

BottomLine



THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS // VOL. 33, NO. 1 // JANUARY 2022



The Must Do for 2022

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2022

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Entering The New Year // PAGE 4

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Michigan's Two-Decade Workforce Decline // PAGE 14



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BottomLine

THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS
VOL. 33, NO. 1 // JANUARY 2022

features



UNDERSTANDING ILLINOIS' POLITICAL LANDSCAPE ENTERING THE NEW YEAR

- COVID-19 Forces Modifications in Legislative Engagement
- Illinois Legislative Redistricting – Redrawing Legislative Representation for Next Decade
- Ongoing Issues To Be Addressed In 2022



COVER STORY // THE MUST DO FOR 2022

It is a tough time to run a small business. Rising prices, worker shortages and supply chain disruptions are some of the current challenges. Some people are weighing in on what must be done for independent retailers to be successful in 2022.



LIVONIA CHAMBER LOOKS AT WHAT'S CONTRIBUTED TO MICHIGAN'S TWO- DECADE WORKFORCE DECLINE

Over the last year, MIRA has reported on the workforce shortage in the country, primarily in the Midwest. The Livonia Chamber of Commerce took a closer look at the decline in Michigan which spans over two decades.



chairman's message

CLIFTON DENHA // MIRA CHAIRMAN

Minimizing “Shrinkage”

As we work our way out of this pandemic and venture into a new year it is likely time to re-implement some policies and procedures that have been overlooked during the past eighteen months. I’m talking about “shrinkage”. Any merchandise that leaves the premises without being accounted for is considered “shrinkage”.

About one-third of shrinkage can be attributed to employee theft, another third to shoplifting, followed by vendor fraud and inventory errors.

You need to let your employees know that you are watching your inventory. The first thing I recommend is actually paying for anything you “buy” at your store. Whether it’s fuel, pop, cigarettes, coffee, etc. If they see you paying, they are less likely to think they can take anything without paying for it. You may have an “employee discount” button on your cash register, but everything must be paid for. I even pay for anything I offer to a delivery person or friend as a gift. This reinforces the optics that all product is accounted for.

Cameras help reduce the amount of employee theft and shoplifting. Let your staff know that you are aware of what’s going on in your store and you are keeping track of inventory. It’s hard to review hours and hours of videos, but if you suspect a certain shift or employee that specific review can help you confirm if you have a problem.

I know its tedious, but review journal tapes and check out documents for “unusual” entries. Too many “no sale” rings are a clue to the sale of unscanned merchandise, perhaps to friends or relatives. Excessive “deposit returns” are another clue to be investigated.

Scheduled regular inventories need to be performed at least monthly. I would recommend inventory of cigarettes and lottery tickets at the conclusion of each shift. The oncoming shift should verify the numbers recorded by the outgoing shift to make sure the numbers match. Without verification the outgoing shift can deflect shortages to the oncoming shift. These are items that are easily pilfered and can cost you plenty each month. Keep unneeded tobacco and lottery tickets locked up until needed upfront. With appropriate shift reports and a little practice this is an easy process. A month-end inventory performed by an outside inventory auditing company can assure continuity of your inventory numbers.

Look around your cash register and see if there is any indication that there is a system being used to keep track of sales that are not being rung up. Let your employees know that you verify sales and receipts at the end of each shift and full day.

Make sure you check-in inventory deliveries against the invoice and note changes on the invoice before the delivery driver departs. Most delivery personnel are honest, but honest mistakes occur and sometimes less than honest mistakes occur. Its easier to handle a “short” delivery before the driver leaves than a day or two later when its “he said/she said”.

If you trust a shift manager with price changing authority be sure to regularly check and verify price changes and “test sales” that are recorded on your cash register. This can be a source of disappearing merchandise.

I don’t want to sound so negative, but it is only prudent to manage your inventory.

In the meantime, stay safe! And remember MIRA continues to work on your behalf. ■

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illinois lobbyist report

STEPHEN S. MORRILL // MORRILL & ASSOCIATES, PC

Understanding Illinois' Political Landscape Entering The New Year

COVID-19 FORCES MODIFICATIONS IN LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT

2021 established a “new normal” in the legislative process; instead of passing by crowds of school children on field trips, trade groups representing their industries, and citizens seeking to petition their government in the halls of the Capitol Complex, the buildings remain quiet and almost empty. Committees are now held in a hybrid remote/in-person model, and legislators are allowed to vote virtually by way of video during session. Entry to the capitol is restricted to “appointment only,” and legislators, staff, and lobbyists who wish to enter the complex are required to test negative for COVID-19 twice each week. Given the strict COVID-19 protocols, in person lobbying and advocating in Springfield has largely taken a back seat to electronic communication for the time being. Emails, texts, video conferencing and Zoom calls have become the best ways to reach legislators and staff. Having cell numbers, and getting through via text or call, has become critical to success.

Illinois continues to impose its strict COVID-19 protocols, as Governor Pritzker continues to re-issue his emergency executive orders – most recently on Friday, December 10 – to extend the statewide COVID-19 protocols until January 8, 2022 (Illinois remains in Phase Five protocols). It is anticipated the Governor will continue to impose and modify such executive orders throughout, at least, the first six months of 2022. This will include limited access to all governmental offices and allows for the continuation of remote governance at all levels.

