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SHINE UNITED



BY KATIE GINDER-VOGEL



Profound campaigns spring from this Madison, Wisconsin-based ad agency's comprehensive client relationships.

Even in the winter, Madison, Wisconsin, is full of warmth. Visitors tell tales of being lost downtown, only to have multiple friendly passersby greet them and offer directions. That salt-of-the-earth kindness and decency enables creativity to flourish.

It's no wonder, then, that professionals lured to the coasts from Wisconsin often settle back home. Mike Kriefski and Curt Hanke, two of Shine United's three cofounders, both left the state early in their careers.



Left to right: Curt Hanke, Michael Kriefski and John Krull.

After leaving the Midwest to join Young & Rubicam in Raleigh, North Carolina, Kriefski returned to Wisconsin four years later to work as associate creative director at one Madison agency and vice president/creative director at a second. There he met Hanke, who had landed back in Madison after stints in Los Angeles and Minneapolis. The two, along with designer and third cofounder Chad Bollenbach, hit it off, thanks to a shared mindset about what an ad agency could be.

"Mike's a creative who gets business, and I'm a business guy who gets creative," explains Hanke. "We wanted to create an agency with a combined reverence for both science and art."

Tired of traditional agency approaches, the two set out to create an agency that honors both the consumer and the brand. Declaring, "We hate advertising," Shine's first website outlined the new agency's disdain for the status quo. "The idea is king," the copy concluded. Sixteen years later, Shine continues to train its focus on big, unconventional ideas.

Right: "When the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board decided that it needed an agency with fresh perspective for the Wisconsin Cheese brand, it turned to us. Our team members spent a fair share of their time at local fromageries, getting to know cheesemongers and their wares. With concept and copy in hand and amazing typography, photography and food styling, the result was not only a powerful concept, but also a voice and personality that brought various artisanal cheeses to life to truly engage with foodies."

"When your competitor is outspending you by 1,000 percent in any given media—let's say broadcast TV—your agency's job is to find a battlefield where you can win. For the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, that battlefield was digital. We created straight-up food porn in the form of a digital Rolodex of sorts, a microsite including 40 of the most amazing cheeseburgers your taste buds can imagine. The result: more than 7.5 million visitors since its launch. A true game-changer."

WISCONSIN BLUE

Never holds his tongue.

Not one for idle CHITCHAT. Blue doesn't waste time with small pleasantries. When ordering a bottle of red, he rather asks the sommelier for advice nor requests to see the WINE list. Pinot noir it is. That's Blue. He's bold, determined, and opinionated. To not LOVE him is to not know him. And to not know him is a crying shame.




OUTDOOR CROISSANT
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www.wisconsincheese.com

WISCONSIN PARMESAN

Long live the Renaissance man.

He's down to earth, yet always upscale. He can hold his own at a spaghetti feed, a neighborhood POTLUCK, or a black-tie affair. Meet PARMESAN. Never one to mistake a dinner fork for a salad fork, he enters the finest restaurants with a head-turning swagger, typically set aside for celebrities and guys named Pierre. Parmesan. A good FRIEND to have on speed dial.




EAT WITH JOY
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www.wisconsincheese.com

THE BURGERS THE CHEESE CHEESE & BURGER SOCIETY THE SOCIETY SWEEPSTAKES

Welcome to THE HOLY GRAIL OF CHEESEBURGERS

We are the Cheese and Burger Society. We believe that cheese is the Grand Poobah of every cheeseburger grilled, flame broiled, or even fired. But not just any cheese: Wisconsin cheese. Join us as we celebrate the greatest cheeseburgers ever made.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 APR CHE DAL DEN KC MEL NO NYC SF SEA
— REDEFINING DELICIOUSNESS ONE CHEESEBURGER AT A TIME —

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Please & Burger Society is a registered service mark of the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, Inc.

