

EPISODE 002

IRON CITY BEER

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Aaron Easler, Top Hat

AND

Bobby Baker, Top Hat

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Follow-up, a weekly podcast that goes in depth into projects recently reviewed on Brand New featuring conversations with the designers, and sometimes their clients, uncovering the context, background and design decisions behind the work.

BRYONY GOMEZ-PALACIO

Hi, this is Bryony Gomez-Palacio and welcome to episode 2 of The Follow-up. This week we are following up on Iron City Beer, one of the most iconic local brands in Pittsburgh, brewed by Pittsburgh Brewing Company, which is considered to be one of the first breweries to produce a lager in the United States.

The project, designed by local firm Top Hat, was posted on Brand New on May 27. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast002 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast002, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Aaron Easler, Creative Director and Partner of Top Hat, and Bobby Baker, designer and brand specialist at Top Hat.

In this conversation we go deeper into how Top Hat secured this job with an all-out effort on the initial proposal, the speed at which the project developed, the influence that the city of Pittsburgh had throughout all the touchpoints, and the hard work that went into making so many collaborations with other local brands possible.

Now, let's listen in as Armin follows up with Aaron and Bobby.

ARMIN VIT Aaron, Bobby, welcome to the Follow-Up. Are you ready to get started?

AARON Yeah, absolutely.

BOBBY Of course. Excited to be here.

ARMIN Uh, can you tell us a little bit about your role at Top Hat?

AARON Uh, I'm the Creative Director and Partner here.

BOBBY I am the Brand, uh, Specialist, but I'm really just a designer.

ARMIN So the first question that I like to start off with is how did the relationship between you and Iron City Beer start?

AARON We got a call from Pittsburgh Brewing about this sort of secret project, ownership was changing, there was a non-disclosures involved., and at that point we really had no business working with a brand with that kind of, uh, clout for how small we were and how new to the game we were. So we, we went all in with that relationship. We got to work immediately. Bobby's eyes lit up and we knew that that was a project that was right in his wheelhouse, and we went over the top with the, with the proposal, you know, the audience can't see it, but we, we made a booklet, we delivered it and, uh, like a steel case that was made by a local fabricator. And we just went all-out trying to make sure we secure that job if it was at all possible. And honestly, we had no expectations to be able to at that point.

ARMIN Well, that's really interesting that you went all-in and did you know that you were com—, did you know off-hand that you were competing against other firms? Or were you that you get any hint that maybe you were the only one that was being considered.

AARON Ah, no. We, like, we definitely knew that we weren't the only firm at that point, it was just totally shocking that we were even being considered for it and that we were on their radar. Uh, we had done a campaign a couple of months earlier that got some traction called "We'll Work for Beer", where we offered to work in exchange for beer for any brewery,

and we had them send us proposals of why they should be the brewery that we worked for. And that got a lot of traction and, uh, got some notoriety, it got placement and big beer blog, uh, Hop Culture and, um, uh, Ad Week. And that's really what put us on their radar more so than anything we had portfolio-wise at the time, but there's a lot of big players locally that they reached out to, or probably in a conversation with like 12 to 15 different agencies.

ARMIN And having no experience, no prior experience with a client this size, how did you know how to price it, how to present it? Um, was it, uh, you know, at that time, was it a lot of guessing?

AARON Yeah, there's guesswork, but we like w—is new to the game, and small as we were, we've always treated ourselves like a very legitimate agency and priced ourselves, like what we thought the value of the work we were delivering was, um, you know, we've been aggressive with some, some things where it was, we think this is going to be a really cool portfolio piece, and we know they can't afford the services otherwise, but we had some experience with, uh, big dollar jobs, you know, near six figure jobs already, and we're confident in quoting from that standpoint. So I think when you're walking into an environment like that, a lot of it comes down to looking like you belong there and feeling like you believe in, you're able to say those numbers with a straight face and confidently and know that you can back it up. I think that's honestly a big part of being able to land a job like that whenever you're new to the game. And don't have quite the expansive portfolio and years of reputation that some of these other big ad agencies around here do.