ILLINOIS LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING – REDRAWING LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION FOR NEXT DECADE

According to the Illinois Constitution, and codified within Illinois statute, every ten years the Illinois General Assembly is required to redraw state and federal legislative districts after the federal census is conducted by the United States Census Bureau. Illinois law requires the Illinois General Assembly must approve new state legislative district maps by June 30th of the year following the federal census; passage of federal legislative district maps typically is approved at the same time, but no later than November of the redistricting year. Failure to approve new state legislative maps forces the redistricting process to a commission process in which the “majority” party on that commission is literally chosen by drawing a name out of a hat. This structure provides strong incentive to the incumbent majority party in the General Assembly to enact a

new legislative district map before the June 30th deadline.

2020 was the most recent decennial census year and requires Illinois to enact new state and federal legislative maps during legislative session. Due to COVID-19 and federal litigation, the 2020 census began four months late on April 1, 2020 and delayed certification of the final census numbers for each state until September 2021. Because of the delay in certification, the Democratic legislative leaders utilized census data from the American Community Survey to develop and enact HB 2777 – the initial 2021 legislative district maps. The General Assembly approved HB 2777 on May 28, 2021, and the bill was signed into law on June 4, 2021.

In mid-August 2021, the U.S. Census Bureau released its final 2020 census numbers. The new census figures showed a net population decline in Illinois – resulting in Illinois losing one congressional seat (from 18 seats to 17 seats). The release of the 2020 census numbers also allowed the Illinois Democratic Party to revise its 2021 legislative redistricting maps to address the issues raised in filed court challenges. The Illinois General Assembly reconvened on September 1, 2021, to approve revised state legislative district maps – contained in SB 927 – and Governor Pritzker signed the new maps into law on September 24, 2021 (becoming PA 102-663). The 2021 congressional redistricting map was finalized in October 2021, the legislation – HB 1291 – was approved by the legislature during the fall veto session in late October, and was sent to Governor Pritzker on November 2, 2021. Governor Pritzker is expected to sign HB 1291 into law.

It is important to note that in the year after new legislative district maps are approved – or the upcoming 2022 election cycle in this case – all 177 legislative district seats are up for election. In anticipation of potential legal challenges to the new legislative district maps, the Illinois General Assembly passed legislation in May 2021 that delayed the 2022 petition collection deadline for elected office until January 13, 2022 and the 2022 primary election until June 28, 2022.

The new legislative district maps have already impacted the upcoming 2022 elections. Regarding Illinois congressional races:

- Democratic Congresswoman Mary Newman has announced she will challenge Democratic Congressman Sean Casten in the primary for Illinois' new 6th District.
- Republican Congressman Adam Kinzinger – who was drawn into a new district with Republican Congressman Darin LaHood – has decided not to seek reelection.
- Republican Congressman Rodney Davis has decided to run for reelection (and forego a run for Illinois governor).

Regarding Illinois state legislative races:

- Rep. John D'Amico (D-15) has resigned his legislative seat (effective November 12, 2021) and Michael Kelly was appointed to replace him.

michigan lobbyist report

MATT MINER // CAPITOL STRATEGIES GROUP



- Rep. Mark Batinick (R-97) has announced he will not run for reelection.
- Rep. Mike Murphy (R-99) has resigned, and his replacement has not yet been appointed.
- House Majority Leader Greg Harris (D-13) unexpectedly announced he will not run for reelection in 2022.
- Many other state legislators are still weighing their options on running for reelection, running for a new elected office, or deciding to not run in 2022.

ONGOING ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN 2022

Again, in response to the expected legal challenges to the redistricting maps, the General Assembly delayed the 2022 primary election (typically in March) until June 28, 2022. In an attempt to further accommodate reelection efforts for members of the Illinois General Assembly and those holding executive office, Illinois Democratic leaders have scheduled a severely truncated 2022 spring session. It begins in earnest on January 4th, 2022 and is scheduled to adjourn on April 8, 2022 (a full month-and-a-half earlier than normal).

The condensed 2022 spring session calendar ensures Democratic leadership will be averse to address issues that are viewed as controversial or having too much opposition. While the focus will be on passing and enacting the FY23 state budget, there will be attempts by members to advance their legislative initiatives that stalled out in 2021.

For MIRA, the list of priorities in 2022 is straightforward:

- Monitor the local redistricting efforts of both Cook County and the City of Chicago to determine impact on representation on MIRA member-stores (as local elections will be in calendar year 2023).
- Continue efforts at the City of Chicago, Cook County, and the State to support the elimination of food deserts (in ways that MIRA members can proactively participate).
- Continue proactive efforts with the Illinois Health and Hospital Association to generate potential partnership.
- Monitor how the City of Chicago plans to address public safety concerns for businesses.
- Monitor whether Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx revises policy on retail theft.
- Monitor State efforts, during budget planning, on impact to retailers (such as reduction in the retailer discount rate). ■

Bottle Law Changes Sent to Michigan's Governor for Signature

A package of four bills was sent to the Governor for her signature that would amend the Beverage Container Deposit Law to direct money toward the enforcement of Michigan's bottle deposit system, as well as creating enhanced criminal penalties for those looking to cheat the system. House bills 4780 -4783 would:

