

Jesse Thelen
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EXECUTIVE SYNOPSIS:

Dynamic sales and business development leader with a proven track record of generating top- and bottom-line results. A principle based leader, managing by team and individual motivation while providing opportunities for development and growth. Expert in developing strategic initiatives and driving execution through leadership, collaboration and accountability to provide uncompromised customer focus and deliver exceptional sales and profitability results.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Benestar Brands LLC – a PE backed salty snack manufacturing company

January 2021 – Present

Chief Sales Officer – Chicago, Illinois

Lead all facets of the company's sales organization of mainstream, incubation and private label brands representing +\$300MM in annual sales. Oversee a team of 3 Vice Presidents, 8 Regional Vice Presidents, a west coast DSD organization and a sales operations team. Responsible for all aspects of account management, broker management, category management, revenue growth management and retail. Direct the planning and process development for sales strategy, financial growth targets, team structure and performance tracking. Family of brands included Macs, 4505 Meats, Turkey Creek, Chicas Tortilla Chips, Cazo de Oro, PÖRQ and a variety of contract manufacturing.

- Evangelized company vision and strategy in the market. Served as company spokesperson for revenue activities.
- Ownership of gross sales and EBITDA strategies across omni-channel business model to deliver our 5-year strategic plan.
- Restructured the sales organization, broker network, trade strategy, sku portfolio and sales development organization resulting in cost savings, smoother operations and better execution.
- Collaborated with leadership across finance, operations, marketing and HR to help deliver overall team strategies.
- Led or stewarded major contract negotiation on Private Label manufacturing, contract production, vendor agreements and agency contracts.
- Optimized our DTC & eCommerce plan resulting in a return to profitability and revenue growth from \$30k a year to over \$2MM.
- Developed portfolio brand strategies across our family of brands including channel strategies, sku rationalization, box and case pack optimization resulting in customer specific execution goals based on brand and profit objectives. Results converted our portfolio from 45% branded and 65% contract revenue to 65% branded and 45% contract revenue.
- Macs #1 brand with xAOC growth of 16% L52 wks and ACV gains from 41% to 51% xAOC all while intentionally removing distribution in the value/discount channel, US foods ACV from 31% to 41%; Turkey Creek #1 Non-DSD in C-Store & #3 brand overall +168% growth 21,219 stores YTD. Incubated PÖRQ from concept to 7% ACV xAOC and \$5MM in GSV.
 - Key Customer highlights: Moved Kroger from DSD to warehouse direct resulting in 8% margin enhancement and ACV from 44% to 100%. Scaled Albertson's regionally to gain national awareness resulting in national buy meeting and significant distribution expansion in west and south divisions. Successfully negotiated multiple price increases with Walmart while growing distribution and feature support. Moved Ahold direct from regional DSD resulting in ACV gains from 15% to 55% all while enhancing internal margin. Grew AWG from \$20k GSV customer to \$2MM within 12 months by execution locally with the buying groups. Launched Macs canister and within 12 months it was #1 sku in the category xAOC with over \$20MM in GSV. Converted the value discount customers from Macs to Turkey Creek resulting in 12% margin enhancement and expanded distribution. POD gains in C-Store on Turkey Creek, took the brand from #6 to #1 warehouse brand by creating a national broker network and brand execution strategies. Amazon/DTC converted from losing \$500k a year to profitability by changing partners, strategies and renegotiating agency terms.
- Successfully incubated Chicas Tortilla Chips from Southern California brand with no recordable ACV and \$1MM GSV to all divisions of UNFI/KeHE, Kroger & Albertsons Western Divisions, Amazon, Faire.com, Costco, Central Market, Fresh Thyme, Lowes Foods, Harris Teeter, and Publix resulting in double digit ACV gains and several thousand stores. Run rate GSV on Chicas is \$8MM one year after expansion with national coverage.
- Partnered with Walmart to create Cazo de Oro tortilla chips negotiating a one year exclusivity agreement resulting in 34% ACV with a run rate of \$10MM in GSV. Now scaling to other key mainstream retailers such as Food Lion, AWG, Food City, Save-A-Lot, Aldi, 99 Cent Only and other regional grocery stores.
- Contract, Bulk & Private Label business conversion from low margin business to corporate goal margin by changing the customer mix and portfolio strategy. Thereby gaining contract business with Aldi, Lidl, HEB, Wegmans, Fresh Thyme, Meijer, AWG, Topco, Afod, and various other partners.