ARMIN Yep. That's great. That is some actionable, uh, uh, action steps that people can take, just, uh, if not so much, uh, you know, I think we all have a weird relationship with pricing and we never quite, I mean, we think we have an understanding, but we never really know if we're charging more or less. Uh, but I think in the end, like, as you mentioned, if you have enough conviction behind it, and you think

like, oh, this amount of work is worth this much and you stand behind it in your mind and in your heart, like this is it, you know, every now and then it might, people might approve it.

AARON You know, at the end of the day, you're like, I, I would do this for next to nothing because I want this in my back pocket so bad. So that's what you're trying to balance it against. It's like, I want to put up a legitimate number and I want us to get what we're worth, but I'd rather do it for a lot less than not get the opportunity to do that. And that's a really tough battle, I think, to kind of weigh in a lot of those circumstances.

ARMIN Uh, what did the engagement look like? Was it a big overhaul? Was it just like, hey, we want to redesign our beer bottles and then it just exploded from there.

AARON Um, yeah, it was put out as a proposal for the rebrand and packaging, ah for sure, like that relationship has grown a lot—far beyond the scope of the original contract we signed with them. Um, and now we are just on retainer with them to do all their marketing, like we do all their social media, all their signage, uh, billboards they put out just with really very little oversight. They treat us as kind of like part of their team, which is a really cool dynamic of the relationship. But I think one of the things that actually, uh, separated us from all the other proposals they were getting is they were treating Pittsburgh Brewing Company, which is the overarching, ah, brand as, as they would any kind of brewery where they're doing the rebrand of Iron City.—IC Light, IC Light Mango, American, old German, their whole portfolio in tandem. And I think trying to put a template around them where we said, no, you have the biggest opportunity to grow Iron City right now. Like that's where you, that's the brand with the notoriety. That's where we should sync a lot of this effort in upfront, and then move on to the other brands in your portfolio, because this isn't, this, isn't like a Dog Fish Head or a brewery that, um, it's the brewery first. And then the brand, it's more like a Boston Beer where people know Sam Adams and, uh, Twisted Tea and truly, and these other brands in their

portfolio before they know the parent company. So, um, really, we kind of reduced the original scope and then kind of tackled each of those subsequent pieces as time went on, but as individual projects.

ARMIN Yeah. That's interesting. So even before you got started, you were already thinking about what would be the best approach for this client, knowing the product and the city and you know, what it takes, what it would take to reinvigorate the brand. And how, after the proposal was approved and signed, what was the timeline like to go to market?

BOBBY Hurry?

AARON Yeah, uh, it was hurry, but, um, then a lot of waiting, a lot of anticipation because for things like printed beer cans in particular and, uh, getting approval from TTB and regulatory standards and all that, um, it's, you know, six months out from the time we designed it. So they wanted to go live with it as quickly as possible. And we wanted to have that launch be as unified as possible—so launch all the brand alongside of each other. And it's really hard to get all those pieces aligned with a brand with that kind of volume, but not the money of, um, you know, your AB in Bev and those big Goliaths. So you can't just throw out all the old product on a dime. So, um, yeah, it was probably about actually to back up for a second... Um, the initial pitch we did with the logo and the packaging, um, basically every piece of that was approved week one, like the meeting we had one week after we signed the contract, you know, everything was pretty much aligned and we probably had finished designs for every packaging sku within, like, three weeks—it was a very quick process. Like Bobby, was feeling that brand from the time before we even started working with them, so it was very smooth and very rapid from a design standpoint, but in terms of like rollout and execution and building that brand language, that's a process that's still going.

ARMIN And Bobby, so, uh, Aaron just mentioned that you were feeling that brand. What was it about it? that, you know, just got you revved-up from the beginning.