- Create the "Bottle Bill Enforcement Fund" within the Department of the Treasury.
- Require a distributor selling a dealer a nonalcoholic beverage to originate a 10-cent deposit on the container at the time of sale to the dealer and maintain a record of that deposit.
- Require the first \$1.0 million deposited into the Bottle Deposit Fund to be disbursed to the Bottle Bill Enforcement Fund for the Department of State Police (MSP) to use to enforce the law.
- Specify that if the Bottle Bill Enforcement Fund balance exceeded \$3.0 million at the end of a fiscal year, deposits into the Bottle Bill Enforcement Fund would be suspended until the balance fell below \$2.0 million.
- Require the MSP, three years after the bill's effective date, to report to the Legislature on the efficacy of its enforcement of the law
- Amend the beverage container deposit law to prescribe misdemeanor and felony penalties of varying severity for violations of the Act.
- Amend the sentencing guidelines within the Code of Criminal Procedure to include the felonies proposed under the Act. ■



michigan liquor report

PAT GAGLIARDI // CHAIR, MICHIGAN LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

Licensees Benefit from MLCC Business Innovations

Happy New Year! We join with retail licensees in having high expectations for greater profitability in a competitive market in 2022. To reach those lofty goals, the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) has greatly modernized its way of doing business.

The forward-looking changes we've made over the past year make it easier than ever for retailers and all licensees to do business with the MLCC.

We're excited that the MLCC is working smarter to not only keep pace with industry changes, but also lead in innovation to provide the best possible customer service. Changes in how our customers can select, order, and pay for spirits have already proven to bring increased efficiency to our customers and moved the MLCC business practices and productivity light years into the future.

The Michigan Online Liquor Ordering System (OLO) we launched last spring has been a huge improvement and proven to be exceedingly user friendly. Its many new online capabilities have significantly expanded functionality for licensees to order spirits products for their stores, bars, and restaurants. We were proud to learn that our new system was named in the top three (among 30 finalists) in the *Digital Government: Government to Business* category by the National Association of State Chief Information Officers, 2021 State IT Recognition Awards.

Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), the MLCC's most recent business improvement that launched in November, provides convenience for licensees when paying for spirits orders. Deliveries of spirits orders are faster and

more "on schedule" as authorized distribution agents' (ADA) drivers will no longer be delayed on their routes waiting for checks to be issued or counting cash before moving on to their next stop. The MLCC did extensive testing with the ADAs and banking partners to ensure that licensees would have a successful, safe and secure transition to this new and only method of payment now accepted by the MLCC.

We implemented a new Spirits Products Delisting Policy that began last September.

The new policy updates factors that trigger automatic delisting of products including: the timeline for delisting, product shelf prices, number of cases sold, and whether the item is a value-added package. The policy will better serve retail licensees, vendors of spirits and better manage the MLCC's extensive list of almost 13,000 spirits products. The MLCC intends to bring new products and new tastes to the state in 2022.

Looking to the future, we will be adding new software platforms that will help our retailers, brokers, wholesalers, and manufacturers. In anticipation of a new Sales, Inventory and Purchasing System (SIPS), the MLCC completed two Lean Process Improvements that documented all processes and steps in the state's Mainframe system that will be replaced by SIPS. An LPI was also completed that documented all processes and steps for the EQuote System and documented all wants and improvements in a revised EQuote System that also may be a part of SIPS.

Providing excellent customer service by proactively recognizing and exceeding the business needs of licensees will continue to be our goal at the MLCC in the coming year. On behalf of MLCC Commissioners Olshove, Toma, Gonzales and myself, and entire staff, we wish you a safe, healthy, and prosperous new year. ■

The mission of the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) is to make alcoholic beverages available for consumption while protecting the consumer and the general public through regulation of those involved in the sale and distribution of these alcohol beverage products.



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ohio lobbyist report

TERRY FLEMING // TC FLEMING & ASSOCIATES

Pandemics, Elections and Legislation

As members of the Ohio General Assembly return to Columbus to continue the work of the people they will still be focused on COVID-19 as a new variant was recently discovered in South Africa. In 2021, they passed a bill that gives the legislature the authority to overrule the Governor and health department on rules dealing with COVID-19, i.e. shutting down businesses, requiring masks and limiting travel. HB 435, currently pending, would deal with regulations regarding COVID-19, but the issue is that conservatives want to ban all government and businesses from requiring masks and vaccinations for employee's to continue to work. On the other hand, liberal's want the Government to require mandatory vaccinations and masks. Those legislators in the middle don't have enough votes to pass any measure so the result is a stalemate.

HB 435 would also prohibit government from closing small businesses and those not designated essential. Whether they can ever agree on a bill depends on how bad the virus becomes and how many people are affected by the virus.