THE BURGERS THE CHEESE CHEESE & BURGER SOCIETY THE SOCIETY SWEEPSTAKES

CHEESE & BURGER # MAKE THE BURGER MEET THE CHEESE

No. 6



THE HONKY TONK
FEATURING WISCONSIN BRICK

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 APR CHE DAL DEN KC MEL NO NYC SF SEA
— REDEFINING DELICIOUSNESS ONE CHEESEBURGER AT A TIME —

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THE BURGERS THE CHEESE CHEESE & BURGER SOCIETY THE SOCIETY SWEEPSTAKES

CHEESE & BURGER # MAKE THE BURGER MEET THE CHEESE

WISCONSIN BRICK

When looking up the word "delicious" in the dictionary, don't be surprised if you see a picture of Brick cheese right next to it. Originating in Wisconsin and reassembling a brick, it's a smooth-textured cheese that is ivory to creamy yellow in color. Brick comes in three varieties: mild, aged, and dry stid.

THE FLAVOR
Changes from mild and sweet with a touch of nuttiness when young, to pungent and tangy when aged.

THE PAIRINGS
Gets along swimmingly with meat and pork ribs. Appreciates the company of a hearty soup, porter, or stout.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 APR CHE DAL DEN KC MEL NO NYC SF SEA
— REDEFINING DELICIOUSNESS ONE CHEESEBURGER AT A TIME —

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THE BURGERS THE CHEESE CHEESE & BURGER SOCIETY THE SOCIETY SWEEPSTAKES

WISCONSIN FONTINA ABOUT FONTINA

No. 10



WISCONSIN FONTINA
FEATURED ON: THE SAN FRANCISCO

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22
— MEET THE CHEESE THAT MAKES A CHEESEBURGER A CHEESEBURGER —

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Please & Burger Society is a registered service mark of the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, Inc.

Shine's client list includes quintessential Wisconsin clients like Harley-Davidson Motorcycles, University of Wisconsin Health and the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, as well as large national consumer brands like GORE-TEX apparel and LaCrosse Footwear.

"We wanted to start a national agency in a place with a wonderful quality of life," says Kriefski. "The Midwestern work ethic is real. There's an honest desire to roll up your sleeves and do great work."

A REVERENCE FOR SCIENCE AND ART

"We feel we have a fiduciary responsibility to our clients, and we're on a never-ending quest to help them unlock the potential of their businesses and brands," says Hanke, who frequently writes about marketing for *Inc.* and *Advertising Age* and is authoring a book titled *How to Shine*. "We see ourselves as a brand consultancy, and at our best, our planning, creative and client teams are all charging down the path together."

Shine approaches each client relationship holistically, delving into clients' financials, market size and dynamics to develop effective campaigns for them. Working in partnership with each client, Shine maps out a holistic marketing, brand and communications strategy, tying those efforts to the client's overall business goals.

"Our focus is on making beautiful art and what it does," explains Hanke. "It's in the doing, the outcomes."

As marketing teams are increasingly expected to improve both short-term sales and long-term brand equity,

Shine's clients have never needed more help, and the agency has never been more committed to transparency.

"Everything we create has a story behind it, and that story is rooted in asking hard questions — finding an inherent truth about the consumer, the brand and the relationship between them; identifying a desired outcome; and [making] 1,000 little decisions along the way toward building high-impact, high-octane communications," says Hanke. "We make thoughtful, engaging art that amplifies the meaning of the brand and its relationship with its consumer."

"We wanted to start a national agency in a place with a wonderful quality of life. The Midwestern work ethic is real. There's an honest desire to roll up your sleeves and do great work." — Mike Kriefski

The agency constantly reports back to its clients, providing mobile dashboards for real-time reporting, monthly reports on digital campaign results, quarterly reports for other types of media, and annual reports that offer insight on sales and brand performance over the course of a year.

Left: *"When you want to grow a brand with the hope of one day selling it, it's critical to, well, have a marketable brand. As such, the new owners of Cybros the Sprouted Bakehouse turned to Shine for a complete brand overhaul. From a new name—Angelic Bakehouse—and identity to packaging, in-store displays and advertising, Shine worked hand in hand with the ownership group to create a brand worthy of the amazing products it was baking—culminating in new distribution points across the country, from Costco to Meijer to Whole Foods to Target. In November 2016, a regional specialty food distributor bought Angelic Bakehouse, demonstrating the power of a well-built brand."*





TOM PORTER FOUNDER

WHO



KNEW THAT
BLOOD, SWEAT AND
TEARS
COULD BE SO
REFRESHING?

