



Jack's Blend

Jack Groot owns JP's Coffee & Espresso Bar, On Track Coffee Consulting and the Midwest Barista School based out of Holland, Mich. E-mail your questions to jack@ontrackcoffeeconsulting.com with "Jack's Blend" as the subject line.

Dan Bolton is *Specialty Coffee Retailer's* (SCR) new editor-in-chief. Shortly after he took the reins in hand, I received an email; "We need to talk." If you're like me, you'll recognize the "What did I do" jolt that juiced through my veins.

I found Dan at Coffee Fest Seattle 2008. After doing research on him, so I could recognize him before he found me, I found he would be easy to spot. When I found a picture of Dan online I thought I was looking at Grizzly Adams' brother. He is silver-haired with a full beard and a broad face. I half expected him to be carrying an axe and have a carnivorous mammal following behind him. He didn't.

Meeting at our agreed upon time, we sat in a Coffee Fest hallway and had an hour-plus discussion where Dan asked me questions. Lots of questions. Questions about coffee. Questions about the industry. Questions about products and services offered in the industry. Questions about where I thought the industry was going, who were good people to connect with and what did I feel the industry was in need of. Questions about what retailers like me needed to know more about.

And then the best question; How did I think SCR could improve?

This was unexpected and welcome. It's not that SCR has done a bad job, but having the man-at-the-helm ask such questions, wanting to understand clearly what you (and I) need to be more successful in this industry was exciting.

I shared with Dan my feelings that what readers like you need most is help. Real help. Help to run a more profitable store. Help to know how best to spend money when needing to advertise. Help in how to understand a P&L statement and better yet, what to do with the information. Help in finding the right location before opening a store and help in maximizing an already secured spot. Help in knowing who to

hire, how to train them and how to be a better owner. Help in understanding how to properly price a menu.

Quality information is what we need and the more, the better.

I know of few owners who go into the coffee business thinking, "I'm just gonna sit back and watch the cash role in." For those of you like that, I'm sure you'll find another job soon. Most of you are people who want to serve your community, share your passion for great coffee and offer a great place for people to meet, hang out and enjoy.

I asked Dan if I could change up the content of my Jack's Blend column to allow me to "rant" on any subject I felt was most relevant and helpful to you, the reader. As a fellow retailer, I am "in the trenches" so to speak and can relate to many of the issues you experience. (I am in Michigan. Can you say automotive industry?) I will still address questions from you, but more than that, I have a unique position of being both a retailer and writer and can be a source to help you be more successful.

What you see in this issue is already a reflection of Dan's desire to serve the readership: to give you the information you need to be successful. Dan may not have a lot of experience in operating a coffee bar, but he has a lot of experience in publications, business and the right attitude to make SCR an even more valuable and relevant resource for you. I am proud to be part of this quality product that serves the industry who keeps the rest of the business world humming—the coffee business.

Please keep the questions coming, but also feel free to e-mail me with topics important to you on subjects you want to know more about. I'll answer from a combination of experience, education and research. And if I can't answer your question, I'll give you a free year's subscription to *Specialty Coffee Retailer* magazine. SCR