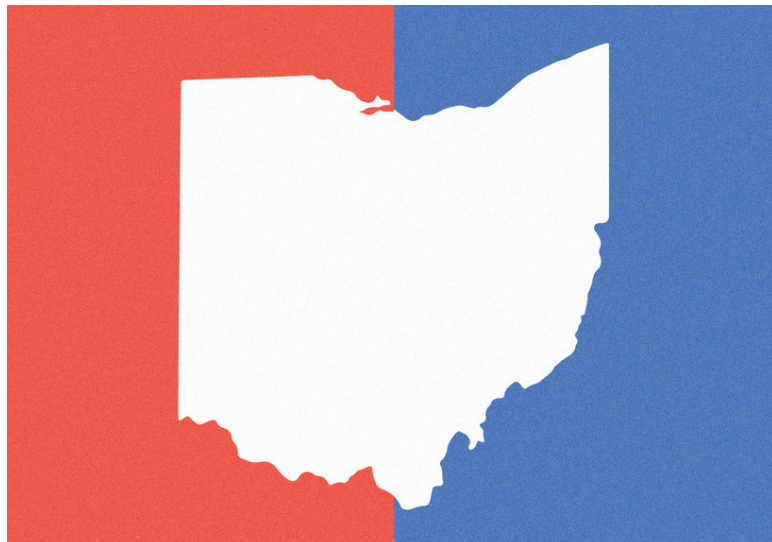
MIRA is of the opinion that businesses, not the government, should make decisions on vaccinations and masks.

Other bills pending that were holdovers from 2021 that MIRA is watching are:

- **HB 31** would expand the definition for handicap license plates and parking spots.
- **HB 46** would allow the use of gift cards to purchase beer and wine, but only if for consumption on site.
- **HB 47** would give grants to businesses that expand or establish electric charging stations for automobiles.
- **HB 165** would give temporary tax refunds for use of high level Ethanol fuel.
- **HB 234** would repeal the Commercial Activity Tax (CAT) in Ohio.

The biggest issue for 2022, is it's an election year and the races will have great impact on any legislation. With all 99 House seats up and 17 Senate seats, all 5 statewide races (Governor, Attorney General, Auditor of State, Secretary of State and State Treasurer), as well as 2 seats on the Ohio Supreme Court including Chief Justice. One U.S. Senate seat and 15 congressional seats are also up for election. The good news is they won't consider any new or increased taxes or new regulations, unless the regulations are helpful to business.

One last thought, with gasoline prices soaring people have a tendency to blame service stations, you need to be vocal in pointing out that you have no control over the cost of a barrel of oil and that prices are set by producers. Hope you had great Holidays and that 2022 will be a very happy and prosperous New Year. ■



government relations report

JUAN ESCAREÑO // MIRA DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH



A New Year of the Same?

“There is one thing which gives radiance to everything. It is the idea of something around the corner” – GK. CHESTERTON

A new year springs upon us and the pandemic seems to never want to leave us. I felt this article could be a snapshot of the work the Government Relations arm of MIRA will be working on for 2022.

MICHIGAN

The state has billions of dollars still to appropriate from the COVID-19 funds Congress handed out last year. We have submitted a request in the 2022 budget to have 10 million dollars set aside for food safety and compliance training. If we are successful in securing these funds, we anticipate providing food safety training at a considerably reduced cost for our members.

Continued COVID-19 protocols and consumer expectations warrants this appropriation to help stop the spread of the virus.

We are also working on legislation to stop ghost retailers from delivering spirits using independent contractors. We are working with legislators to introduce a bill that would require a retailer of any size to have at least 25% face to face sells to deliver alcohol. We believe this will reduce the likely hood of minors accessing liquor from retailers that are less accountable than our traditional format stores. Ghost retailers can operate out of a garage with minimal staff and inventory. They will use technology to undercut the traditional retailer that has invested in their community by creating jobs and a safe place to buy groceries.

We also are pushing for more compliance training for delivery drivers to protect the industry from independent contractors who will lack the tools to deliver a controlled substance.

Our legislation will ask for the following:

- Require that spirits must be delivered by an employee of the retailer or an employee of the 3rd party facilitator.
- Require that an age verification must be done by delivery driver by reviewing an actual ID.
- Require that all drivers delivering spirits must complete a liquor compliance course approved by the MLCC.
- Modify the following subsection in Section 25 under “Qualified Retailer” to read as follows: (ii) *At least 25% of the retailer’s annual gross sales of alcoholic liquor must be from face-to-face sales transactions with consumers on the premises.*

ILLINOIS

We continue working to expand the Link Match program with our non-profit partners. We anticipate 15-20 stores piloting Link Match within the first 6 months of 2022. This program not only creates an opportunity for EBT customers to buy more healthy food but it brings marketing money to our members that are participating.

We also continue working on the Cook County ordinance to create a permanent tax abatement for grocery stores serving “food deserts” as defined by the USDA. We anticipate meeting with Cook County commissioners at the beginning of the year to solidify their support.

OHIO

I wish every state could be like Ohio when it comes to legislation and support for small business. We keep our ears to the ground there to educate legislators. We continue to monitor liquor, lottery, and regulatory changes for our members. ■



c-store news & views

JIM GREEN // MIRA VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Curbside and Delivery

Consumers rapidly adopted curbside pickup and delivery services due to the pandemic. These services have shown they have not only survived the pandemic, but are becoming “must have” services to compete with other retailers operating in this space. Many progressive retailers see this as incremental sales that could touch consumers who might never visit their store and are focusing their marketing efforts to reach these new consumers. It is not just food service and grocery items anymore. In many states consumers are now ordering beer, wine, spirits, and cigarettes. Products that require age verification. Just look at 7-Eleven’s partnership with the alcohol delivery platform Drizly. They promote “beer, wine and liquor delivered in under 60 minutes” from over 1,200 locations. They are expanding it to locations in Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. This should be a wakeup call to all retailers that they need to be competing in this space.