There's no machine for assembling 6-pack boxes. No shortcut to brewing a well-rounded beer. No quitting time for envisioning and crafting new ones. And no one knows this better than owner/brewmaster Tom Porter. His work is never done. But he wouldn't want it any other way. ➔ LAKELOUIE.COM




TOM PORTER FOUNDER

YET ANOTHER MIDLIFE CRISIS FUELED BY ALCOHOL.



Some people called Tom Porter crazy when he quit his corporate job to turn his home-brewing obsession into a business. Seventeen years and thousands of barrels of beer later, crazy continues to pay off. ➔ LAKELOUIE.COM





WINTER IS A THIEF

With a cold heart and ice water coursing through its veins, it steals your freedom. Its sleet, slush, and snow taking away your roads and your streets. Robbing you of that forever stretch of asphalt. But today, you lace up and you run. You take to the pavement. You take to the paths. You take back what's rightfully yours. GORE-TEX® lining in running shoes. Waterproof. Windproof. Breathable.



GORE-TEX.COM/RUNNING

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“If our clients let us, we’ll track everything,” says Kriefski. “We don’t just create beautiful art; we create beautiful art that actually works.”

IT’S IN THE DOING

Inside the office door, it’s clear that Shine values its employees’ happiness. From the lockers in the front vestibule for employees’ bikes and winter boots to the salvaged 1950s-era mahogany bar, the space—originally built in 1906 as the Hudson Car Dealership and remodeled in 2011—is designed to make people feel at home.

“We believe great work comes from a true balance of individual ideation and team collaboration,” explains Kriefski. “As such, we put all of our individual offices around central common areas, allowing for both quiet workspaces and easy collaboration. We’re committed to this idea of an expanding and contracting work process.”

The workweek is designed to give employees large blocks of unstructured time in which to create. Monday staff meetings, held on the reclaimed high school bleachers in the common area, cover the highlights of the week’s calendar. Every Thursday afternoon at 4:30, a.k.a. “Beer Thirty,” everyone gets together to mingle.

“Creative not only has a seat at the table here, it has a voice,” says partner and creative director John Krull, who after nine years at Shine was offered the opportunity to buy in and join the ownership group. Krull began his career in Iowa and worked at several Des Moines agencies before joining Shine in 2005. “Creatives have input on

everything, from creative briefs and job orders to budgets and timelines.”

Shine’s planning team identifies each project’s end goal “starting with the end in mind”—a popular saying at the agency.

“The planning team defines true north,” explains Krull. “Then the creative team looks north, northwest and northeast,” bringing back concepts that reflect focus and breadth. For example, Shine created the Cheese & Burger Society microsite for the Wisconsin Milk Mar-

“We make thoughtful, engaging art that amplifies the meaning of the brand and its relationship with its consumer.”

— Curt Hanke

keting Board (cheeseandburger.com)—it draws more than a million new visitors every year.

“While concepting ideas for [the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board], we pushed far and wide, looking for new ways for consumers to interact with its Wisconsin cheese brand,” explains Krull. “Smart insights lead to amazing creative.”

Krull notes that Shine’s small size means they know their clients personally and want to do right by them.

Left: “At Shine, we believe in digging deep and finding those stories that truly resonate with the intended target market—you know, real people. This ad/poster campaign for Lake Louie Brewing features a roll-up-your-sleeves story of a man of simple means following his dream and starting a brewing company.”

“Our deep dive into apparel brand GORE-TEX helped us truly understand the challenges that hardcore runners face in keeping their feet warm and dry in the winter months. Shine’s creative team included a competitive runner and two-time Boston Marathoner, so we knew a thing or two about runners who need to take back the run.”

