

FIELD REPORT : Q3 2020

MICHIGAN BUSINESS LEADERS: WE CAN'T COMPETE IF WE CAN'T GET ALONG





In today's economy, communities compete with one another to attract new talent and investment. They compete with their schools, workforce, and infrastructure. They also compete with the strength of their community.

Winning states grow and create new jobs, which pay for better schools, roads, and parks. New investment attracts more new investment, and so on. On the other hand, states that fail to bring in new investment can spiral as their shrinking economy causes young workers to move away.

For years, business leaders in Michigan have shared a simple, powerful point with their employees, suppliers, customers, and neighbors: We cannot compete if we cannot get along. We need to work together, respect one another, protect one another, and bring out the best in one another.

The 2020 election will be among the most contentious in recent history. It's okay for citizens of good faith to disagree strongly, but we must commit ourselves to protecting the most vulnerable among us -- and we must reject those trying to divide us.

This report features comments, recommendations, and advice on diversity, inclusion, and tolerance from many of Michigan's most successful business leaders, as well as the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies operating here. Some relate to recent events, like the murder of George Floyd. Others relate to the "Detroit Civility Project," an effort to encourage an open dialogue across the business community. And some relate directly to comments made by President Trump.

If you are interested in learning more, Business Forward is working with community organizations and faith leaders to share ways to manage the discord online, in the news, and on our streets. We encourage you to learn about our program, contribute your own ideas, and participate in one of our trainings.

If we work together, Michigan can compete with anybody.

CASE STUDY: DETROIT CIVILITY PROJECT



Launched in 2019, the Detroit Civility Project is a partnership between the Detroit Chamber of Commerce and journalists Nolan Finley and Stephen Henderson. The project encourages shared conversations and resources amongst people with different backgrounds. When people learn more about each other, it's much more likely they're willing to see the other's perspective. At the end of the day, that ability to effectively work together drives economic competitiveness in Michigan.²³

“

Given the progress Michigan and Detroit have made in recent years — and how much remains to be accomplished — we cannot afford to follow the example of incivility that grips much of our national dialogue. The continuation and acceleration of Michigan's progress is dependent upon all of us working together, finding common ground and handling our inevitable disagreements with humility and grace.

”

- SANDY K. BARUAH
CEO, DETROIT REGIONAL CHAMBER

“

Racism and inequality are very bad for business, for the economy. There's a cost for all of us... in terms of economic prosperity and progress, along with human relationships and the damage it's doing to people... It will benefit [business]; this isn't altruism, this is something that has to be done.

”

- NOLAN FINLEY

“

Nolan and I are really committed to the idea that no matter what the idea is, how offensive it might be to the other person, we can have this conversation and do it in a way that is productive and leads to solutions. The civility project is all about that.

”

- STEPHEN HENDERSON

PART OF A NATIONAL TREND

“THE COST OF SILENCE:
WHY MORE CEOS ARE SPEAKING
OUT IN THE TRUMP ERA”²⁴

The Washington Post

“A WATERSHED MOMENT
IN CEO ACTIVISM”²⁵

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

“WHY CEOS CAN’T STAY
SILENT IN THE WAKE OF EVENTS
LIKE CHARLOTTESVILLE”²⁶

Harvard Business Review

“CEOS LONG AVOIDED POLITICS.
TRUMP IS CHANGING THE CALCULUS”²⁷

“Fomenting racial unrest is not in the nation’s
interest and it’s not in businesses’ interest,”
[Jeffrey Sonnenfeld] said. “Divide and conquer
has always been Trump’s strategy, and
somehow it has worked until now. The way to
take a bully down is through collective action.”

The New York Times

CEOS ACROSS THE U.S.

1000+

COMPANIES

ACROSS 85 INDUSTRIES
HAVE COMMITTED TO CEO
ACTION’S PLEDGE.²⁸

NORTH CAROLINA BATHROOM BILL

200+

COMPANIES

SIGNED ONTO A LETTER URGING THE
GOVERNOR TO REPEAL THE LAW
THAT REQUIRED TRANSGENDER
PEOPLE TO USE BATHROOMS BASED
ON THEIR BIRTH SEX.²⁹

SEPARATION OF FAMILIES

120 companies opposed the policy
of separating refugee children
from parents at the border.