RXBAR - (Insurgent Brands LLC) – Acquired and integrated by Kelloggs**October 2018 – December 2020**

RXBAR is a line of clean-label protein bars. The company has expanded to launch a line of RX Nut Butters, RX A.M.Oat Cups as well as RX Kids bars.

Senior Vice President Sales – Chicago, Illinois (August 2019-December 2020)

Led all facets of the company's sales organization representing \$286MM in annual sales. Oversaw a team comprised of 41 associates including 8 direct reports, Director of Sales National Accounts, Director of Sales Regional & Natural, Director of Sales Small Format, Director of Sales Club, Director of Sales eComm 3P & 1P, Director of Sales B2B(DTC), Manager of Insights, Manager of Commercialization. Responsible for all aspects of account management, broker management, category management, trade marketing and retail management. Directed the strategic planning, sales, pricing and cost management to ensure company goals were attained and exceeded.

- Successful integration of the acquisition into the Kellogg organization as the Natural and Insurgent Division. Worked with HR partners and Kellogg's leadership to design the structure, strategies and plan to stand up a "better for you" division within Kellogg. Stayed with the team through the implementation to help guarantee a successful transition.
- Built capabilities and restructured to improve portfolio selling, better aligning the business across growth channels.
- Established IBP business planning processes to better align the cross-functional organization around S&OE, reducing forecast error by 20%, reduced invalid deductions by \$2MM, reduced excess inventory by \$1.5MM and better aligned the organization to execute against business strategies.
- Worked with HR and functional leads to establish a 9-box talent process helping our mid-level managers focus on talent development as well as performance management.
- Negotiated with a network of broker agencies to reduce commission rates across all classes of trade.
- Launched RXBAR into Canada across all classes of trade including DTC and ecommerce resulting in \$13MM GSV.
- Partnered with Kellogg organization utilizing capabilities to help incubate their venture brands such as JoyBol and Leaf Jerky on DTC, B2B and dropship platforms.
- Developed dropship capability for 1P and 3P ecommerce to unlock speed to market as well as incubation of innovation within Amazon, Costco and other partners.
- System implementation of VisualFabriq TPM, Salesforce CRM and Tableau data to provide visibility and execution.

Vice President Sales Grocery & Mass – Chicago, Illinois (October 2018 – August 2019)

Oversaw the customer business development efforts for the \$170MM business within the Grocery and Mass channels. Led a team of five direct reports and 15 indirect reports. Responsible for leveraging market and consumer understanding with retailers to drive strategic alignment and deliver profitable business growth.

- Led creation, presentation and execution of a strategic growth plan across the retail sales force to increase top-line sales with customers through efficient promotion which led to historical company highs in terms of GSV and the team exceeding financial commitments with a growth rate of over 30%.
- Cultivated strategic relationships with key customers including Kroger, Albertsons, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Ahold, Fresh Thyme, HEB, Giant Eagle, Wakefern, Publix and other regional players to improve brand positioning with each retailer and the internal protocol in developing retailer partnerships.
- Leveraged marketplace data to persuade Whole Foods Markets to reset and test RX Nut Butter and RX Kids merchandising standards across several key categories at all stores
- Developed and implemented a strategic initiative and secured retailer buy-in to execute our 10ct Variety Packs in Mass channel resulting in double digit growth.
- Redesigned trade spending, post promotion analysis and go-to-market strategy that leveraged package mix changes improving trade by 5% points.

JM Smucker Company**January 2010 – October 2018**

The J. M. Smucker Company is an American manufacturer of coffee, pet food, pet treats, peanut butter, fruit spreads, ice cream toppings, snacks and beverages.