Retailers have three options when it comes to offering curbside and delivery service. They can sell on these large platforms, create their own app, or they can offer curbside and delivery from their website. For the average independent retailer, offering curbside and delivery from their website is the easiest way to compete in this space. Studies have shown that consumers want to order directly from your store opposed to these large platforms preferring that their money goes straight to the store and not a third party. If you explore this option, there is good news and bad news. The bad news is there are companies that can help you do this, but

many only want to work with large retailers or charge very high fees. The good news is MIRA is working on a cost-effective, easy to implement solution to help our members and will be ready shortly. The MIRA program will give the retailer three options. Curbside only, curbside and delivery with your own staff, or curbside and delivery with a third-party carrier that will pick up the order and deliver it for you. This allows you to pick the best option given your capabilities with your staff.

As MIRA developed this program for our members, we discovered an area of concern that all retailers need to be aware of if they are using a third-party for delivery of beer, wine, and spirits. Independent retailers know age verification is a requirement and that you cannot sell to a visibly intoxicated person. If they do not adhere to these laws, it creates considerable liability risks to the retailer. Regardless of what platform you decide to use, if you are using third-party for delivery of beer, wine, and spirits, you must make sure that your business insurance covers you for these third-party deliveries. Many of the third-party delivery companies have fine print in their agreements when it comes to liability. They only accept responsibility up to the amount in which they collected in fees from you over a certain time-period. If there is a major incident with an under aged consumer getting alcohol and being involved in an accident, it could leave you on the hook. Please make sure your policy covers you!

Each state has their own rules regulating beer, wine and spirits and it can be difficult to keep up on all the laws. For some states it is a grey area. There are no rules for or against it. Technology is simply moving faster than laws can keep up. For example, beer and wine delivery is legal in the state of Michigan. However, there are no rules for or against the delivery of spirits. Some retailers have decided to move forward with delivery of spirits until there is a firm rule in place. Whatever you decide to do with delivery with beer, wine, and spirits, make sure your business insurance covers you on third-party deliveries. ■

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- Energy Supplements
- Supplies
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Customer needs to purchase 12 out of the 13 weeks per quarter

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\$2,000 Est. MIRA Member
Program Savings

\$3,350 Total Member Benefits
PER LOCATION

* Based on \$1,000 non-tobacco purchases weekly

For more information on Team Sledd, call the office at **800.333.0374**
or E-mail Sheila Reilly at SReilly@TeamSledd.com

The Must Do for 2022



■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

It is a tough time to run a small business. Rising prices, worker shortages and supply chain disruptions are some of the current challenges. Some people are weighing in on what must be done for independent retailers to be successful in 2022.

The issues today are not just cyclical. “We have to maintain and not lose sight of the end,” said Mike Mitchell, Markham Oil. “We have had cycles, but this has been one of the worst. We have had workforce issues and political unrest before, but with this pandemic, we are hit harder and it is lasting much longer. We have to stay focused.”

Early on in 2020, it was reported and believed that the virus would go away within weeks or months, but two years later the world is still coping with it. “COVID-19 is not going away,” said John Denha, 8 Mile Foodland. “We have done everything we are supposed to do to keep everyone safe, but this virus is here to stay and we have to learn to live with it.”

The pandemic forced many industries to pivot and find a new way of doing business in, as it had been constantly reported to be, the “new normal.” In many establishments, masks are still suggested and social distancing is encouraged. “You will still see a lot of that in 2022,” said Denha.

In 2022, the food supply chain is expected to still be a problem. Anecdotes about food shortages and empty grocery store shelves dominated headlines in recent months. The jams in the food supply chain are real for a ton of local markets in the country including in the Midwest. Grocers are forced to get creative and be flexible.

With supply chain issues, retailers are reevaluating their stock. “We are cutting down on our inventory,” said Denha. “We are looking at every section of the business and cutting down on variety. Instead of 10 different types of one product, we are cutting down to four options, for instance. We have to adjust with the supply issues we are facing.”

With reports of a new variant of the Coronavirus, retailers are trying to stock up on basic necessities. “We have no idea if there will be another shutdown but learning from 2020, we know we need to stock up on basic items for our customers,” said John.

Many MIRA members agree. “In 2022, grocers and other food retailers need to evaluate business and look at the products that do not sell, eliminate them and only focus on what sells,” said Najib Atisha, Indian Village Market. “As grocers, we need to minimize the staff needed to operate our businesses and maximize shelf space.”

Denha did explain that customers are aware of the situation and understand why stores have product shortages and long lines. “They know we have employee issues and we have less products to offer, because of the lack of

products coming in and the fact that we can't find help. I am working seven days a week, about 12 hours a day. We just can't get the help we need."

The employee shortage dilemma, along with the virus itself, won't be disappearing any time soon. "I think for our independent and chain customers it will be imperative for them to secure the right employee," said Orlando Woods, Faygo Beverages, Inc. "They need to fix the employment piece. We can't have consumers going to retail outlets and have nothing on the shelves and no one to service them. I think that is the biggest hurdle is getting employees and product in the business."

There are many contributing factors related to the employee shortage issue. MIRA continues to address these problems in this issue on page 14.