BOBBY Um, it's a lot of things that I like combined into one thing. Um, and it's like industry and it's locally driven and it has a lot of heritage to it and it's kind of gritty and it's just like all these things that I like to design for, but combined into one item. And I, I feel like we, we pretty quickly understood without even saying it, how everything was supposed to look, um, from day one—the heavy lifting and the bulk of the brand was established pretty quickly. Um, mainly just because we already saw it in our, in our heads, the way that we wanted it to look, and we were able to flush out those ideas. And we quickly—

AARON And we had the good fortune that the client was on board with that. And that's always the number one question like, um, but Bobby remembers this more than I do, but I guess like one of the first things I, I said when he started working for us like the hardest thing is not doing the good work, it's getting the good work approved, like getting someone to let you do good work for them is, is no small order. Especially if, you know, you put everything you have into creating something that you think checks all the boxes, even if what they have in their head is a great vision. Like just having the resolve to not be totally deflated and discouraged, like if your initial solution and where everyone thought you were heading to, isn't isn't right for them. Um, that's really, to me, the hardest part of this job is keeping the spirits up and being able to sell those ideas more and more consistently and with, with the right amount of conviction.

BOBBY Yeah. When I, when I first met Aaron in person in the parking lot of our first office, that's what he said. He said, the hardest part about our job is convincing your clients, that you're doing something good for them. And that's proven to be like, the thing that I remember the most about the design industry to this day. I'm sure something will come along that might be a little bit more insightful than that statement, but it holds pretty true.

ARMIN No, probably because I think that is a very common feeling amongst designers that you can do the best work ever, but if you're not able

to—not convince the client—but convey the appropriateness of the design and how it benefits their business, and you know, it’s not that you have to make up things, but that your work has to meet those criteria. That is really the hardest thing. And when we’re like, even on Brand New, whatever, there are many projects where the design solution is either really out there or really clever, and sometimes in the comments it will be like, you know, I wonder what they had to do to get that approved because I would love clients like that. Um, because yeah, it is really hard, uh, to, you know... designing in a way is the easy part, the hard part is conveying to clients that are not usually versed in the ways of the designer that, you know, this makes sense, not just visually but business wise and that it will help their business in a positive way.

ARMIN Um, so are you both from Pittsburgh originally?

AARON Yeah. The greater Pittsburgh area, uh, within like half an hour, both of us.

ARMIN Close enough. The reason why I asked that is that one of the things that jumped out at me in the comments section of the review was there were two or three people that were, hey, I’m from Pittsburgh, and this is a Pittsburgh brand—that is awesome. It wasn’t that many, it wasn’t like a hundred people, but that is not something that happens often in the comments. Like if we feature a company from, uh, Houston, no one is like, hey, I’m from Houston—this is awesome. Nothing against Houston, but I felt that there was a different kind of pride of a Pittsburgh brand being featured on Brand New, like it was not that it was a big deal, but it was like, hey, we’re, you know, we’re out there and people will think this is cool. What kind of role did the essence of the city play into the design of the brand?

AARON That’s an interesting question. I thought about that, uh, after I, I read that when you shared the notes ahead of time, but, um, cause I think about brands that I associate with cities that are large on a corporate scale, like Starbucks and, um, with Seattle and Duncan and Boston. And I don’t know if they have that as much pride for brands like

that as Pittsburghers do for Heinz Ketchup. Like if you, if you're in a restaurant and you see Hunt's Ketchup and you're from Pittsburgh, it's like illegal to not mention it. So I don't know where that comes from, but like for Iron City in particular, I'd say it's kind of among the Holy Trinity of Pittsburgh brands, like there's Hyne's catch up there's Primani Brothers, and then there's Iron City. Like I kind of view those as, as that triangle that everyone has just associated with the city forever. The brand's been there since 1861 and Iron City is kind of unique because even though, even though they've never really broken into the national scene in a meaningful way, um, they've always been competing head to head with the Millers and the Budweisers and all the really big dogs. So there's, like, a lot of local pride there. Like there was a time in the seventies where I see Light the, the light beer for Iron City was, um, I think like 75% of our local beer market, like it just completely dominating it. So I think that mix of competing with the big guys, but also being hyper-regional really fosters that kind of attitude around that brand.

ARMIN Switching now to the design of the cans, and the pack, and the bottles and stuff like that. One of the images that you showed in your case study and that we included in the Brand New review was this really great lineup of cans from decades past. And, each of them are amazing on their own and they all have elements that you could pull from and you sort of did, but was there ever any, did you ever think like, oh, we can just reuse one of these ones and call it a day?

