



Pork Barrel doesn't mess around when it comes to BBQ. Brett Thompson and Heath Hall have a passion for perfect slow-cooked, savory-smoked barbecue, which sparked the idea for Pork Barrel BBQ in 2006. From their nationally award-winning BBQ sauce to their BBQ spice rubs and seasonings to their Shark Tank-famous Bacon Jerky, their products push the boundaries of taste and artisan quality.



2  
FRIENDS



100+  
COMPETITION  
AWARDS



6,000  
NATIONWIDE  
RETAILERS

PRODUCT USED:

D&B Credibility Concierge®

# Pork Barrel BBQ Wins the Support of 6,000 Retailers Nationwide

Everyone knows the secret's in the sauce, and for the owners of [Pork Barrel BBQ](#), this couldn't be more true. The startup of two friends and colleagues, Pork Barrel BBQ quickly grew from a risky idea into a successful business despite the challenges the company faced.

Brett Thompson and Heath Hall created their barbecue sauce company after they found themselves out of work when their candidate for reelection to the US Senate lost the race at the height of the 2008 recession. Sounds like the perfect time to start a business, right? But the duo was willing to take the risk, and they combined their love of barbecue with their ability to "do all things pig" and became entrepreneurs. Little did they know, their experience working together on political campaigns would help them get in front of investors on the hit show Shark Tank – and into 6,000 stores nationwide.

"When you start a company, you really have to believe in yourself and in your product. We started Pork Barrel at the peak of the recession, and even though we were launching at one of the worst economic times in our country, we wanted to create a business and get a piece of the American dream," Thompson said.

## VOTE FOR PORK BARREL

In politics, you need money, experience, and a stand. In business, you need ... well, most likely the same things. Thompson and Hall had their stand – make a great-tasting, gluten-free barbecue sauce that was affordable – and they had their experience too. Both founders were competitive barbecuers and had traveled around the country competing in professional competitions. Hall even confessed that he regretted going to law school instead of culinary school. In many ways, Pork Barrel was a way to embrace his culinary passion that had for so long been just a hobby.

Using their experience in marketing political candidates, Thompson and Hall put all their efforts into establishing a solid brand, and Pork Barrel BBQ quickly became the world's largest barbecue brand Twitter account. They had seemingly beat the recession, and their product had already made it into three retail stores.

## THE COST OF SUCCESS

However, the duo discovered that with greater success come greater challenges. For instance, one of their first orders was for 2,000 jars of their spice rub. The production cost of 2,000 jars was \$8,000. It was a struggle for the two of them to come up with the money, but they felt that the next order would be easier to fill since they would profit from the first order.

“Our biggest challenge has just been making sure that we grow smartly and take advantage of the best opportunities,” Thompson said. “It sounds strange, but sometimes quick growth forces an entrepreneur to have to work even harder to be at your best, in order to take advantage of all opportunities while growing at a pace that makes sense for your business.”

Unfortunately, they found that production costs rose as they received more orders. They wanted to be able to fill these large orders, but the two business owners began to feel anxious about having enough capital on hand to continue taking on more business. They knew they would need to work with a lender to help continue to grow the business.

## USING BUSINESS CREDIT TO FURTHER THEIR SUCCESS

Another challenge their growing business faced was demonstrating credibility. Just as politics is strewn with scandal, businesses can be subject to bad credit, so businesses need to be able to show that they are reliable business partners. As their business grew and they began working with bigger retailers, Thompson and Hall quickly realized that they needed to convey their business as credible to their customers, vendors, and lenders – so they sought the help of a [Dun & Bradstreet Credibility Concierge™](#)

“Just like your personal credit score matters when you’re trying to buy a house, **your [Dun & Bradstreet] business credit scores and ratings can be an important sign of the strength of your company** to these large retailers.”

— Brett Thompson, CEO, Pork Barrel BBQ

Thompson and Hall were experts in barbecue, but business credit was almost a foreign concept when they first began working with their Concierge Manager. The passion and enthusiasm that their Concierge Manager had for growing their business made it feel like they had another member of the Pork Barrel team. The Concierge Manager helped them understand their [business credit scores and ratings](#), why they were what they were, and how they could improve them.

“Having a strong D&B business credit profile and having someone who understood how to help us grow our company with this service was an invaluable resource.”

— Brett Thompson, CEO, Pork Barrel BBQ

Now when they sit down with a nationwide retailer or with a bank looking for line of credit, being backed by their [Dun & Bradstreet business credit file](#) helped ease a lot of tension and opened a lot of doors. With their improved business credit scores, they landed multiple retail contracts. And with a line of credit from the bank, they were able to maintain the capacity and the capital to meet their obligations to these retailers and grew their business responsibly.

**“We got our big shot and landed it** because of our Dun & Bradstreet scores and ratings.”

— Brett Thompson, CEO, Pork Barrel BBQ

## REWARD LIVES IN THE HOUSE OF RISK

Today, Pork Barrel BBQ is no longer just a small business but a nationwide brand, selling their products in 10,000 stores, including 6,000 retail chain locations. Its initial television notoriety and continued performance in barbecue competitions around the country have helped it gain a reputation for pushing the boundaries of taste and artisan quality. In addition, its business credit scores and ratings helped improve its reputation as a trustworthy and reliable partner.

**“Our relationship with our Concierge Manager has really become a key partnership in the continued growth of our company. We even call our Concierge a key employee.”**

— Brett Thompson, CEO, Pork Barrel BBQ

“Our motto is ‘reward lives in the house of risk,’” Thompson said. “Heath and I like to challenge each other every day. As a small business owner, you have to be able to put yourself out of your comfort zone in order to succeed. Ultimately, the only way you’re able to grow and succeed is with partnership with others. Choose partners that fuel your growth and understand that each and every day is a chance to take a step forward.”

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