



# A Sweet Return: The Relaunch of A-Treat Soda

## 9A. Marketing Communications, New Products and Services Klunk & Millan Advertising

### 100-word summary

Klunk & Millan was retained by Jaindl Companies in the summer of 2015 for PR and social media services six days before the relaunch of A-Treat soda, an iconic regional beverage brand with almost 100 years of history in Pennsylvania.

A-Treat suddenly closed production and manufacturing in January 2015 much to consumers' dismay. Following the sale of the company to Jaindl Companies, timely media outreach, consistent press releases, integrated social media efforts, and the development of a community event allowed Klunk & Millan to generate the coverage necessary to build awareness of and excitement around A-Treat's return to grocery store shelves.



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### Program Overview

When storied soda brand A-Treat ceased production in January 2015 at its Lehigh Valley plant, an hour's drive from Philadelphia, it ended a legacy dating back to 1918. The move left a community of supporters heartbroken and prompted an outpouring of rally cries from fans and customers.

Enter Jaindl Companies, who secured a deal to save the brand in June 2015. To announce the brand's comeback and subsequent relaunch campaign, Jaindl Companies enlisted Klunk & Millan for PR and social media efforts. Klunk & Millan sought to harness the power of nostalgia marketing to find a familiar home in the hearts of Pennsylvania customers. Once product hit stores the goal was to drive sales despite months of lost production, competition from other beverage companies, and stores that had moved on to other soft drink brands.

### Objectives

- Establish and sustain buzz and awareness, keeping A-Treat top-of-mind until product was on shelves
- Reintroduce the soda brand to both new fans and brand loyalists
- Encourage fans to request that A-Treat be sold at their grocery stores
- Expand awareness beyond core market of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and surrounding areas

### Target Audiences

- Existing brand loyalists
- Members of the general public in Eastern Pennsylvania
- Members of the regional and national media

### Research & Planning

Klunk & Millan conducted an interview with David Jaindl, Jaindl Companies owner, and Tom Garvey, former A-Treat owner, to get a sense of the reason for purchasing the brand, future goals, and a timeline of upcoming key milestones. Klunk & Millan also held information-gathering sessions with two key Facebook fan pages ("Save A-Treat" and "Let's Keep A-Treat Sodas Flowin") that had been influential in growing ground-level support for the brand's comeback.

### Strategies

- Merge two existing Facebook fan pages into one official A-Treat social media presence, creating a unified voice for the brand and solidifying the support of over 10,000 highly enthusiastic existing Facebook followers
- Build a groundswell of support through the brand loyalist community by letting them know that "their voices had been heard" regarding the comeback of A-Treat
- Actively engage the media throughout each production milestone of A-Treat prior to its hitting the shelves
- Host a community event kicking off the arrival of A-Treat

### Tactics

To revitalize interest in the brand prior to production and capitalize on A-Treat's brand advantage—unique flavors—Klunk & Millan generated a public relations and social media campaign polling the public to choose which flavors would hit shelves first. Our Flavor Poll served as a way of saying "thank you" to the thousands of fans who had taken to social media to express their desire for A-Treat's return.

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In just one week over 18,000 unique votes were captured. Because of the poll's popularity, two flavors were chosen. Orange Cream won the campaign outright and was scheduled for immediate production. With a finger firmly on the pulse of consumer interest, Klunk & Millan also recommended that Black Cherry be added to the first production run based on its surprise ranking in the poll. A-Treat was pleased to be able to incorporate customer input when considering additional flavors to be manufactured, and was able to quickly respond to consumer demand by adding Black Cherry to all orders.

By incorporating a fan-driven social media poll into the brand's return, we were able to honor A-Treat loyalists while also harnessing valuable consumer feedback.

Klunk & Millan researched the top reporters who had previously written features on the demise of A-Treat to identify and approach the most appropriate contacts. Each reporter was individually notified of timely milestones, from the A-Treat contract being signed to the first can rolling down the production line to the full distribution to store shelves. Immediately following production, cases of A-Treat were delivered to the top media outlets and newsrooms in the area. In establishing relationships with key reporters, Klunk & Millan secured coverage in all top regional outlets including repeat cover stories with leading newspapers *The Morning Call*, *Lehigh Valley Business*, and *Express-Times*. Fan-favorite newscaster Eve Tannery of WFMZ-TV even concluded a morning show with a can of A-Treat on her desk.

Coverage went far and wide including hits on Philly.com (web channel of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Philadelphia Daily News*), *Philly Voice*, and ABC6, Philadelphia's leading broadcast news channel. The news was covered nationally in the *International Business Times*, *Washington Times*, *Small Business Journal*, and more.

As a community engagement event, Klunk & Millan organized an A-Treat soda preview day, dubbed "Fizz & Franks," before A-Treat's full distribution run hit shelves on Labor Day weekend. The event leveraged sampling and offered customers the opportunity to "turn back the clock" and purchase a hot dog with an A-Treat soda for only \$1.00. The event was solely publicized through PR and social media, and over 3400 people attended, more than four times the anticipated amount. All proceeds were donated to the Miracle League of the Lehigh Valley.

## Results

Consistent media outreach and product updates garnered 100+ press features throughout local, regional, and national broadcast, print, radio, and online coverage, including a feature on CNBC. *All told, Klunk & Millan's PR efforts garnered coverage that represented a circulation/viewership/unique visitors of more than 10 million.*

A-Treat's passionate Facebook following grew to over 20,000 fans in less than six weeks and captured over 1000 email newsletter signups.

### Stats for Facebook page overall (7/20 to 9/14):

- Over 135,000 weekly organic impressions
- Over 5,100 users engaging weekly
- Over 7,200 clicks weekly

### Stats for Flavor Poll (7/27 to 8/2):

- 18,264 total votes
- 45,744 people reached
- 450 shares
- 509 comments

By responding to 90% of messages and maintaining a median response time of five minutes for all replies, Klunk & Millan earned the Facebook "responsive badge" underscoring our commitment to customer experience.

The PR campaign results are now featured as part of the Jaindl Companies' plan to expand its marketplace and pitch to top distribution accounts like Wawa, Sheetz, Giant, and Wegman's.

*Sales figures for the first two weeks of A-Treat beat expectations by topping the sales for the previous six months before A-Treat closed business.* Based on the success of this program, Klunk & Millan's services have been extended to media planning and buying, and website redevelopment.