AARON Yeah, I think, um, I'm kinda going to kind of tee up Bobby on this cause you know, he made all these decisions, but I think the overall approach and philosophy from day one is in part because they have had the same basic format for so long of this red bull's eye and, uh, or the red eye or whatever people want to call it here. And the guts of it and the typeface, it—have gone through so many iterations over almost 200 years that like there's no one to go home to—ah, that would feel right to be the one that everyone remembers and goes back to. But even then I did it, like, the thing we didn't want it to be is

a novelty, a throwback product kind of just like, oh, all we have is our heritage, it's um, we have a ton of heritage let's build off of that. Let's make the new, the new normal, the new, uh, collection of everything we have in the past, trying to make what, you know, our attempt at the best package of that, and, um, make something that can live as the one for a long time to come.

BOBBY Yeah. The temptation to pull something from the past. It was definitely there. And just to sort of make like another, like a carbon copy of it, but we had a really cool opportunity to take something and put our fingerprints on it and be able to add to the history and the heritage of this really celebrated brand around these parts. And there, there were, like Aaron was saying, there were a lot of things that they of course had to stay, but we tried to make design decisions to make them more effective in terms of scalability and just improve typography, and spacing, and just little things like I'm looking at the, the package across from me, but, um, we wanted to keep it retro—it sounds so cliché now, but like the retro contemporary, but it's a true thing. Like we wanted to keep it and have it stand alongside of all of those really cool old packages, but we wanted it to feel new. Um, and we, we really wanted to make sure that we try to introduce new drinkers and millennials just like everybody in the world wants to do, but we also didn't want to throw off the old drinkers and make them feel disgusted by some new design that they're like, this isn't my beer, this isn't the beer I know and love and just never get it again because they will do that. Especially in the Pittsburgh area. People, people love tradition, and if tradition is, ah, super altered, they're more than likely to not be interested in it anymore.

ARMIN Yeah. I think to your credit, uh, you, if you took that same image with all the vintage cans and you put this one in the center, or, I mean, anywhere, you'd be like, you know, you wouldn't be able to tell where in the chronology it falls, uh, which is it's really great because then, as you mentioned, it forms part of the, you know, can canon of Iron City Beer in that it's just one more, not one more, but it's the latest iteration

of this great output of canned design that, you know, I think it's almost like ah, looking at those cans is almost like an underrated history of canned design that hasn't gotten the, um, sort of merit it deserves.

BOBBY I feel like if, if we were to take that design and put it on one of the flush cans, like the older ones without the tapered mouthpiece, or one of the even older cone top cans that we added, like the proper patina and the years and the dust to it, uh, I don't, I don't know if anybody would be able to look at it and be like, oh, that's the most recent one. So there's, there's something good about that. And I think it, it's not, it's not so different where somebody could pick it up and be like, yeah, this is the new one. It blends in with all the other stuff—in a, in a good way.

ARMIN Right. And so I think one of the things that, uh, dif differentiates the new design from at least from the most immediate recent one is this switch from a slab-serif into this really beautiful, uh, flared-serif that you found called Cenzo Flair. And now we're going to get a little bit nerdy now about the specifics of that.

AARON That's fine.

ARMIN Um, do you remember how you came, you, you chose that typeface?

AARON Yeah. I, uh, when I read that, that question, I was just like, this is the absolute best compliment you could give to Bobby, like in what he is able to do from a design standpoint, because I-like-I've never worked with a designer that is able to—the way he does just like, he, you know, I hate just sort of the default remove the personality from the brand, make it a sans serif and put it out there, kind of world that a lot of identity design lives in right now. But, and I always think it's so important to carry that personality. And, um, with any rebrand project, Bobby pretty much like digs through, you know, type foundries and looks through all these great type resources before anything is created as able to be like, that's the one, what do you think, Aaron? And I'm just like, I, I guess it looks good to me. Like I have no idea where you're

thinking of going with it and, you know, it's a, it's at a point where I do this kind of trust him to be able to do that and know like what it needs to look like. So, um, definitely let him answer the question, but I want to do a, build his ego more than he would about that...