SHINE UNITED

“The Midwest work ethic is how you excel,” says Krull. “Caring more and working harder makes a difference.”

The founders have deliberately kept Shine small, finding that 40 to 60 employees helps the agency stay nimble and flexible. “Our size allows us to hire only tier-one talent,” says Kriefski. “Clients always get our A-team.”

In addition to receiving profit sharing and fully paid medical coverage, Shine’s employees can spend \$400 each year through its arts initiative to learn a musical instrument or take an art class, have summer Fridays off, and receive a \$10,000 gift to take a vacation on their ten-year anniversaries. It’s no wonder *Outside* magazine has ranked Shine as one of America’s best places to work four years running.

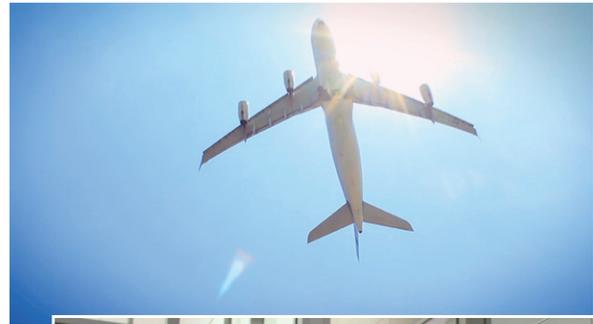
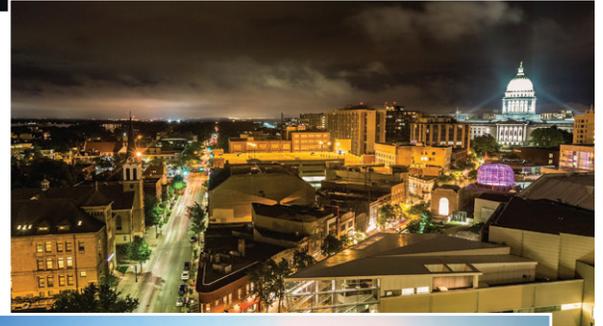
“Agencies and design firms are only as good as the teams they have,” says Kriefski. “At the end of the day, all we have are our people, so attracting and keeping a talented team is so important.”

THE IDEA IS KING

Most people don’t know that the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, a Shine client since April 2007, typically wins more cheese-tasting awards than any state or country combined. To elevate the client’s brand image, Shine hired Nir Adar, a food stylist who studied sculpture, and photographer Ashton Worthington, who specializes in shooting cosmetics and jewelry.

“They made the cheese look like art,” says Krull.

This Page: *“Park Bank, a Shine client since 2012, has trusted us to push its advertising outside its comfort zone. Part of a broader campaign that included print and digital, this TV campaign stopped talking about bankers and started talking about consumer dreams lost in the fray of life—the business we could have started or the home we would have built. The campaign reminds people that it’s never too late.”*



SPEND
QUALITY TIME
— WITH A —
HOTDOG

★ LONG LIVE BASEBALL ★



DUST OFF
— YOUR FAVORITE —
PEANUT
EATING PANTS

★ LONG LIVE BASEBALL ★



BOLD AND SMART

“We’ve engaged with Shine in a variety of areas, and [its] thought-provoking approach to strategic development is one reason the engagements we’ve had with them have yielded highly measurable positive outcomes,” says Brian Gallagher, head of Footwear, Gloves & Accessories Global Marketing for the GORE-TEX brand at W.L. Gore & Associates, Inc., in Elkton, Maryland. “We’ve traditionally approached the running category from an ingredient perspective. We decided a few years ago to change that approach, and Shine was instrumental in helping us change the strategy and the messaging.”

The resulting campaign aimed to embody the tenacity of winter runners, with print ads declaring: “Winter is a thief. Rain is a tyrant.” Digital banner ads ran when the seasons changed.

“[Shine’s team members] asked us a lot of really hard questions that helped us frame our thinking,” says Gallagher. “They came to the table very prepared, with great background info on the category and consumer, and drove us to think about the category in a different way. We ended up with great creative that was well received, not only by consumers, but also by our licensee base and retailers.”

