



MPM STUDIOS

Bridging National-Facing Programming and Local Detroit Engagement Through Hyper-Local Digital Content

A Case Study in Video Short Content Strategy on Detroit PBS Social Media Platforms

Detroit PBS · Digital & Communications

Case study compiled from organic video performance data (August 2025 – July 2026) and the MPM Studios strategic realignment proposal.

Executive Summary

MPM Studios is an 8-person team within Detroit PBS's marketing and production staff, launched in August 2025 to give the organization a fresher, digital-first social presence. Over its first year (August 2025–July 2026), the initiative published 111 organic video posts across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts, generating 312,057 organic views and 37,226 organic engagements.

The data behind that growth tells a clear story: the videos that performed best were not the trend-driven, promotional content MPM Studios was originally built to produce, but content rooted in Detroit identity and community storytelling. A single Detroit-rooted video, “Vernors is Ken Burns Approved,” drove 199,398 views across the platforms it was posted to. That is 63.9% of all views the initiative generated in its first year. Four Detroit-rooted videos together accounted for 74.7% of total views.

This case study lays out the performance data behind MPM Studios' growth, the strategic lesson that data reveals, and the realignment Detroit PBS's Digital & Communications team is proposing as a result: formalizing MPM Studios as a dedicated, Detroit-focused storytelling unit, distinct from day-to-day social content, with the production partnership and resourcing needed to scale what is already working.

Background: What Is MPM Studios?

MPM Studios was built to share Detroit PBS back with its social audience through a fresher, more humor- and entertainment-forward voice, built on trending audio and topics. The team is staffed by existing Detroit PBS marketing and production personnel:

8 Person Team <i>total staff</i>	6 Marketing Staff <i>content & strategy</i>	2 Production Staff <i>shooting & editing</i>
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The Challenge: Flat Engagement, National Content

Before MPM Studios' data pointed to a path forward, Detroit PBS's broader social channels were struggling to break through. Three problems stood out:

- Engagement had been flat across every platform and content type for years. This was not a recent dip.
- Video views were consistently low across platforms and content types.
- Paid campaigns were not delivering the expected return on investment.

Just as importantly, the Detroit community wasn't showing up, online or in person, the way the organization had hoped. The team's diagnosis: this wasn't a content quality problem, it was a strategy problem. Detroit PBS was making national-style content for a local audience. PBS National has the budget, reach, and brand presence to win the national content game; Detroit PBS's audience comes to it for something PBS National can't offer. That something is Detroit itself.

The Data Behind the Flatline

A full Sprout Social pull confirms the flatline. It also shows how sharply that changed once MPM Studios launched. The pre-MPM baseline covers 2,456 organic video posts across Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube in the two years before launch (Aug 2023–Aug 2025); the MPM Studios period covers 111 organic video posts across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube Shorts, and TikTok since launch (Aug 2025–Jul 2026). The most reliable comparison is engagement rate, engagements per view, since it isn't skewed by the baseline's mix of long-form posts (1,741 of 2,456) and short-form Reels/Shorts (715) versus MPM Studios' entirely short-form output. That rate rose from 9.9% to 11.9%, roughly a 21% relative gain, while avg. engagements per post more than doubled, from 123.4 to 335.4.

Metric	Pre-MPM Studios (Aug 2023–Aug 2025)	MPM Studios (Aug 2025–Jul 2026)
Posts analyzed	2,456	111
Organic engagement rate (engagements ÷ views)	9.9%	11.9%
Avg. organic engagements per post	123.4	335.4
Avg. organic views per post	1,248.3	2,811.3

Breaking that out by platform, now including TikTok, which wasn't part of Detroit PBS's presence before MPM Studios, shows the lift wasn't even across the board:

