

**“IN THE EARLY DAYS AT BOULDER, BREWING ‘WAS ALL WE DID ... IT STARTS WHEN YOU WAKE UP, AND IT ENDS WHEN GO TO SLEEP—IF YOU’RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO GO TO SLEEP.’”**

**2 Get close, then closer still**

He took the first job that got him near a brewhouse—working in BridgePort Brewing Company’s pub. “That was my foot in the door,” he says. “I loved talking about beer, just being around the beer culture.” He worked in the pub for a couple months, got hooked on homebrewing, and jumped into the brewery, washing kegs, painting—doing whatever odd jobs he could. Soon enough, he got the chance to join Karl Ockert’s brewing staff full time. “I had no idea what I was doing,” he recalls. “I just knew I liked drinking beer, and that I wanted to get into it.”

**3 When the revolution hits, grab a pint**

“At that point, BridgePort was in the industrial part of northwest Portland, way, way off the map,” Zuckerman recalls. Drinkers flocked to it. “It was an exciting time. Every day, you were uncorking new customers and letting them see what beer with flavor was like, what it could be. And every day, there were more and more believers that thought what you were doing was a great thing. You’d work six days in the brewery, go home and homebrew, do one or two brews at home, then show up the next day and start up the cycle again.”

**4 Just do it**

Zuckerman didn’t have a background in biology or chemistry. However, he did have access to BridgePort’s legendary tandem of Ockert and Matt Sage. “It’s a matter of, if you want to learn something, you go out and learn it,” he says. He’d brew between 10 and 20 gallons per week at home, encouraging his neighbors to take as much beer as they could, to keep his kegs turning over. “It was kind of a time to learn on my own terms how the ingredients interact,” he says. “It became an exercise in adjusting and modifying recipes and processes.”

**5 Clear the deck**

When Zuckerman landed at Boulder in 1990, the brewery was a wreck. He had a huge system to work with, but poor quality wrought anemic volume (3,000 barrels that first year), and he was only brewing once a week. Zuckerman immediately cleaned house, ditched Boulder’s boring dried yeast for a more dynamic liquid strain, and began overhauling recipes. Then the hard, years-long work of rebuilding the brewery’s reputation began. “A lot of it was going out into the retail market, and saying, even though the name is the same, the people making the beer are different.”

**6 Never stop working**  
In the early days at Boulder, brewing “was all we did,” Zuckerman recalls. “It starts when you wake up, and it ends when you go to sleep—if you’re lucky enough to go to sleep.” The hard work has more than paid off. Zuckerman inherited a portfolio he characterized as “on the level of glorified homebrews,” and turned its Porter, Pale Ale and Amber recipes into award winners. He surrounded them with new, bold, full-flavored brews, and when drinkers’ palates swung toward the extreme, he swung with them, uncorking ridiculously hopped-up ales like the cult favorite Killer Penguin Barleywine.

**7 Leave your own mark**  
When asked what types of beers he brews, Zuckerman launches a discussion about quality and pride, not styles. “Far and away, it has to be something that we’re proud to drink,” he says. “We don’t use style guidelines to constrain our concept of a style. We brew to satisfy our own concept of what we’re looking for, and to satisfy our degree of creativity.” Mojo IPA, for instance, is loaded with hops, but it doesn’t have the caramel color or flavor that most beers in its category have. “It’s a very, very light color for an IPA, but we pack a lot of flavor into it, and, do you like the flavor? We want to stake a claim too, this is our style of IPA. And whatever category you want to call Hazed, we still haven’t figured it out, but that’s our category, that’s our style.”

**8 Put the consumer first**  
“We’ve never been a marketing-driven company,” Zuckerman says, so recipe development “is very much a ground-up phenomenon.” Brewers have free reign on a 50-gallon test system for Boulder’s pub, and once those beers are on tap, “We leave it up to the consumers.” That’s how Hazed and Infused came about—it was a pub favorite that had legs. Mojo Risin’, Zuckerman’s Double IPA, was a special request from the Publick House in Brookline, Mass. “The first reaction was, what do you mean, hop up the Mojo?” He did, and it was a winner. Lately, Zuckerman has been busy filling requests for one-off firkins. “That is fundamental to why we’re in this industry—we want to make interesting beers and have fun doing it. And look what happens—you end up with a great beer.”

**9 Head West, thirsty friend**  
“I consider myself to be extremely lucky to get to do what I do where I do it, and with the people I do it with,” Zuckerman says. “There is no shortage of great beer here, and it’s great beer that’s brewed here. Everywhere you go in Colorado, you’re gonna be surrounded by great Colorado beer. No shortage of it. And the people who live here are proud of their locals. Seeing people spending their hard-earned money on your hard work? That’s an amazing feeling.”

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