Retailers are not the only ones struggling to get products on the shelves. Suppliers are facing shortages as well making it difficult for them to get products in stores. "So many people are just trying to get products that it is hard to say what must be done in 2022," said Marissa Cowans, Lipari. "So many of our vendors weren't able to showcase their products in the last two years because of COVID-19 and retailers struggled to get products."

Cowans anticipates 2022 to be much better than in the previous two years. "We plan to have our trade shows and to showcase products for customers to sample," she said.

On its website, the Food Industry Association (FMI), notes that cost increased at every stage of the food supply chain during the pandemic.

At the beginning of the pandemic, many restaurants closed as communities sought to contain the spread of the coronavirus. As the country went into a shutdown and lockdowns, more families were spending money at the grocery stores; more Americans began cooking at home, increasing their demand for grocery products.

For the most part, the pandemic was devastating to many industries, but the food retail industry was not only considered an essential business, they were one of few businesses still open since the pandemic started.

FMI reported that grocery shopper demand doubled during the pandemic. The average household spent \$161 on groceries at the height of the pandemic, compared to \$113 in 2019, FMI notes. Though spending has decreased, it's held steady at \$144 per week since then. If a new variant arises and talk of shutdowns continue, it seems fitting for grocers to stock up on products, "and that is what we are planning to do but it's all about if we can get the products. We still can't control the supplies available to us," said Denha. ■

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ASK THE MEMBER //

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR 2022?



"I am going to reinvest in the store. I am offering different varieties of foods. We are noticing how people are shopping, so we are leaning towards more prepared foods, more meals-to-go and easier shopping."

– JOHN DENHA // 8 MILE FOODLAND



"One of Lipari's goals for 2022 is to showcase new items we have had for couple of years but customers haven't been able to see, taste or touch because of the pandemic. We want to expand the customer market. Our vendors haven't been able to showcase their items, because we haven't had trade shows."

– MARISSA COWANS // LIPARI



"A personal goal is to get rid of the oxygen machine I am on and to reconnect with my family and friends that I have lost touch with because of the pandemic. Business is business right now. We are working a lot in the stores, because we can't get help."

– MIKE MITCHELL // MARKHAM ENTERPRISES



"My personal goal is to cut down on work and try to retire. I am definitely trying not work as much in 2022."

– NAJIB ATTISHA // INDIAN VILLAGE MARKET



"Our objective is to create excitement with the Faygo brand like we did with our Fireworks brand. It was a great success. It was new and the name had a ring to it and the product did well for us. The demand for the product was very high."

– ORLANDO WOODS // FAYGO



MICHIGAN //

Livonia Chamber Looks at What's Contributed to Michigan's Two-Decade Workforce Decline

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

Over the last year, MIRA has reported on the workforce shortage in the country, primarily in the Midwest. The Livonia Chamber of Commerce took a closer look at the decline in Michigan which spans over two decades.

Blame has been directed to the enhanced unemployment benefits paid during the first 18 months of the pandemic which expired September 2021. "While that was a factor, the issues in Michigan go deeper," said Dan West, President and CEO of the Livonia Chamber of Commerce.

As reported by the Livonia Chamber, Michigan has lost 8.5% of its available workforce over the last 20 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and according to U.S. Census data, and Michigan has not been able to add population and thus workers over the last 20 years. From 2000 to 2010, Michigan was the only state in the country to lose population; the Great Recession during the last half of that decade contributed significantly to that reality. Between 2010 to 2020, Michigan's population grew by only 2%, the second slowest rate in the country. "Michigan is also older than other parts of the country," said West. "In the state, in one quarter of its counties populations are 50 years old or older on a medium basis. The medium age is 39.8, which is the 12th highest in the country." In addition to these stats, high School graduations don't make up for the work demand. "We will have 100,000 people graduating from high school this summer and even if all of those people enter the workforce, that number won't even cover half the people we lost in the workforce because of COVID-19," said West.

In 1980, Michigan had nineteen representatives and in 2022, the number dropped to thirteen representatives. In February 2001, Michigan had nearly 5.2 million people available to work and since 2007, that number has decreased to less than five (5) million. In September of last year, Michigan reported an available workforce of 4.73 million with 4.51 million employed.

Michigan's labor participation rate in February 2011 was 68.5% and in 2001, that number was 59.3% which dipped below 60% for the first time in the state's history, since the Bureau of Labor started tracking the numbers in 1976.

"The response to COVID-19 has only exacerbated an ongoing trend with the state's workforce. Since September 2019, before the pandemic, Michigan is down 216,000 workers," said West. "People are not returning to work in order to take care of kids at home, elderly relatives, retiring early or lifestyle adjustments- despite the fact there has been significant pay raises given to those working all industries."

The question becomes: What can be done? "Michigan's political leaders need to develop a better long-term economic development strategy that is consistently executed so business and education policy can adjust accordingly," said West. "The state's inconsistency in this area the last two decades had been a source of blame by business leaders."

He continues explaining that more collaboration is needed between with political leaders, educational leaders, and business. "They need to focus on pragmatic problem solving," said West. "There are politicians who talk primarily with business leaders, and those who talk primarily with

education leaders, but we need more of them to consistently talk with both."

Businesses are competing for the same workers. "They are eating their own," said West. "We are seeing this in all industries including retail, manufacturing, medical support and education."

This trend must change. "Business managers will need to make some adjustments to maintain their current workforce," said West. "Many young professionals seek value in their work beyond compensation."

