

Public Relations

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Jack Horner Communications Inc.

Public Relations ■ Graphic Design ■ Advertising ■ Promotional Products

Case Study:

Byers' Choice Ltd.: Reaching New Customers

The Challenge

Byers' Choice Ltd. (Byers' Choice), creators of the famous Caroler figurines, is one of the largest producers of Christmas decorations in the United States. The company started at the dining room table of Joyce Byers and today ships hundreds of thousands of Carolers to gift retailers across the United States and abroad.



philly.com

Each Caroler is handmade in the company's Bucks County, Pa., facility, which also is home to a Visitor Center including a Christmas museum and Gift Emporium.

The company wanted to bolster the roster of retailers that carry Byers' Choice products and strengthen its relationships with the gift trade media. The publications in the gift industry are an important vehicle to reach Byers' key audience: owners of independent gift stores.

The Visitor Center hosts many events over the holidays, and Byers' Choice was looking to drive more people to the property over the Christmas season.

In addition, the company was eager to establish a social media presence, and the Byers family sought counsel on how to use Facebook and Twitter to directly reach consumers.

Byers' Choice called on the team at Jack Horner Communications Inc. (JHC) to strengthen relationships with key gift trade publications as well as regional media to turn the heads of potential retailers and drive traffic to the Visitor Center during the holiday season.

The Solution

To build relationships with key gift trade publications, JHC invited the ad team and editors from each magazine to meet with the Byers family and JHC in Bucks County for a one-on-one tour of the facility and meeting to determine best practices for collaboration. Being able to show the handcrafted nature of the Carolers was a key strategy in demonstrating to these media contacts what Byers' Choice has to offer.

JHC suggested creating a retailer newsletter as another tool to reach key gift shop owners. Working in conjunction with the Byers family, JHC wrote a series of articles with tips and information on how to market Carolers, as well as a profile of a successful gift store that sells Byers' products.

The agency reached out to media in the Philadelphia area through press releases, event listings and targeted pitches to drive traffic to the Visitor Center for holiday season events. For example, Byers' Choice hosts an annual performance of "A Christmas Carol" by the great-grandson of Charles Dickens at its workshop and coordinates an East Coast tour of Dickens' show. To leverage these events, JHC created customized releases for each market where Dickens performed to drive visitors to those shows.

The JHC team set up Facebook and Twitter pages for Byers' Choice as tools to reach consumers, the media and retailers. These pages were managed with frequent updates about events at Byers' Choice, appearances by the Byers family and news on Byers' Choice products, along with employee news and other relevant posts.

Finally, JHC refreshed the content of the Byers' Choice press kit, creating new fact sheets, backgrounds and profiles. The kit was used for the media and also for gift retailers requesting information on the company.

The Results

Over a period of six months, JHC's public relations efforts garnered 1,287,760 audience impressions in print, Internet and broadcast media and ad equivalency totaled \$64,302. Some highlights include:

- *Giftware News*
- *GIFT SHOP*
- *Victorian Homes magazine*
- "Philadelphia Business Today" (Philly.com)
- *Bucks County Courier Times/Intelligencer*
- WCAU-TV (NBC) "10! Show"

The top three gift industry publications visited Byers' Choice in December 2009 and toured the workshop/Visitor Center. JHC has been able to leverage the relationships built through those meetings to place several stories highlighting Byers' Choice products in upcoming issues.

Byers' Choice's presence in social media is continuing to grow steadily, going from zero to 700+ Facebook fans in under six months. The engagement level of the audience is high, with fans frequently adding photos, suggestions or questions to the Byers' Choice Facebook page.

Thousands of guests visited Byers' Choice over the holiday season, and many of the performances of "A Christmas Carol" sold out.



"Our experience with JHC has been very positive, and they've helped reintroduce our brand to the key trade publications that will help us reach new retailers. We are

looking forward to working with JHC to continue building new relationships with both retailers and consumers."

Jeff Byers
Vice President of Marketing
Byers' Choice Ltd.