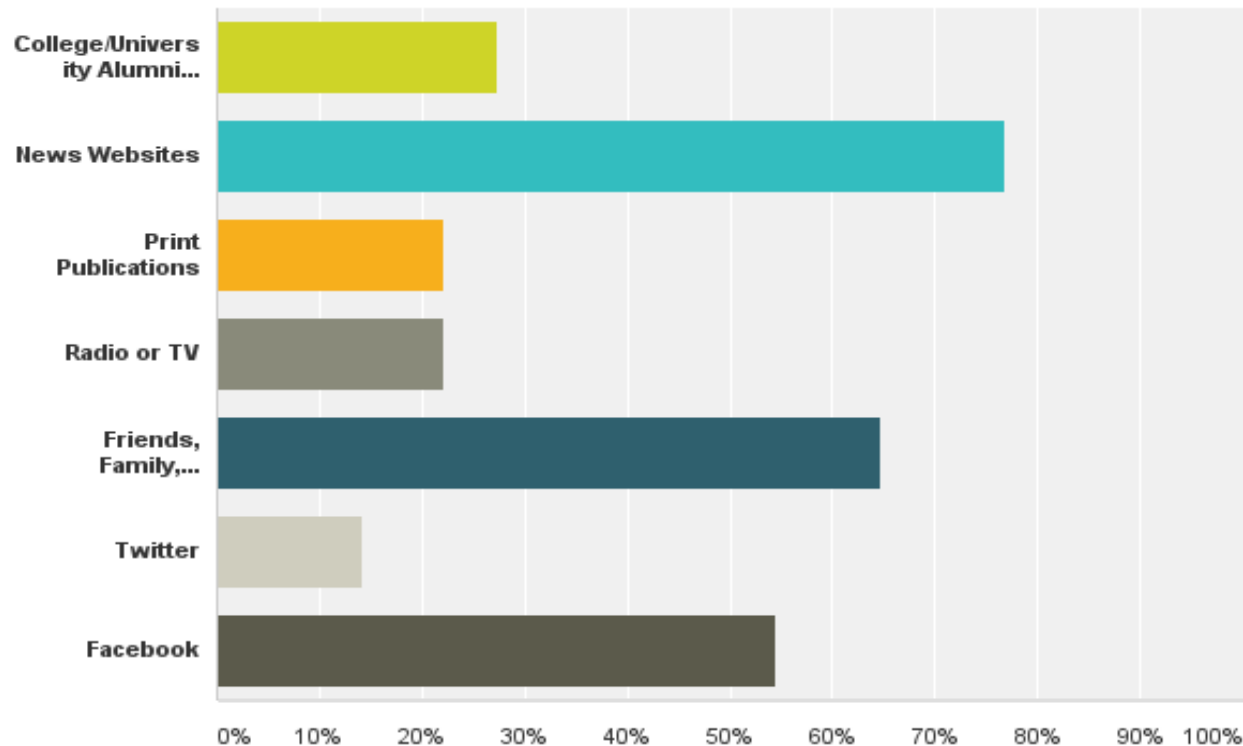
There's a pro and con to this. The brands that are powerful in Michigan are brands that are nostalgic brands, they are linked to the past rather than brands linked to future. But we continue to be bogged down by Michigan's past, rather than focusing on future possibilities and that makes it hard for me to see a role for myself to play there.”



Media Influence

Q4 What are the ways you keep connected with Michigan news that matters to you? (select all that apply)

Answered: 99 Skipped: 6



“I joined a Facebook community for the Detroit neighborhood where I grew up (North Rosedale Park)...I love following the old stories about my neighborhood. There’s also a Northland Facebook group. I joined that as well. I see my friends joining groups for their elementary and high schools in Michigan as well and as long as the conversation threads stay interesting, they’re completely engaged.”

Concluding thoughts

- ▶ Two high potential areas of opportunity: financial capital strategies and social capital development
- ▶ Navigate challenges that may arise from conventional approaches to community economic development and lack of follow through
- ▶ Re-framing Michigan's Image
- ▶ Build direct connection between alumni engagement and community benefit
- ▶ Invest in statewide capacity for thoughtful engagement & follow-through



QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

THANK YOU

@MAYORWALLING