Platform	Posts (Pre → MPM)	Organic Views (Pre → MPM)	Organic Engagements (Pre → MPM)	Engagement Rate (Pre → MPM)
Facebook	1,068 → 33	1,239,962 → 117,131	265,139 → 19,555	21.4% → 16.7%
Instagram	664 → 32	181,299 → 56,997	6,524 → 3,354	3.6% → 5.9%
TikTok	N/A → 27	N/A → 125,747	N/A → 13,908	N/A → 11.1%
YouTube Shorts	724 → 19	1,644,521 → 12,182	31,476 → 409	1.9% → 3.4%

Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts each show real engagement-rate gains; TikTok has no baseline, since Detroit PBS wasn't on the platform before MPM Studios, and already posts the second-highest rate of the four. Facebook is the exception. Its rate reads as lower, but that's most likely a format-mix effect (1,068 historical long-form posts vs. just 33 short-form MPM posts), not a genuine decline in what Detroit-rooted content does on that platform specifically.

The Growth Story: A Year of Data

Since its August 2025 launch, MPM Studios has driven consistent, compounding organic reach across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts:

312,057	111	37,226	2,811
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Total Organic Views <i>Aug 2025 – Jul 2026</i>	Posts Published <i>~9 per month avg</i>	Total Engagements <i>likes, comments, shares</i>	Avg Views / Post <i>across 4 platforms</i>
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Growth was not the product of a single lucky viral moment. November 2025 was the peak month by far. Twenty-three posts drove 222,156 views, 71.2% of all-time total views, powered by the breakout hit “Vernors is Ken Burns Approved.” But outside that viral month, MPM Studios still averaged roughly 8,200 views per month, a durable baseline rather than a fluke. June 2026 logged 19,084 views, the second-highest month to date, well after the viral spike had faded.

Consistent Production Made the Viral Moment Possible

The team published 111 organic video posts over its first year, averaging about 9 per month, building the audience base that the November spike could reach:

Month	Posts Published	Organic Views
August 2025	3	1,876
September 2025	8	12,293
October 2025	5	3,325
November 2025	23	222,156
December 2025	10	8,060
January 2026	5	10,110
February 2026	4	2,590
March 2026	28	15,338
April 2026	8	4,170
May 2026	3	2,276
June 2026	6	19,084
July 2026	8	10,779

What Worked: Detroit-Rooted Storytelling

Of the 111 organic posts MPM Studios published, four pieces of content, each rooted in Detroit identity and culture, generated 233,180 of the initiative's 312,057 total organic views, or 74.7% of everything the channel produced in its first year (combining views across every platform each piece was posted to):

Rank	Video	Views	% of Total
#1	Vernors is Ken Burns Approved	199,398	63.9%
#2	How are you celebrating Juneteenth this weekend?	13,968	4.5%

#3	September is #LibraryCardSignUpMonth	11,201	3.6%
#4	Detroit's role in MLK's message	8,613	2.8%

Every one of these top performers shares the same DNA: Detroit-rooted identity and community storytelling, not trend-chasing or internal promotional content. That pattern is the strategic through-line of this case study. When Detroit PBS posts Detroit-specific content, engagement spikes, and national-style content simply doesn't land the same way.

Smaller Output, Significantly Stronger Performance

A concurrent-period pull of all Detroit PBS video posts (Aug 2025–Jul 2026, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube) puts MPM Studios' output in context: 775 organic video posts went out across Detroit PBS platforms in that window, and MPM Studios produced 111 of them, about 14.3% of total video output. Yet on a per-post basis, MPM Studios substantially outperformed the rest of the platform:

Metric	Rest of Platform (non-MPM)	MPM Studios	Difference
Avg. organic views / post	1,912.8	2,836.9	+48.3%
Avg. organic engagement / post	170.3	335.4	+96.9%

MPM Studios' lower output is by design, not limitation. It is a small, scrappy team proving this thesis on top of its regular workload, without dedicated time, training, or resources. That combination of small scale and outsized results is exactly why the numbers matter more than a single strong quarter: they point to a sequencing problem in how Detroit PBS approaches social media more broadly.