This Page: “At its core, going to a baseball game is just plain fun. This was our starting point when Big Top Baseball tasked us with creating a marketing program for its new Northwoods League team. In addition to the featured ad and posters, Shine was involved in naming the team—the Kenosha Kingfish—and designing the logo and identity. The new mark and marketing materials helped the Kingfish exceed all sales goals for its opening season.”

SHINE UNITED

DREAM BIGGER

When Park Bank, based in Madison, embarked upon an awareness campaign to target executives, professionals and small business owners who dream big, Shine crafted the tagline “Make someday today.” Related TV, radio and print ads pushed prospective and existing customers to ask themselves why they hadn’t pursued their dreams yet and showed how Park Bank and its experts could help make them a reality.

“Shine’s staff challenges us,” says James Hegenbarth, Park Bank’s president and chief executive officer. “They approach the problem by doing research, data collection and analytics to show us where we are and where we want to be. The creative team then creates a masterful story to make the reader, listener and viewer feel good about the possibility. I don’t know how they could do it any better.”

START WITH THE END IN MIND

Shine’s name was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright’s nearby home, Taliesin, whose name is Welsh for “shining brow.” In 2012, the agency changed its name from Shine Advertising to Shine United to reflect its expansion beyond conventional advertising to brand consulting, digital marketing and design.

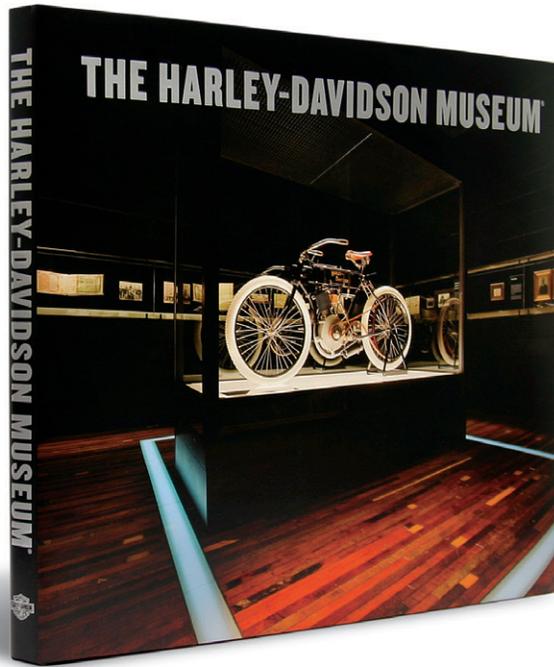
“From the beginning, we wanted to position ourselves as a full-service agency that could be a brand’s AOR [agency of record], handling all their work,” explains Kriefski. “Once we felt like we had good awareness and were turning away more work than we took on, we evolved from ‘Advertising’ to ‘United’ because we felt that was one of our key points of difference—to unite a brand’s voice and messaging across all media.”

The agency’s logo features a red-winged lion, an alchemist’s symbol of the transformation of objects into gold. For brands that are ready to embark on a metamorphosis, Shine will be here, in its beautiful corner of the Midwest, to guide them.

“Our Midwestern ethos is part of what makes us different,” says Hanke. “We keep our promises and tell the truth. Having focus and a culture of fearlessness means anything is possible.”

Right: “After working on a few smaller engagements for Harley-Davidson, we were asked to work on one of its largest projects to date—the construction of the Harley-Davidson Museum. We documented the construction of the museum to completely write and design a book worthy of this bold new structure. We were there when Harley-Davidson first broke ground, when it raised the last piece of steel and when it opened the doors to the public for the very first time.”

“Guns Are Hungry is one of a series of ads that helped relaunch the ammunition brand Aguila in North America. In addition to the ad campaign, which included a 30-second TV spot, Shine redesigned Aguila’s packaging, annual catalog, website and digital marketing and also gave its trade show booth a new look.”



GUNS ARE HUNGRY

FEED THEM AT AGUILAAMMO.COM
High-performance centerfire, rimfire, and shotshells.

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