More than 60 CEO members of
the Business Roundtable wrote a letter
to DHS stating the government “must
avoid making changes [to immigra-
tion policies] that disrupt the lives of
thousands of law abiding and skilled
employees, and that inflict substantial
harm on U.S. competitiveness.”³⁰

MUSLIM TRAVEL BAN

127

COMPANIES

JOINED LAWSUITS AGAINST
THE TRAVEL BAN³¹

CASE STUDY: RESPONSE TO CHARLOTTESVILLE

In the aftermath, more than 30 CEOs from major companies resigned from or voted to disband 2 White House advisory panels.

“ America’s leaders must honor our fundamental values by clearly rejecting expressions of hatred, bigotry, and group supremacy... As CEO of Merck and as a matter of personal conscience, I feel a responsibility to take a stand against intolerance and extremism. ”

- KENNETH FRAZIER
CEO, MERCK PHARMACEUTICALS³²



“ I have already made clear my abhorrence at the recent hate-spawned violence in Charlottesville, and earlier today I called on all leaders to condemn the white supremacists and their ilk who marched and committed violence... ”

- BRIAN KRZANICH
CEO, CDK GLOBAL
FORMER CEO, INTEL³⁴



“ There would be no GE without people of all races, religions, genders, and sexual orientations. GE has no tolerance for hate, bigotry, racism, and the white supremacist extremism that the country witnessed in Charlottesville last weekend. ”

- JEFFREY IMMELT
FORMER CEO, GE³⁶



“ As the events of the last week have unfolded here in the U.S., it is clear that we need to collectively stand together and denounce the politics of hate, intolerance and racism. The values that are the cornerstone of our culture: tolerance, diversity, empathy and trust, must be reaffirmed by our actions every day.³³ ”

- GREY HAYES
CEO, UNITED TECHNOLOGIES



“ I strongly disagree with President Trump’s reaction to the events that took place in Charlottesville over the past several days. Racism, intolerance and violence are always wrong... There is no room for equivocation here: the evil on display by these perpetrators of hate should be condemned and has no place in a country that draws strength from our diversity and humanity. ”

- JAMIE DIMON
CEO, JPMORGAN CHASE³⁵



“ Racism and murder are unequivocally reprehensible and are not morally equivalent to anything else that happened in Charlottesville... I believe the President should have been -- and still needs to be -- unambiguous on that point. ”

- DENISE MORRISON
FORMER CEO, CAMPBELL SOUP³⁷



CASE STUDY: BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE



The Business Roundtable (BRT) is a nonpartisan national trade group that generally supports conservative policies. The group recently issued a statement calling for unity and urgent action against inequities. BRT Chairman and Walmart CEO Doug McMillion established a special committee to advance racial equity and justice.



Over the past few days, I have watched with a heavy heart the violence, unrest and national outcry to end race-based injustice. ...Having spoken to many CEOs of America's leading businesses, I know they share my conviction that this is a time to act to address racial inequality... Business Roundtable CEOs do not have all of the answers. But we are committed to doing our part to listen, learn and to use our collective influence and scale to advance racial justice and equal opportunity for all Americans.



- DOUG MCMILLION
CEO, WALMART³⁸



As the employers of more than 15 million individuals of all backgrounds, whose diversity strengthens our institutions, Business Roundtable CEOs are deeply concerned about the racial bias that continues to plague our society. At a time of great uncertainty, when communities of color are facing deep inequities, now is a time for unity and justice. We call on national, local and civic leaders to take urgent, thoughtful action to prevent future tragedies and to help our communities heal.



BR Business Roundtable³⁹

CASE STUDY: WITH “TIME TO VOTE,” BUSINESSES PROTECT DEMOCRACY

Time To Vote

“Time To Vote is a nonpartisan movement, led by the business community, to contribute to the culture shift needed to increase voter participation in our country’s elections.”⁴⁰

“ This campaign isn’t about any particular party or candidate or issue – it’s about encouraging more people to vote without having to make the hard choice between going to work and going to the polls. ”

- CHIP BERGH
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF LEVI STRAUSS & CO.



“ Demonstrating your company’s commitment to voting reinforces the idea that American businesses can protect our democracy. I have been heartened to see business leaders from every corner of the country and across a range of industries prioritizing the health of our democracy and I look forward to seeing this movement grow. ”

- ROSE MARCARIO
CEO OF PATAGONIA



“ The purest expression of any person’s freedom occurs in the voting booth - it is our collective moral duty as CEOs to accommodate every citizen in pursuing that privilege. ”

- TODD CARMICHAEL
CEO OF LA COLOMBE



MORE THAN 600 COMPANIES HAVE JOINED THE INITIATIVE, INCLUDING MANY THAT OPERATE IN MICHIGAN:



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