Why This Matters: Organic Content as the Foundation for Paid Strategy and ROI

Organic engagement, pledge donations, and email subscriptions are not the same currency. A view, a like, or a share reflects a moment of attention and cultural resonance; a pledge or a subscription reflects a much deeper level of trust and commitment. Trying to generate the second without first earning the first is where the current strategy falls short. Too much of Detroit PBS's social content is asked to do conversion's job before the audience has any reason to feel connected. MPM Studios shows what happens when content is simply entertaining and locally resonant, with no conversion ask attached: engagement goes up, not down.

Two Different Jobs, Two Different Strategies

- Organic, platform-native content (most of the social calendar) should prioritize entertainment, cultural relevance, and connection. This means meeting the audience where they already are, without a constant conversion ask attached.
- Paid media, along with a small number of deliberately bespoke and highly strategized organic pieces, should carry the conversion load, including pledge drives, event promotion, and email sign-up, because that's the content built and targeted specifically to do that job well.

Conversion-focused messaging should be the exception on organic social, not the constant baseline. It should be reserved for paid placements and select high-investment content built for that purpose. The near-term priority is rebuilding connection with the local Detroit audience through hyper-local, entertainment-first content. This is the model MPM Studios has already begun to prove out. After that, Detroit PBS can layer in conversion strategy more deliberately, with an eye toward each platform's specific purpose.

MPM Studios as a Testing Ground

MPM Studios remains a modest share of Detroit PBS's overall output. But its role isn't to replace the broader strategy; it's to test and lead the way. Its results are proof of concept for a digital- and audience-first approach to video content, one that the rest of the organization's social and paid strategy can build on with confidence once the foundational, organic relationship with Detroit is in place. Getting there, though, means being honest about how the initiative has drifted from its original intent. It also means being honest about what it will take to reset course.

Strategic Realignment: How We Got Here, Where We Go Next

The original MPM Studios strategy was sound in concept. It was digital-first content sharing Detroit PBS back with its social audience, built around trending audio, themes, and topics, aiming for a fresher, more humor- and entertainment-forward look. But in practice, it evolved into something narrower: quick-turnaround videos tied to internal promotional priorities, loosely connected to a trending theme through humor. That version of the content reads as tone-deaf rather than fresh, and it isn't resonating with the hyper-local Detroit audience the channel actually depends on.

The data points to a clear reset: high-quality, standalone content made specifically for Detroit social audiences, created in true partnership with production. That reset requires dedicated administrative and strategic support, and a rebuilt content calendar grounded in purpose and goal. The same reset applies to Detroit PBS's broader social content as well, which deserves its own intentional strategy rather than serving as a catch-all for promotion.

	As Designed	What It Became	Proposed Reset
Approach	Digital-first content sharing Detroit PBS back with the audience, built on trending audio and topics.	Quick-turnaround videos tied to internal promotional priorities, loosely wrapped in a trending theme.	High-quality, standalone content made specifically for Detroit audiences, built in true partnership with production.
Result	Goal: a fresher, more humor- and entertainment-forward voice.	Reads as tone-deaf rather than fresh; doesn't resonate with the hyper-local audience.	Needs dedicated administrative and strategic support, plus a calendar grounded in purpose and goal.

Social Media Content Strategy vs. MPM Studios: Strategy and Workflow

That reset isn't just about what content gets made. It's about who leads it and how. Social content and MPM Studios are often talked about as a single “social media” effort, but the data above only makes sense once they're understood as two different strategies with two different workflows, doing two different jobs. Conflating them is part of why MPM Studios' videos have had to compete with promotional asks for the same slot on the calendar. Separating them is what lets each one do its job well.