Current chamber members offer some ideas for business owners:

- Offer a comprehensive onboarding process, not just a brief orientation, to support connecting a new hire to the organization culture.
- Be flexible with employees.
- Provide mentoring opportunities: young professionals want to see a clear path to their advancement.
- Human resources managers should value data from exit interviews, but also consider "stay" interviews as well.
- Business leaders should heighten their awareness and management strategies for people dealing with mental health issues; understanding stress and anxiety that exists today.
- Support public transportation options: more younger people are not driving, so this could expand access to a new pool of workers.
- Be nimble and adjust to cultural and behavioral shifts as change will always be constant.
- Consider a payroll system where workers are paid daily. ■

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FOR THE
HUSTLE





Food Retail Trends in 2022

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

There are many predictions for food trends in 2022 and several issues factor into those predictions including the current supply chain problem. Food marketing expert Dr. Russell J. Zwanka, associate Professor of Food Marketing at Western Michigan University is offering some insight. “Most customer trends accelerated tremendously during the pandemic, so it was more a ‘pull forward’ of trends than a changing of trends,” said Zwanka. “Most customers know they should eat healthier, know they should look out for wellness products, and many have shifted to ‘food as medicine’ as a goal.”

Food marketing trends will look different from pre-pandemic years and will continue to depend upon gaining some share of attention from an increasingly distracted customer. “The use of QR codes has come roaring back,” noted Zwanka. “Snap filters are abundant, and there is plenty of discussion around when the path to purchase really starts like Pinterest recipes driving consumer behavior. Where 2020 and 2021 were about acknowledging people were at home and separated, expect the ‘get out there and explore’ and ‘welcome back together’ to be the big themes.”

There are some best practices when it comes to marketing products including staying with the trends and communicating with customers, especially top ones on a regular basis. “Show them that they are noticed and valued,” said Zwanka. This includes enhancing direct loyalty program interaction and engagement. “And for suppliers, keep working to simplify ingredients. Retailers need to continue stressing the cleanliness of their stores, and work to keep items in stock even

though labor issues abound. The more you can focus on local, the more that message will resonate with customers,” he added.

The industry continues to move past the pandemic with supply chain challenges and the lack of variety on store shelves. Customers will continue see less assortment for a while. “It is easier and more efficient to move all volume into a few flavors or varieties,” said Zwanka. “Plus, most customers appreciate the less variety, as every study shows customers equate less variety as easier for decision-making and more helpful in their shopping. The larger issue is going to be the labor market, and its impact on the operations of production plants, trucking, and stores. Expect to see more automation.”

Food retailers, like other various industries, had to pivot and make changes and some of those changes will be around in 2022. “There will continue to be a focus on taking care of in-store customers, as well as those ordering online for pickup or delivery,” said Zwanka. “As customers have shifted back to work in offices, online delivery has decreased; However, we see many people in the aisles shopping for Instacart and Shipt and Go Puff. Expect to see dark stores, where they are only used for online fulfillment, take some of the pressure off using stores for both in-person and online.”

As noted, there are many issues affecting the food retail industry including inflation and labor shortages. “The affordability of food is on every customer’s mind,” said Zwanka. “Then, going in stores and seeing wiped out shelves is playing on the psyche of ‘should I buy that last roll of bath tissue’, when it’s really only out of stock because there is no one to drive the product to the stores and no one to stock the shelves.”

He also noted that people need to be on the lookout for more automation, vending machines, and robots, to replace the workers who have seemingly disappeared from the workforce. “Inflation ramped up heavily from the end of January 2021, which means it will start to cycle those inflation rates in January of 2022. There is really no way this country can tack on 6-8% inflation on top of 6-8% inflation from the year before,” he said. “And, if we start to see deflation, expect some companies to realize they’ve only been selling inflation for the last 12 months; and that will impact cash flow and operating earnings.”

He shares a few of Zwanka’s own predictions.

- Hard seltzers and flavors have made it easy for customers to move between beer, wine, and spirits, and we do not see that stopping anytime soon. Ready to drink cocktails are on fire, since they solve the question of how to mix a Moscow Mule, etc. Hard kombucha keeps coming back up, as well.
- Meat reduction will continue. Driven by high inflation, and also an overall sense that less meat is probably better for you. The terms flexitarian and reducetarian are being used.
- Functional beverages will continue to be introduced, although we’re probably at a bit of a saturation point.
- Turmeric and ginger are continuing to be embraced as the healthiest additions to our foods.
- Celebrity-endorsed foods, like the Travis Scott burger at McDonald’s, tequilas by pretty much every celebrity, etc.
- CBD-infused foods, and THC foods (where legal) will continue to increase in popularity.
- Mushrooms seem to be having their moment in the sun, so to speak. ■







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The Life of a Lobbyist

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

When Matthew Miner isn't lobbying on behalf of MIRA or his other clients, he likes to visit his cottage in northern Michigan and take trips to Mackinac Island with his wife. "We enjoy boating and taking in every tourist trap that comes along on our journeys," Miner said.

Miner is the CEO of Capitol Strategies Group, a lobbying firm based in Lansing. He and his company represent MIRA in Michigan's political world and help further its agenda.