Divisional Vice President, East – Cleveland, Ohio (June 2016 – October 2018)

Led and managed a multi-functional customer team with over \$1.4B in retail sales for the Coffee, Pet and Consumer business units, with 12 direct reports and 14 total reports. Reports included Director of Sales, Regional Sales Managers, Account Business Managers and Sales Analysts. Delivered against quarterly revenue objectives, drove change internally and with the customer to create demand at retail, deliver against experiential shopping environment, build industry leading capabilities across the team and created development plans for Account Managers and Sales Analyst.

- P&L responsibility of \$1.4 Billion in JMS sales with a trade budget of \$165M across Coffee, Pet, and Consumer food business units
- Strong Customer Relationships included AWG, Wakefern, C&S, HEB, SEG, Albertsons, Wegmans, Military, Lidl and all other East Grocery
- Sales lead on the divestiture team transitioning the Pillsbury and Hungry Jack business to Brynwood Partners, Hometown Foods.
- Managed the sales development program for grocery. Successfully promoted Wal-Mart, Kroger, Target, Ahold/Delhaize and Publix NAM's
- FY18 YTD results 97.5% (Total Grocery 96%) volume and 99.5% profit plan, all while integrating the Big Heart Pet acquisition
- Passed Ernst & Young year-end audit with no errors all while beating deduction goal by \$1.5M and reducing days outstanding to 12

- Trade Synergies of \$7M, Slotting savings of \$1M, implemented terms enhancements of 2 days, and enforced a new LDI policy
- Negotiated vendor agreements at C&S, AWG, Bozzutos and other distributors preventing \$60M in inbound diverting as well as improving supply chain efficiencies through lane optimization and fee reduction.
- Helped developed a Single Source Retail Policy pushing back against retailer margin enhancement saving JMS \$14M annually
- Sales Representation on the following task forces: Baking divestiture, Pet acquisition, Market Development Organization, Innovation Task Force and TPM System.

Eastern Sales Director – Cleveland, Ohio (November 2013 – June 2016)

Selected to turn around a poor performing region with high trade spending rates, lack of talent upgrade and declining sales. Owned the strategic direction and implementation of tactics for the market and was held accountable for share growth. Developed and implemented sales strategies, created marketing and promotion plans to shape local and trade perceptions and directed negotiations of area's annual merchandising agreements. Managed staff of 7 employees, \$531MM operating budget.

- Strong Customer Relationships included: Ahold USA, Wakefern, C&S, Giant Eagle, Wegmans, Safeway, and all other Eastern Grocery
- Delivered FY16 quota at 101% vs Grocery 101% all while saving \$2M in trade.
- Delivered FY15 quota at 98.1% vs Grocery Finish of 95.2%
- Delivered FY14 quota at 102.7% (coffee at 100% and consumer at 103%) while remaining within trade budget
- Foster VP and President level business review meetings to align on joint goals and plans
- Established Joint Business Plans with all top retailers, setting long term budget and growth goals
- Successfully integrated multiple acquisitions. Rowland Coffee \$48 million with 8% growth, Sahale Snacks \$200K +300%
- Sales representative on cross functional business and process team at HQ. Acquisition integration, Siebel Upgrades & Process development
- Developed process improvements for trade audit from Ernst & Young resulting in 100% scores in the East Division for last two years

Regional Sales Manager – Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (December 2011 – November 2013)

Led the development and implementation of common sales materials format, coordinated calendar of ship dates, sales plan deployment, monthly top-line reporting and common trade promotion principles across all categories. Acted as a liaison between the marketing and sales teams, developed strategies to include new item launches and shopper marketing campaigns with key customers. Presented marketing strategies to all top retail customers and was responsible for sales input to develop brand planning and execution of the plan with the sales team.

