

MICHIGAN LODGING AND TOURISM ASSOCIATION REBRANDING AND RENAMING PROJECT

It's official: the Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association has a new name, and a new look for its legacy. Together with partners and members throughout the State of Michigan, Advance 360 guided their journey to their new name and brand, now known as Check In Michigan.

WHO IS CHECK IN MICHIGAN?

Check In Michigan is an association for the hospitality and tourism industry, leading efforts to benefit hotels, attractions, and hospitality ventures through out the state.

THE SCOPE OF WORK

Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association, as it was formerly known, knew that they were poised to reinvent themselves. Under new leadership and with a changing landscape for lodging entities with the surge in short-term rental companies like Airbnb, the collective efforts of advocacy on legislation around Post-Labor Day Academic Year, minimum wage and Pure Michigan funding, the work of the association was stronger than ever, but their dated identity no longer served them well.

Advance 360 was contracted to develop charrettes for the stakeholder groups across the state, use the findings to develop a logo and identity system, and launch a new web presence for the association's conference and institutional websites.

Of this work, Deanna Richeson, President and CEO of Check In Michigan wrote, "Our association has a rich history of 112 years representing a widely diverse industry, and we wanted to forge a stronger future for our hotels, attractions, and hospitality ventures. We envisioned honoring the contributions of those

who were before us, and yet opening our arms to embrace younger generations of rising leaders. Clearly this required the skills of master communicators! Over several months, [the Advance 360 Team] created a process that was inclusive, reflective, expansive and thorough. We held several focus groups with a diverse kaleidoscope of hospitality stakeholders, including engaging exercises that gleaned rich insights into the values, emotions and preferences of our participants."

THE CHARRETTE EXPERIENCE

Participants: 73

Geographies: Traverse City, Grand Rapids, Farmington Hills

Total Themes: 68

Theme "Categories": 16

The association's team recruited a diverse group of open minded individuals to share their thoughts and stories. Activities generated forward iterations on individual ideas, and the groups were able to weigh in personally as well as in groups. From 68 ideas that emerged during these discussions, 16 common themes were forged, crossing the generational, business, and personal preferences of those in the rooms. These themes became the source for creative inspiration for logo designs.

BUT THESE JOURNEYS ARE RARELY LINEAR

"Just when we thought we were nearing our final stage, MLTA realized we were envisioning a new culture and decided to choose a new name as well a new logo. We were also racing against the clock to announce our new brand at the annual industry conference," said Richeson.

Advance 360's regroup was immediate. An additional focus group, called the "Groundswell" was formed to further explore the concept of a new name, build further "buy-in" to this change in direction, and build upon what had already been explored. Activities during this session built to a crescendo around the strategic priorities that would need to be reviewed by the Board of Directors.

This charrette was followed by two board planning sessions to do just that. These sessions were intense for everyone, but harvested the best version of commonality across all the collected data and overcame any hesitation around change for the organization at large. The board was a united team and was energized to "grow forward."

NOW WHAT?

Now the design began. Over a months-long process, the guiding principles of the association were built into a verbal representation of the brand (name) and the visual representation (logo). The group that carried us forward toward that end was formed with executive team members, board members, and a cross section of industry representation.

"None of us looked back, but instead focused on the tasks ahead with a team of stakeholders who met to guide the design process with their input. The result was stunning ... a look that was strong, professional, inclusive, inviting, and even a tad fun."

FORMER NAME AND LOGO



NEW NAME AND LOGO



“Almost a year ago, Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association realized our growth was constrained by a traditional model that had served us well, but was no longer aligned with our vision for our future organization. Following a highly competitive RFP process to identify a firm that could design a brand that would add momentum through our next growth phase, Advance 360 became our partner and truly is now part of our team. I speak for our staff and board of directors in fully recommending A360 and Anne Drummond to any organization seeking to brand or rebrand their identity.

In the hospitality community, we hold that people are our most valuable asset. So while the rebranding process was long, exciting and demanding, the path has been smoothed and enriched by the talented hearts and souls that make up the A_360 team. From their initial team presentation through countless turns and unexpected requests, Anne [Drummond], Kami [Kennedy] and Corina [VanDuinen] have listened with full presence, responded quickly with creative perspective and blended timely candor with light humor. They are “ALL IN...” one hundred percent. The culture at A360 is one where team members honor one another, respect and count on each other’s talents in a way that overcomes minor speed bumps. And this is how they engage with us, as well...more as partners than clients. This quickly fostered a deep trust that allowed us to travel a fluid path to our new brand identity.

Our association has a rich history of 112 years representing a widely diverse industry, and we wanted to forge a stronger future for our hotels, attractions, and hospitality ventures. We envisioned honoring the contributions of those who were before us, and yet opening our arms to embrace younger generations of rising leaders. Clearly this required the skills of master communicators! Over several months, the team created a process that was inclusive, reflective, expansive and thorough. We held several focus groups with a diverse kaleidoscope of hospitality stakeholders, led by Anne through creative, engaging exercises that gleaned rich insights into the values, emotions and preferences of our

participants. Two board retreat exercises were designed and facilitated by Anne, the second of which was modified on the fly to accommodate an unexpected turn of events. All this was delivered with grace and calm, fueled by A360’s tireless determination to land us at our destined point.

Just when we thought we were nearing our final stage, MLTA realized we were envisioning a new culture and decided to choose a new name as well a new logo. We were also racing against the clock to announce our new brand at the annual industry conference. In spite of the drastic change in plans, Anne and her team responded to our request within days and rolled out a revised timeline that would still meet our conference deadline. None of us looked back, but instead focused on the tasks ahead with a team of stakeholders who met three times as Anne guided the design process with their input. The result was stunning ... a look that was strong, professional, inclusive, inviting, and even a tad fun.

Once the brand identity was complete, the final leg of our marathon was creating the “brand reveal.” Our A360 partners are creating the presentation that will inspire nearly a thousand conference attendees, from scripting the presentation to creating an animated video that excites the imagination and “cool factor” among our audience. I am completely confident in the positive reception of our new brand identity, and in the electrified energy the audience will experience at our brand reveal. My highest professional respect and deep gratitude goes to the team at Advance 360!

Deanna Richeson, President / CEO
Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association