In college, he studied public relations and political science. He got an opportunity to intern for then-Michigan Senator Mike Rogers, where he developed his interest in political work. After working for other state senators like Harry Gast, he became the Chief of Staff for Mike Bishop, who eventually became senate majority leader.

In 2010, Miner decided to venture off and create his own lobbying firm. "I started Capitol Strategies Group, a multi-client lobbying firm where I have the honor to represent many clients across a broad spectrum of industries," he said.

The "strategic" aspect of his job is what Miner enjoys the most. "There is great satisfaction in taking a problem, crafting a solution and then working that through the legislative process," he said. "It isn't an easy or short process, but it is very rewarding making an idea law."

Miner said he thoroughly enjoys working with MIRA because it combines small business with a global, worldwide industry. These circumstances are especially rewarding when it comes to the lobbying industry, according to Miner.

"As a multi-client lobbyist, I get to work with a wide array of industries, so I'm constantly seeing how different industries work through their issues," he said. "MIRA has many great members dedicated to protecting the industry and seeing it grow in the new economy. This makes advocating on their behalf exciting."



In politics, Miner said, there are always winners and losers, which makes it a difficult industry. "Not everyone is honest and not everyone plays fair," he said, "but there's always a job to do. That's what keeps me motivated."

Miner said Michigan's beer, wine, and spirits regulations are so unique that changes are always being proposed from the distribution industry, and he expects that to continue through 2022 and beyond. In addition, he said, "the ever-evolving world of food delivery is expanding quickly to include beer, wine, and spirits. There will be a concerted effort to see that our laws catch up to the market."

COVID-19 changed how people eat and where they go for meals, according to Miner, which presented great opportunities for the independent retailers that MIRA represents. Just as well, MIRA must provide food safety and training opportunities for its members who want to capitalize on the to-go food boom, he said. At the end of 2020, food delivery apps had more than doubled their business since the start of the pandemic.

Miner enjoys spending time with his wife, who also works in politics. "We currently have two rescue dogs and I spend a decent amount of time lobbying my wife not to get more," he said. "We enjoy cooking and I would consider myself a novice craft distiller, but my wife would call me a novice moonshiner." ■

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 West Ohio Food Bank (419) 222-7946

ILLINOIS

Central Illinois Foodbank (217) 522-4022
 Eastern Illinois Foodbank (217) 328-3663
 Greater Chicago Food Depository (773) 247-3663
 Northern Illinois Foodbank (630) 443-6910
 Peoria Area Food Bank (309) 671-3906
 River Bend Foodbank (563) 345-6490
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- Detailed data that help drive sales today and into the future.



For More Information Please Contact Our Midwest Region:

BRAD MILLER Senior Director, Market Development, **630.743.9226**

MIKE CROWE Director of Sales, **412.780.0749**

CRAIG LITTLE Manager, Market Development, **262.357.4403**

FORT WAYNE D.C. - 4815 EXECUTIVE BLVD., FORT WAYNE, IN 46818



JANUARY 29, 2022

MIRA'S 105TH ANNUAL TRADE DINNER & BALL

Join over 800 leaders in the food, beverage & petroleum industries at this one-and-only black tie gala. Delight in fine cuisine, dancing and entertainment and engage with colleagues and friends to celebrate the strength and vitality of MIRA and the members it serves.

Penna's of Sterling // Sterling Heights, MI



FEBRUARY 23, 2022

MIRA'S 35TH ANNUAL INNOVATIONS BUYING SHOW

MIRA's longest running trade show has retailers looking to fill their shelves for the spring and summer months.

The Annual Innovations Buying Show is known for high-quality attendees, non-stop interaction and exhibitor satisfaction. Admission for MIRA members is free. Must be at least 21 years old to attend this show.

Andiamo Warren Banquet Center // Warren, MI



MARCH 10, 2022

HISTORY BOOK VOL. 2 SIGNING

Celebrating 110 years of the Midwest Independent Retailers Association! We will have a book signing with long time members, past presidents and chairmen. Meet, greet, and join us for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres.

Shenandoah Country Club // West Bloomfield, MI



MAY 20, 2022

MIRA'S 3RD ANNUAL CHICAGO METRO GROCERS GALA

With a "Saturday Night Fever" theme, enjoy fine cuisine, network, dance and enjoy live entertainment with more than 500 industry leaders. Black tie recommended.

Sponsorship opportunities available.

The Empress // Addison, IL

publishers statement

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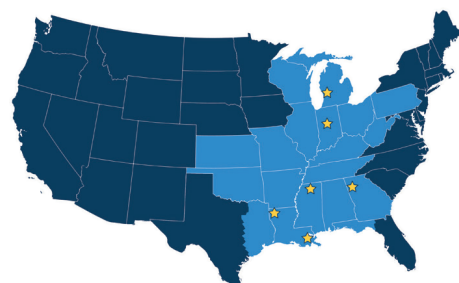


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17 STATES

stretching from the
Canadian border to
the Gulf of Mexico

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www.sasinc.com

A photograph of three diverse people (two men and one woman) sitting at a table in a cafe, smiling and looking towards the left. The man on the left is holding a coffee cup. The background features exposed brick walls and industrial-style pipes.

A FORCE FOR GOOD

Strong communities are the foundation of a healthy, thriving environment for all people. That's why you can count on DTE Energy to support local organizations that are having a real impact. We are proud to partner with MIRA.

DTE