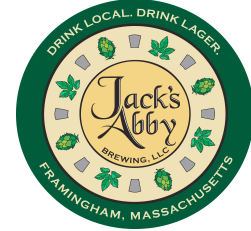


## Jack's Abby Brewing Case Study: *Community Building in Social Media*



### **Describe the issue to be addressed / challenge to be solved:**

Jack's Abby Brewing is a Framingham, MA based brewer of specialized lagers launching a craft brewery in an already crowded market. The company was founded Jack Hendler and his brothers Sam and Eric in January 2011 and began brewing in June 2011.

There are currently more than 30 craft brewers in the State of Massachusetts. According to the Brewers Association, craft brewers are small, independent and use traditional brewing methods Under Massachusetts state law they are allowed to offer on-premise tasting and to self-distribute to restaurants, bars and liquor stores.

In establishing its business, Jack's Abby faced a number of challenges:

- With more than 30 already popular craft brewers in the state, Massachusetts is a crowded market for specialty brewers. The category contains several well-known brands (Sam Adams, Harpoon) as well as smaller brewers favored by beer aficionados. In order to compete, Jack's Abby needed to quickly establish its presence in the market with a strong offering and support from a large community of followers.
- While most craft breweries focus on ales, Jack's Abby chose to specialize in lagers. Brewing lagers is a more time-intensive process and many beer aficionados prefer ales.
- While self-distribution helps a brewer have more control over where and how its beers are served and marketed, it also means that the brewery must go out and sell to each individual restaurant, bar and liquor store to gain shelf or tap space. In order to gain traction quickly, Jack's Abby had to convince these establishments that there would be an audience before the beers were even brewed.

### **Define the target audience:**

There were numerous targets for the social media campaign – mainly concentrated in the Boston and MetroWest region. The primary targets were:

- Friends and family – Personal friends and relatives of the Hendler brothers who lived in the region and could be counted on as enthusiastic supporters for Jack’s Abby, both on Facebook and in real life.
- Beer aficionados – Individuals who were home brewers or who would otherwise seek out craft brews, had intimate knowledge of beers and the brewing process and would be (similar to friends and family) enthusiastic brand supporters.
- Beer writers – There are a number of beer bloggers and writers who cover beer for mainstream publications in the Boston area and these were important targets for the social media campaign. We counted on them to put their seal of approval on Jack’s Abby at the earliest possible moment, and for them to share their writing with the rest of the Jack’s Abby community on the Facebook page through linking or sharing.
- Bars, restaurants and liquor stores – These were the ultimate targets for the social media program. If they saw significant support for Jack’s Abby they would in turn be motivated to sell Jack’s Abby beers in their establishments. It was vital to generate a sufficient level of excitement and anticipation for the beers early in the process and maintain that excitement up to and following the beginning of production so the sales outlets would know there was a strong market for the beers.

### **Please Describe the Solution:**

Working with Nurenu Brand Marketing, Jack’s Abby employed an aggressive social media campaign to build interest in the brewery and anticipation for its beers before brewing even began.

Using the social media platforms developed by Nurenu, Jack’s Abby was able to document its brewery construction progress, establish its bona fides in the brewing industry, explain its focus on lagers instead of the more common ales known by craft brew drinkers, and build a following early. By the time the company began production, it had established a strong market for its beers.

### **The Deployment:**

Facebook was used primarily to communicate progress in building the brewing infrastructure. Jack and his brothers (partners in Jack's Abby) used Facebook to talk about their plans for the brewery, the beers they would be selling, the founders' background in the brewing industry and progress towards completing the brewery and beginning production.

Construction of the brewery was regularly documented with photo albums on Facebook.

Twitter was used to augment and echo what was being said on Facebook.

A blog was set up on the Jack's Abby website where Jack and his brothers wrote longer-form entries about the progress of construction and plans for the brewery.

Early on in the program, Norm Miller, a features writer for the MetroWest Daily News, a newspaper covering the suburban communities between Boston and Worcester MA, including Framingham, contacted Jack's Abby. Mr. Miller wrote a regular column and a blog covering local breweries and was interested in documenting Jack's Abby's progress toward opening. An agreement was made where Jack Hendler and his brothers would be guest bloggers on Mr. Miller's blog – providing content that could also be used on the Jack's Abby blog. Among other benefits, this agreement helped establish an important relationship early with a key influencer.

### **Were there any obstacles or challenges that needed to be overcome?**

Jack's Abby staff was trained on using Facebook and posting blogs as a key part of aggressively marketing the company.

### **Describe qualitative and/or quantitative measures of success. How do these results specifically map to the objective(s) stated above?**

By the time Jack's Abby began production (June, 2011), their Facebook page had more than 600 'likes.' These were primarily people who lived in the target geographic market – between Boston and Worcester MA – and they were mainly beer enthusiasts and aficionados. The Facebook page became an active discussion board, with conversations between Jack, his brothers and many of the fans.

Seeing this strong support for the brand before they even began brewing, led several bars and restaurants to contact Jack's Abby about serving their beers. By the time



Jack's Abby began selling growlers at the brewery, they were already in a dozen bars and restaurants in the Framingham area.

The high level of activity on the Facebook page attracted the attention of several local beer and food bloggers and writers who in turn covered Jack's Abby on their own blogs and in their publications. By the time of the Jack's Abby grand opening event, the company had received press from the most important media in the region including articles from beer columnists at The Boston Globe, The Boston Herald, and Boston Magazine as well as MetroWest Daily and the most well known beer writers and bloggers in Massachusetts. As of today, Jack's Abby has over 800 "likes" on Facebook and is growing its Twitter fan base too. Its beer has been featured in area bars and restaurants in and around Framingham, Cambridge, Boston, and Worcester.