

Scotia-Glenville native makes your business his business

BY JEFF WILKIN

When Steve Janack meets a prospective client, the first thing he does is ask questions.

"Tell me about your product, tell me about your customer service, tell me about the way that you structure your business," said Janack, the driving force behind The Janack Group, a Glenville-based public relations firm. "Tell me something you do that no one else does. Now the wheels start turning and we see where we can take it."

Janack's personal wheels have been on the move since September 2015, when he started his own business. In addition to raising profiles of a technology or company — that's the public relations end — Janack offers media relations, media training, crisis communications, public speaking and community outreach.

He has assisted three dozen companies and agencies during the past nine years. He loves the work.

"I think that there's a strategic

'I try to never lose sight that people do business with people, and if there's a way to showcase people as part of an organization, I think that's particularly effective.'

STEVE JANACK
Owner, The Janack Group

process that goes with public relations. That is the most exciting part to me," said Janack, 61, a longtime Glenville resident and a 1980 graduate of Scotia-Glenville High School. "By that, I mean I love the challenge of someone coming to me and saying, 'We want to promote this cause, this aspect of our business, this new product or service that we're launching and

we have no idea how to do it. Help us do that.'"

Asking questions comes naturally. Janack spent the first 15 years of his career (1984 until 1999) in Capital Region radio and television as a reporter, anchor, assignment manager, and news and program director. He was on the launch team of the area's first all-news radio station (WPTR). He also was part of the first 10 p.m. local television news show (Fox News at 10).

Janack became a communications architect when he joined the Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce as senior vice president and chief communications officer in 1999. While working at the chamber, he hosted and produced "Tech Valley Report" a program carried by Time Warner Cable and viewed in 300,000 homes.

In 2005, Janack began eight years with the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (at the Albany NanoTech Complex), serving as vice president for marketing and communica-



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Steve Janack is owner of The Janack Group, a Glenville-based public relations firm.

tions. He made another career move in 2014, joining Glens Falls-based Behan Communications as director of the firm's innovation practice group.

The idea to go it alone came shortly afterward. Janack had often heard the question, "Why

don't you start your own company?"

"I always said, 'That's not me, I'm a corporate guy,'" Janack said. "Eventually, when the opportunity came and I took

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it, it became successful. But it's also been extremely fulfilling ... to be able to build something from the ground up that's truly yours is humbling and is really sort of a dream come true in a lot of ways."

Part of Janack's public relations game plan is to build brand awareness and publicize a company's merits.

"I need to show that the company or organization is reputable. I need to show they're innovative, that their products and services are worthwhile, and that they're someone that people want to make a connection with," he said.

Janack also considers the human factor when representing a company or agency.

"I try to never lose sight that people do business with people, and if there's a way to showcase people as part of an organization, I think that's particularly effective," he said.

Janack has worked with people and principals from the Academy of the Holy Names, Coburg Village, WMHT, Adirondack Or-



PETER R. BARBER

Steve Janack, right, owner of The Janack Group, confers with Schuyler Bull, vice president of marketing at Pioneer Banking and Financial Services, at Pioneer's headquarters in Colonie.

thodontics, Wojeski & Company Certified Public Accounts, and Pioneer Banking and Financial Services, among others.

Representing and advising Pioneer means two points are often mentioned: Janack says the company is locally headquartered and locally focused.

"This is a brand that is easy

to get behind because it is Capital Region born, raised and still a resident, serving people in this community," he said. "It's really showcasing the different products and services that Pioneer offers.

"The real push has been to help people understand that Pioneer does have 22 branches

around the Capital Region that provide all the services, savings accounts and checking accounts, CDs and all of that," Janack continued. "But in addition there is an array of financial services including wealth management, employee benefits, insurance and other things that businesses need to be successful."

For Pioneer, that's the focus from the public relations perspective — Janack wants to ensure that people know about the company's array of services.

Janack's clients range from financial services to human services.

"I have a client that provides mental health and substance-use services, so it really runs the gamut," he said. "The common thread that ties it together is an organization that needs some help telling their story and that's what I consider myself, someone who's a storyteller.

He's helped tell the story behind GTM Payroll Services. The Clifton Park company, founded in 1991, later expanded with a human resources arm and multiple consulting services.

"Part of what they're looking for is to let the world know they offer more than just payroll," he said.

Janack is in a competitive field. He said for some public relations concerns, the push is always on for the next customer. He takes a different path.

"I've been very strongly focused on serving the existing customers, building those relationships," Janack said. "It's also helped in terms of word of mouth that has spread from current clients to future clients.

"I've never advertised. I've never done any kind of outward-facing campaign," he added. "It's always been word of mouth, a call from someone: 'Hey, I hear you're working with so and so, they really like working with you. I've got an issue, can you help me with it?' And that's how the business has grown over the years.

"It's really no different from the news business. It's just done from the other side, but from someone who understands what news is looking for in a story but also has respect for the person who's sitting on the other side of the table as well," Janack continued.

He believes public relations personnel must respect the job journalists are doing.

"Having been a journalist for 15 years, that's an easy thing for

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"Once you join the team here, you develop great relationships. Your associates become friends, that turn into family. What also is special is the culture and work atmosphere. After working at other healthcare organizations, I know what we have here is unique. You need to enjoy where you work, and who you work with, and I can say that I found that at St. Mary's Healthcare."

— **TABITHA SABATER, BS, R.T. (R)(ARRT)**
Lead Technologist, X-Ray



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me," Janack said, "but I'm not into this to be adversarial. All I'm looking for from a reporter is a fair piece. If they ask a tough question but it's a fair question, it's perfectly fine."

Janack is the only full-time worker at The Janack Group, which hires freelancers for web design, photography, social media and other specialties. Janack believes his one-man operation is an advantage in itself: When a client hires his company, they are getting the founder and president.

Janack is also proud of his work from years ago, developing the Tech Valley brand during his days with the Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce. He said Albany has since become a semiconductor powerhouse. And because semiconductor tech is used in smart televisions, battery tech, iPods, laptops and other devices of the 21st century, Janack believes that "powerhouse" reputation will only grow.

"I think this region is extraordinarily well positioned for continued growth and to continue



PHOTO PROVIDED

Steve Janack, right, who now leads The Janack Group, gives Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak a tour of the Albany NanoTech complex on Sept. 5, 2012. Janack was NanoTech's vice president for marketing and communications at the time.

to be a center of innovation not only for New York state, not only for the nation but really for the world," he said.

"You've got a world-class

R&D facility in Albany Nanotech, you've got world-class manufacturing in GlobalFoundries [Malta], you've got Micron [memory and storage solutions]

now coming to Syracuse, Utica has manufacturing as well, G.E. R&D," Janack said. "Then you add to that the colleges and universities, RPI, UAlbany, it's

just an incredible nexus of brain power, of infrastructure, of visionary people who are driving this. I think there is so much upside yet to come."

When technology developers succeed, Janack believes, other local companies such as banks and accounting firms benefit.

The Capital Region also will share those advantages.

"There is a base of state government, higher education," he said. "That base provides the stability so the economy doesn't fluctuate up and down like some other regions."

Janack believes the area's semiconductor industry will continue to grow. He thinks health care is also moving in a positive direction and will become more important.

"I think this region is positioned to be insulated against some of the stronger winds that may hit nationally," Janack said. "In addition to the business side of it, it's recognized as a good place to live and raise a family. I think the quality of life has become more important to people, and that bodes well for this region."

"I'm bullish on the Capital Region's economy and future. I'm bullish on where we are and where we're going."

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