BOBBY Um, Cenzo Flaire... I found it, the type founder is W Foundry. So, shout out to them because they, they make some really nice typefaces, but I looked at a lot of the old Iron City seals and there were some things that I liked, there were some things that I didn't like, and I tried to find something that had a good balance of character...contemporary and craft within the way that the fonts are built and, ah, just spend a good time sifting through different foundries and different type choices to the point where I did feel like I found a good combination of craft and character and when I found it, I would just kind of typing typing words in the preview of, of the, uh, the foundries like generator. And I pretty much knew that it was the one that we were going to use, but I'm sitting here looking at it now and it's, it really is a beautiful typeface.

BOBBY It is nerdy to say that, but there, it just has like a lot of good character and it's just so solid. And it it's, I think it does a good job of representing the brand without any assisting elements whatsoever. You just see that type and you kind of affiliate it with the brand pretty quickly.

AARON We had talked about trying, we'd never done it before, but we thought that maybe we should try it—well, not so much me, but we thought that maybe we should try to do a custom typeface for it. And I just remember thinking, like, we're not going to be able to do that, or we're too green to do something like that. And thankfully we found Cenzo and enrolled with it pretty heavy.

ARMIN And was a client on board with it from the start? It sounds like if you were approved within one week, but do they have any reactions to that in particular?

BOBBY Well, I think when we showed it, they didn't even, they just saw it as a

whole.

AARON The only question they asked us about it is, uh, should we put a stroke around it?

BOBBY Oh yeah.... [laughter]

ARMIN And we each took turns in the room giving way too many reasons, for way too long about why, please God don't make us put a fricking stroke around this type.

ARMIN It's funny how some elements of a design approach that you first present. You're willing to sacrifice a few things here and there, but then there's something where you use like, instinctively know, like, no, this is gonna ruin the whole thing. And I think, you know, in the case of Cenzo, so it's just like, once you have a stroke to it, those tiny little flares, those go away and they, you know, it will get eclipsed by a thick stroke that, you know, just come—the only reason to put it in is because it's been there before.

BOBBY Exactly. Yeah. That's there. And there was a good bit of that getting tossed around the room whenever we were doing the, ah, initial presentation, it's just like, just, just because it has existed doesn't mean we have to do it again. Like that's why we're doing this in the first place to not, we're trying to eliminate all this stuff that's bad about it. And not even so much that they were terrible design choices, but they just weren't really necessary.

ARMIN So one of the things like there's a lot to, like, there's the typeface, there's the, you know, the whiteness of the can, there's just a strike how striking the red eye is on though on all the materials. But one of the things that sealed the deal for me in appreciating this identity was the campaign that you did with local miners and, you know, the visual contrast of the white and red cans with, you know, the coal obviously, which is black, but also the, the uniforms of the workers that were, you know, covered in coal. And just the, the contrast, not so much the contrast in attitude, because I think the attitude was sort of similar,

but I think that just, it just when those two things came together, which was like, yes, this is, this is working.

AARON It all the stars kind of aligned there. Um, the, the new owner is, um, you know, he owns coal mines and we were able to use his real workers. And, um, the narrative of Pittsburgh being built on steel, which is iron and coal is, you know, a total home run. And the, yeah, the contrast with the white cans on the black coal, I get, there was just so much to that shoot as sort of the first piece to introduce that brand to the world. And the first thing we were putting on billboards that, um, was really nice to have.

BOBBY We got incredibly lucky with the environment for that day too. Cause it was like kind of overcast and, and the guys just crawled out of the coal mine and that's where all that contrast comes from. And I think one of the things that Joe, the photographer is, is very good at, um, he's able to reach somebody pretty quickly and reveal who they are through... through the lens just instantly. And he was able to capture who these coal miners are within like a few minutes. And you, you can just, there's some guys that are kinda smiling and some guys are kind of trying to be like a little bit more macho. And I feel like he is always really good at, at finding the authenticity of these people and bringing them out through the lens. But yeah, the contrast is just super cool for that shoot. And, um, it went, it went a long way for us.