	Social Content (led by Aaliyah)	MPM Studios (led by Reyana)
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Nature of work	In-the-moment, responsive to trends, audience conversation, and platform behavior.	Standalone content tied to programming and broadcast priorities. It is pillar-based and strategic, closer to a mini production unit.
Focus	Tune-in and promotional content, plus brand awareness, impact storytelling, and collaboration opportunities.	A production lead role: organizing projects, facilitating production workflows, and shaping the overall presentation of the work.
Planning horizon	Short. Built around what's trending or what needs promotion this week.	Longer. Built around a content calendar of Detroit-rooted story pillars planned in partnership with production.
Success metric	Tune-in, campaign awareness, and timely engagement with a specific promotional ask.	Organic reach and engagement as a proxy for genuine community resonance. No conversion ask attached.
Character	Inherently immediate and collaborative, tied closely to ongoing leadership.	Not a limit on creativity. A stronger identity and elevated production value for the initiative across the organization.

Framed simply: social media is Detroit PBS telling the world about Detroit PBS. MPM Studios, at its best, is Detroit telling the world about itself.

Two Workflows: How Content Actually Gets Made

The two tracks don't just differ in tone and purpose. They move through the organization differently, and treating them as one workflow is part of what has diluted MPM Studios' output.

Social Content: Reactive and Promotional

- Monitor trending audio and platform conversation, then match it to an active promotional priority: a campaign, tune-in date, or event.
- Script, shoot, and edit on a quick turnaround, often within the same day or week.
- Publish and respond in real time, adjusting to comments and platform behavior as they happen.

MPM Studios: Planned and Production-Partnered

- Identify a Detroit-rooted story pillar tied to community, culture, or programming. This is not a trending topic.
- Coordinate with production for access, interviews, and higher-quality capture. This is the journalistic capacity the team is asking to formalize.
- Build the piece as standalone narrative content on its own timeline, then publish on a planned cadence. Evaluate performance and feed what resonated back into the next story pillar.

The two workflows are meant to intersect, not compete: MPM Studios' standalone stories can still be surfaced and re-shared through the social content calendar, and social content can point audiences toward MPM Studios' deeper storytelling. But each piece of content should be built by the workflow suited to its job. A trend-driven promotional post shouldn't be forced to carry community storytelling, and a Detroit-rooted story shouldn't be rushed onto a same-day promotional timeline.

The Ask

Making this reset real requires five things:

- Recognition as a strategic initiative. This is not a side project, which means dedicated time, not just goodwill.
- A production partnership. This means a formal seat in production's process, with dedicated resources and administrative support to align the content calendar and tap production's connections for standalone, audience-first shoots.
- Investment in process. Community interviews and higher-production storytelling take more time, and that's the point. MPM Studios needs staffing and tools to do this right, not as a volunteer effort layered on top of regular workloads.
- A journalistic capacity. This is the ability to speak with people and interview Detroiters about what's happening in their lives and their city, which is what social audiences come to a public media station for.
- A closer look at Facebook specifically. Its engagement rate reads as a decline, most likely a format-mix artifact (long-form legacy posts vs. short-form MPM posts) rather than a real drop. That comparison needs a cleaner short-form-to-short-form read once enough MPM Studios volume exists there to support it.

This represents a relatively small shift in focus that can meaningfully close the gap between the content Detroit PBS is proud of and the community engagement it's still missing.

Conclusion & Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION

Formalize MPM Studios as an ongoing strategic priority, with continued investment in production capacity to scale this performance.

Three findings make the case:

- Sustained growth, not a one-hit spike. Views kept climbing after the November 2025 peak, with June 2026 registering the second-highest month to date.
- Quality over quantity is working. MPM Studios delivered 48.3% higher views and 96.9% higher engagement per post than the rest of Detroit PBS's platforms, from roughly 14.3% of total output.
- A repeatable creative thesis. Detroit-rooted storytelling is what travels, and the top four videos by view count all share that same DNA.

MPM Studios has, in its first year and without dedicated resourcing, already demonstrated the strategy that can close Detroit PBS's engagement gap. The data suggests the next step is not more experimentation, but investment: giving the initiative the structure, staffing, and production partnership to do at scale what it has already proven works.