



The Boston Beer Company better organizes research data and increases efficiency of its market research function with MarketSight®

Background

The Boston Beer Company (NYSE: SAM) is America's leading brewer of handcrafted, full-flavored beers. Its flagship brand, Samuel Adams Boston Lager, was introduced more than twenty years ago and the company now offers 18 distinctive, award winning styles of Sam Adams beer.

The beer market is a competitive one, and has changed tremendously over the past three decades. The Better Beers segment (Crafts and Imports), which didn't exist thirty years ago, is the only segment of the market on the rise today and accounts for 18% of the US beer business. There are a number of players in this segment, but Boston Beer, with its range of high-quality products, is a leader in this category.

In an industry where the continued trend is for consumers to trade up to better quality products, Boston Beer remains focused on what's best for its beer and its drinkers. They believe that quality is, and will continue to be, its competitive advantage and drive business growth. To that end, the company depends on consumer research to test new product ideas, track consumer attitudes, gauge competitive threats, and focus marketing efforts around its core segment of select beer drinkers.

Challenge

Of the nearly more than 400 employees at Boston Beer, only a few manage the consumer research process. Managing this process means not only executing a range of qualitative and quantitative studies, but also managing the large amounts of research data so that it can be leveraged and not lost. In the past, some data was stored with vendors, some files were stored on individual desktop computers, and some sat on the shelf in binders. To address this issue, the market research group at Boston Beer needed a web-based solution that would enable them to:

- Own their data, so as not be dependent on outside vendors for the majority of data analysis
- Establish a data management system, so that valuable data is leveraged and not lost
- Quickly and easily analyze all research data -- much of it in the form of multi-response survey questions -- and run reports

"Someone needed to own the data", said Corey Bennett, Market Research Manager. "Some of the data was in-house and some lived with the vendors. If we wanted to look at results from an old research study, we often needed to go back to the vendor and ask them to cut the data in a certain way. Depending on how the study had been set up, the vendor wasn't always able to help us. We were not maximizing our market research investment."

Customer Profile

The Boston Beer Company
(NYSE: SAM)

Industry: Alcoholic Beverage
Revenue: \$285 Million (2006)
Employees: 433

Challenge

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Solution

In early 2007, Boston Beer adopted MarketSight, an intuitive, web-based analysis tool that allows users to organize their datasets in one application and streamline the analysis process.

Traditionally, the majority of quantitative studies - including the company's Brand Tracking Study -- were conducted by outside vendors. Vendors would write, field and analyze surveys, providing the Boston Beer Company with results and recommendations. And the data would remain with the vendor. Now, while large scale surveys are still handled by outside vendors who complete the basic analyses, Boston Beer requests a file from the vendor and uploads the data into MarketSight. With MarketSight, the Market Research group can build ad-hoc cross-tabs and create additional banner reports on its own, in real time. And if needed, the group can leverage MarketSight's Append Wizard to merge waves of data from past studies through a series of steps that result in correctly aligned data. Datasets can be organized in one place, where they are easy to access and analyze. In the past, even if a data file was requested from a vendor, the group had SPSS® in place and found the tool time consuming to use for basic analysis - valuable data sat idle.

Given the large number of quantitative survey-based studies Boston Beer conducts, the Market Research group saves time by leveraging MarketSight's User Defined Variables to analyze "top box" responses and multi-response survey questions. Additionally, the group finds the recoding of variables much easier with MarketSight than with SPSS - another time-saver.

With studies such as the Brand Tracking study, the Market Research group looks to gain key consumer insights - for example, what patterns emerge among various demographic groups with regard to the products they consume, or how groups of loyal vs. less-loyal customers are different from one another. With the results from this study uploaded to MarketSight, the Market Research team can easily run and re-run various cuts of the data to test hypotheses, and the application automatically runs appropriate statistical tests and highlights significant findings. The color-coded statistical test results make it easy to explain the data to others.

And explaining the data to others is much of what the Market Research team needs to do. With a single mouse click in MarketSight, charts are created, providing visual representations of data that help communicate findings, and they are easily exported to Excel or PowerPoint. "MarketSight is so much easier to use than SPSS," remarked Bennett. "We're a small group and we don't have a team to make slides for us. MarketSight does that for me in a way that is simple, yet flexible enough to allow me to customize my charts."

Results

With MarketSight in place, the Market Research group at The Boston Beer Company is able to:

- **Make the most of its research data.** Given the significant investment made to consumer research, the Market Research group now has an easy-to-use tool that allows them to organize and access data however and whenever needed. Valuable data is not lost or forgotten.
- **Work efficiently and provide valuable input on key business decisions.** By better organizing its research data, the group is able to uncover greater consumer insights that impact business decisions.
- **Respond quickly to internal requests.** With data on their desktop, and easy to access and analyze, useful reports can be turned around in minutes, rather than days.

"Adopting a cost-effective system was important, but even more important is the fact that I save time with MarketSight," said Bennett. "The tool allows me to get my job done more efficiently, and as part a small group in a fast-paced company, that's essential."

Results

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