ARMIN Yeah. Okay. It just showed how, how just, well, everything seemed to have gelled, but now that you mentioned it, like, yeah, everything, everything aligned perfectly from the photographer to the quality of the day to just the context they just worked so beautifully. Um, so speaking about collaboration, uh, you, you know, you mentioned working with Joe the photographer and then the illustrator for, from the old times to do the work on IC Light, but there's also collaborations with other Pittsburgh brands. And, you know, since the you've been working on this for two years and, you know, it was once you see the case study with a lot of these different brand extensions,

whether it's going into a gym or working with Pittsburgh Dad which I had to Google, and then I spent a good hour, just, you know, binging on Pittsburgh dad videos. Um, how, how important have those relationships been to developing the Iron City brand?

AARON Yeah. Yeah, they're huge. Um, I think, you know, the obvious partnerships for a brand with the size and notoriety in this area are, you know, the sports teams, the Steelers Pirates, Penguins. But, um, I think one of the things the new owner is really smart about and, um, has handled well is you don't want to be too big. You don't want to be one of these like giant companies that have a gate at, with their name after, at Heinz field, or, um, just look like this big detached company. Like you can do a lot of partnerships that are small and meaningful and like a lot more personal to people in Pittsburgh and who we actually are as individuals in the city, um, for a lot less money, really, if you're willing to put the legwork into it and just create like, really awesome case studies, like speaking about Joe, again, like that gym, that gym partnership was like, oh, weird deal. It was for a weekend. And it's like arts. It's like, this is so much effort. What's the payoff? But there were some pieces of that that are so cool. Like, um, just, he went in and did a photo shoot with their CrossFit trainers and made them the heroes of these one-off posters we did for it that we'll see them share pictures on Instagram and that's still like the one thing hanging in their garage where they train.

ARMIN And I think that gym collaboration when I was looking at the photos, and then I read the caption that it was only for one weekend, I was like, this is, these are all Photoshop renders. There's no way that for one weekend they went through this amount of work and objects and...

AARON This is a lot more ridiculous than you than you even think it is.

BOBBY Yeah... [laughter].

AARON Cause, uh, sort of like I got, I worked through college, like I, uh, I grew up driving, uh go-karts and race cars, and like, the way I got into design

was, ah, letter—I wanted to letter and design my own stuff I raced, and I started doing, uh, car lettering for other racers. And so I have a vinyl cutter and that was literally me Ben and Joe the photographer, probably a solid, like 12–13 hours of installation and cutting and not sleeping that night to just like, get it ready. Cause everyone was working on pure adrenaline from just the high of working with that brand and kind of getting it out there, in as many ways as possible. Like, it was insane, like at the time, pure, um, effort, a reward analysis kind of, but the shirts we made for that event and all the things that people have taken away from them, like I, you know, you still see people wearing them and I’m still see those posters and everything. So, and it lives on the case study forever. And, uh, also it was on their site as something. And that—that’s something that we did with their website, we wanted to use that as a way to highlight all these collaborations rather than the beer. Cause it’s about the, the beer in the city and the people that embrace it more so than the product itself. Everyone knows it’s a good, like hardworking lager and you don’t need to sell that part.

ARMIN Yeah. I think it’s a, it’s it’s evident in this, in this project that you all just simply cared about it and were enjoying the process. Uh, it wasn’t just, it went from being a job to being something that, you know, you just felt passionate, not just passionate about, but that, you know, your time investment in it would just pay-off for them. And for you in terms of doing something that you were proud of and you know, you don’t remember at the time when you’re, when it’s midnight and you’re like, I’m not even close to done. And you’re like, why did I get into this at all? Which is something that me and Bryony experience all the time with our materials for the conference, but then, you know, you see people’s reaction to it, whether it’s a, you know, the people looking at it or the people, um, in this case experiencing that gym experience, not to be redundant. Um, that’s when you were like, oh, that’s why we did it. For this moment. For that reaction.

