

# Asia Business Intelligence



**Bryan & Sayuri Baird**  
Baird Brewing Company



**Industry:** Craft Beer  
**Location:** Numazu, Shizuoka  
**Established:** 2000  
**Employees:** 5  
**URL:** [www.bairdbeer.com](http://www.bairdbeer.com)



Why pay more when you can outsource all your writing, editing & translation work to professionals?

Executive Interviews & Articles, Corporate & Business Newsletters, Corporate Editing & Writing, Website & Documentation Text, Business Promotion, Multilingual Translation, and more.

[www.businessgrow.net](http://www.businessgrow.net)



## Entrepreneur Drinks To Success

By Jonathon Walsh

*Behind* the near inescapable barrage of beer advertising coming out of Japan's four big brewing companies, there are some nimble smaller players that are making an impact on the country's busy brewing scene. One of them is husband and wife team **Bryan and Sayuri Baird** who run a business that must be every Japanese salaryman's dream – *brewing and selling their own beer*.

The couple's family-run craft brewery and pub business, **Baird Brewing Company**, is nestled at the foot of Mt. Fuji in Numazu, Shizuoka. Bryan and Sayuri craft the beer, create the food, and strive to provide patrons with a memorable beer and pub experience.

### *Burning desire to be independent*

How did this keen American entrepreneur brewmaster break into what is predominantly a Japanese-dominated industry and create a business selling beer to the locals?

Bryan's entry into the market was backed by a significant amount of training. Before launching Baird Beer in Japan in 2000, Bryan attended brewing school in the U.S., apprenticed at a number of American-based craft breweries and undertook three years of industry study. All of this experience, shaken and stirred together with his love of beer and a burning desire to be independent, were the crucial ingredients that led him to launch the business. To complement the beer, the couple also run a pub, **The Fishmarket Taproom**, adjacent to their brewery where in a simple and cosy natural decor of wood and brick Sayuri serves up a selection of freshly made dishes to match her husband's brews.

*PTO...*



### Word-of-mouth effective for business growth

"I learned the lesson common to all entrepreneurs – *that it is ten times as tough as you imagine even in your worst nightmare,*" Bryan recalls about his start-up experience. "*But you overcome the challenges you face by possessing uncommon quantities of passion, integrity and tenacity.*"

**The biggest struggle** the couple face is the lack of precedent in the beer world in Japan for their product. "Essentially, we are trying to create a market where none has existed before," Bryan explains. "All Baird Beer is unfiltered, highly hopped and keg- or bottle-conditioned. This type of beer simply has no history in Japan and is quite different from mainstream, industrial lager beer."

Regarding one of the other major challenges they and many other entrepreneurs face – securing funding – Bryan says the key has been a clear demonstration of honesty, thoroughness and passion when soliciting both debt and equity financing.

**Bryan points out that word-of-mouth has been a very powerful tool for business growth.**

This method of person-to-person advertising has been particularly effective for finding staff, he says. Baird Beer has only hired a very small number of people, all who have been very enthusiastic to become involved.

"By mentioning to beer-enthusiast patrons, retailers and others that we are going to be looking for a brewer, for example, we seem to get a strong response from interested individuals."

Similarly, Bryan has also found word-of-mouth to be the best way to advertise the company. "We don't really engage in advertising. We have a website, which has served an effective information dissemination role, and we receive some press coverage, but that is all. In most cases, enthusiastic patrons and retailers 'sell' for us."

**Word-of-mouth has also helped enlarge their customer base.** "We neither advertise nor do we make sales calls. We don't really find customers – they usually find us. This is probably possible because we operate in a very niche market."

*"I learned the lesson common to all entrepreneurs – that it is ten times as tough as you imagine even in your worst nightmare."*

## BUSINESS TIPS

### *Patience, passion, tenacity and integrity critical for success*

From Bryan's experience, what key points do wannabe entrepreneurs need to know before starting a business in Japan?

*Japanese entrepreneurs must possess immense self-confidence* and a sense of aloofness from mainstream Japanese culture and social expectations.

Alternatively, *foreign entrepreneurs must possess a deep understanding of Japan* and have a natural affinity for the country. "If you do not enjoy the environment in which you operate, you will not be successful."

*Focusing on the basic entrepreneurial qualities necessary for running a business*, Bryan says patience, passion, tenacity and integrity are critical. "Starting up a business and running it is a marathon and not a sprint."

*The most important lessons Bryan has learnt in business are threefold:*

**Passion** – "Launching and growing a business is always an endeavor many times more difficult than the entrepreneur imagines. Without real passion for the undertaking, the chances of perseverance, and thus success, approach zero."

**Tenacity** – "The entrepreneur must navigate many minefields and scale many walls in order to succeed. Tenacity is the key character trait that allows him or her to do this."

**Integrity** – "Forging relationships built on mutual trust and respect is essential to enduring business success. Possessing unwavering integrity is the key to this sort of relationship building."

While growing the business has been extremely tough at times, the pair has gained a great deal of satisfaction from the step-by-step building process.

**The first highlight** for Bryan was the inauguration of brewing the initial batch of Baird Beer, followed by the completion in 2003 of the company's first major business expansion project. "In this expansion, we built a new and larger brewery, launched a website with an eStore, commissioned artwork for our business logos and individual beer brands, and began sales of bottled beer," Bryan says.

However, he says the biggest highlight occurs every day when the couple meets beer enthusiasts and regular pub patrons who really love and appreciate what they do. "These are the customers, vendors and partners that have believed in us, backed us and persevered with us."

The downside is the frustration that stems solely from slower than expected local growth and the razor-sharp financial conditions that result. "This is when the passion and the commitment to what one does is put to the test."

**And long-term goals?** "We plan to expand brewery production capacity, while at the same time opening dozens of Taproom pubs throughout Japan," Bryan says. "We will go as far as the business prospects allow. Transforming this passionate, craftsmen-like approach to beer into a first-class business is our primary long-term goal."

**Kampai!**

## PRODUCTS & SERVICES

- Seven year-round beer brands
- 20-30 seasonal beer brands

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Baird Brewing Company**

Phone/Fax: 055-963-2628  
E-mail: info@bairdbeer.com  
URL: www.bairdbeer.com

**Asia Business Intelligence**

Produced by  
**BUSINESS GROW**

E-mail: info@businessgrow.net  
URL: www.businessgrow.net