- Responsible for \$190 million in JMS Sales across Coffee, Spreads, Oil, Baking, Breakfast and Milk
- Strong Customer Relationships included: Ahold USA, Wegmans, Weis, ACME, Associated Wholesalers and Mars
- Delivered FY12 quota at 104.9% (coffee at 103.8% & consumer 105.2%), FY13 at 105.5% (coffee at 105.1% & consumer 105.6%)
- Managed a team consisting of two BDM's, six CDM's, two ASM CATMAN, one ABDM and five Trade Administrators
- Established Smucker Business Planning Meetings monthly with the entire team. Results were deduction balances decreasing by \$300k, DDO falling to within goal, retail audit score improvement by 20pts all while delivering 105% of smart volume growth

National Account Executive, Kroger – Cincinnati, Ohio (January 2010 – January 2012)

Responsible for leading, training and providing direction to a multi-functional team dedicated to the Kroger account which represented \$82MM in annual sales. Served as the primary point of contact to the customer and prioritized tactical initiatives for the account team. Responsible for Consumer Foods Division sales including baking, oil and milk categories.

- Delivered 102.8% growth to quota for FY10 and 103% to quota for FY11
- Dessert Baking mix consumption +11.5% latest 52 weeks; Oil consumption +20% latest 52 weeks
- Achieved 102.8% growth to quota for fiscal year 2010; projected growth of 103% to quota for fiscal 2011

Colgate-Palmolive

June 2007 – January 2010

Colgate-Palmolive is a consumer products company that produces, distributes, and provides household, healthcare, and personal products.

National Account Executive, Kroger – Cincinnati, Ohio (August 2008 – January 2010)

Responsible for leading, training and providing direction to a multi-functional team dedicated to the Kroger account which represented \$102MM in net sales. Served as the primary point of contact to the customer and prioritized tactical initiatives for the account team.

- Converted case growth of 5.8% with net sales growth of 10% and margin growth of 12%
- Increased 20,000 points of distribution in a sku rationalization environment by utilizing key relationships at Kroger

Account Business Manager, Family Dollar – Charlotte, North Carolina (June 2007 – August 2008)

Functioned as a category consultant for the Family Dollar account which was the company's fifth largest customer and represented \$100MM in annual sales. Analyzed point-of-sale data and provided recommendations based on market trends and consumer behavior.

- Converted case growth of 12% with net sales growth of 18% and margin growth of 21%.
- Consumption growth +31.4% or a 6 share point gain in Fabric Care and +11.% or a 1 share point gain in Cleaners

Thelen Foods, LLC	2004-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self Employed Multi-Company Snack Food Distributor - Los Angeles, California• Channels Responsible for: Grocery, Mass, Club, Drug, Military and Convenience• Built distribution from \$350M in 2004 to \$2MM in 2007• Successful exit and sales of Distributorship 2007	

Campbell's Soup, Inc.	2003-2005
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Field Sales Manager, Pepperidge Farm Division – Central Coast, California• Channels Responsible for: Grocery, Mass, Club, Drug, Dollar and Military	

Coca-Cola Enterprises Inc.	1998-2003
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District Sales Manager, Grocery, Mass & Drug – Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley California• Channels Responsible for: Grocery, Mass, Club, Military, City Government, Dollar, Convenience and Independent	

EDUCATION:

Case Western Reserve University, Weatherhead School of Management – Cleveland, Ohio Managing the Art of Leadership Program	2017
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Cornell University - Ithaca, NY Food Executive Program <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Winner of the Grocery Store Management Project	2014
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University of Phoenix – Los Angeles, California BA, Business Management	2008
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BOARD & COMPANY AFFILIATIONS:

Chomps Meat Stick - Strategy Support <i>Consulted to help Chomps stand up execution strategies across C-Store and Grocery</i>	2020 - 2022
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Whoa! Dough Bars <i>Serve an advisory role with CEO helping to validate and support sales and marketing strategies</i>	2019 - 2022
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Lekkco Belgian Chocolate Spread <i>Serve an advisory role with CEO helping to validate and support sales strategies</i>	2019 - 2022
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MDI Vendor Advisory Board	2017 – 2018
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Ohio Grocers Association	2015 – 2018
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