AARON There are three videos on our case study that were made in a three

day period because we got a deadline for ads that had to air during Steelers pre-season, like a week prior. And we did a whole day of shooting on Monday and none of it was usable. So that whole day was a loss. And we, uh, kind of, you know, the, our other designer that was there at the time, Ian is like our go to guy for all things illustration, and, um, really he didn't even have that much experience with motion graphics at the time, but I wrote a script and found a voiceover guy that worked well with the brand. And, uh, he, you know, took everything he knew about motion graphics and turned like three commercials out that we were really happy about at the time. So it was like just a total, all-hands-on-deck thing that we were into.

BOBBY Yeah.

ARMIN And that's usually what drives the best work. Just that sense of immediate- immediacy and that you have to get it right, because there's a deadline and you know, when you have time to, dabble dabble, you just, you know, you don't get to, you don't get to a solution that works as fast or as efficiently. So it's ah, it's not bad to be against it, to have your back against the wall every now and then. So after all of this work, um, have you or the client measured, um, the ROI and you don't have to give me specific numbers, but was there a clear improvement after the new design went to market?

AARON Yeah. Um, I don't... offhand I don't really remember exact numbers, but it was something like 15% year-over-year for the first year, uh, sales growth with Iron City. And then there are other brands C Light, I think was closer to like 20% or 30%. And IC Light Mango, I think had close to a hundred percent, but, and you know, it's a mixture of the rebrand in the, their sales scene, their distribution approach, all of that. But at the core of it, you know, um, you can, you can put the beer on the floor of as many distributors and wholesalers, as you want, but if it's not moving that doesn't do you any good. So, um, they're getting a lot more sell-through of product. And I think just the overall—we've done, we did a survey a year out, or even, I think it was less than a year

out just to kind of check the pulse of people's overall attitude towards the brand and their perception of it and the numb-, the movement there just from like for the, like fairly poor to a more positive rating was a pretty tremendous movement. So I think it's, it's hitting the right people, the right notes. And I think it's, at this point, it's kind of a matter of scaling those efforts.

ARMIN Yeah. Well, uh, Bobby and Aaron has been wonderful to talk to you and hear about, uh, this really, uh, long longstanding relationship that has yielded some really great results. And it's clearly, uh, the, it sounds like the result of a client trusting you to do what you do best and you're doing it right. You know, because it's easy for a client to trust you and then you just like fumble it. Uh, but I think there's a clear, uh, you, you, you, it seems like you've been empowered to take this to the next level and it shows in the results. And, you know, the, I think the best compliment that I can give is that, you know, I really wa- want to taste that beer. I'm a little bit of a beer snob and, you know, like lagers are not my thing, but just based on the, uh, the design alone, it's like, it's something that I wanna, you know, have one can for my design archives and one can to drink just to see, you know, to experience the beer through the design. So, I mean, it's a weird way to pay a compliment to your efforts, but that's the best that I can do.

BOBBY Yeah. That's a great compliment.

AARON Absolutely. And like, you had a quote at the end of your write up on UnderConsideration, um, that I, you know, I don't know it offhand, but it just so perfectly embodied everything that we were trying to do with the brand and, you know, without, you know, articulating that to you in any way before you wrote it up, like reading, that was ah, really rewarding. And I, I also want to give a shout out to you and what, what you guys do, because I think... in this in 2020, it's very rare that you have people that are writing for humans. You have a bunch of people writing to be picked up by Google with these headlines, that sound interesting, and you click them and it's total crap and just there to like

trick you into clicking it and you feel duped every time you do it. So I really appreciate that being there and like what you do and really excited and happy to be on here with you.

ARMIN I appreciate that a lot.

BOBBY Very well said, Aaron, we're really happy to be on this podcast and we, um, we really appreciate your time today.

ARMIN Sure thing. It's been my pleasure. So, uh, Aaron and Bobby, thank you again and stay safe and stay enjoying that Iron City Beer and your lovely city of Pittsburgh. Thank you.

AARON Thank you.

BOBBY Thank you. Thank you.

BRYONY So what did we learn this week? To believe in your worth and stand behind your pricing. To work hard and pour yourself into the project. To respect a brand's history but not simply repeat it. And, most importantly, to never, EVER, use a bottle of Hunt's ketchup in Heinz territory.

Today, thanks for listening. Until next time, we'll be here, we hope you'll be there.