



**Contacts:**  
Nancy Knutson  
Jack Link's Beef Jerky  
(715) 466-2234  
nancyk@jacklinks.com

Martine Larson  
Carmichael Lynch Spang  
(612) 375-8522  
martine.larson@clynch.com

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Jack Link, CEO, Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Named Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2010 Winner in the Retail & Consumer Products Category**

### **Link Proves He Has The Right Ingredients for Success**

**MINONG, Wis. (Nov. 15, 2010)** – Jack Link, CEO, Jack Link's Beef Jerky, was named the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2010 national winner in the Retail & Consumer Products category. Now in its 24<sup>th</sup> year, Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur Of The Year® is the world's most prestigious business award for entrepreneurs. The award encourages entrepreneurial activity and recognizes leaders and visionaries who demonstrate innovation, financial success and personal commitment as they create and build world-class businesses.

Link was recognized for growing Jack Link's Beef Jerky from a small beef deboning operation in 1986 to the No. 1 U.S. meat snack brand. Link was honored at the Entrepreneur Of The Year® gala, the culminating event of the Ernst & Young Strategic Growth Forum in Palm Springs. The Forum is the nation's premier gathering of high-growth, market-leading companies. Awards were given in nine additional categories. All Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® winners were selected by an independent panel of judges from approximately 300 regional award recipients.

"Entrepreneurs are characterized by a willingness to disrupt traditional ways of seeing the world, a willingness to draw on new ways of thinking about familiar problems, and a willingness to fail," said Bryan Pearce, Americas Director, Entrepreneur Of The Year, Ernst & Young LLP. "Jack Link embodies this willingness and more. By constantly pushing the envelope, and responding to consumers' needs and changing behaviors, Link has grown Jack Link's Beef Jerky into a snack food powerhouse. Jack Link is very deserving of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2010 award in the Retail and Consumer Products category."

"This is an amazing experience, and I share it with the entire company," said John (Jack) Link, chief executive officer and chairman of the board, Jack Link's Beef Jerky. "Truly, Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year Award is the world's most prestigious business award for entrepreneurs. I am so proud to share this recognition. I feel like I am living the American Dream."



## **Lessons learned along the way**

Jack Link was destined to be an entrepreneur. His ancestors settled in the north woods of Wisconsin more than 100 years ago opening the village's first general store. Years later, Link's father and uncles, known as the "Links Brothers," owned and operated a number of businesses in and around the small town of Minong, Wis. As a boy, Link followed his father everywhere, learning all about cattle, the meat business and how to make the best meat products possible. After earning his business degree, Link returned to Minong and honored his heritage by venturing into and establishing a meat processing business.

In 1987, he formed Link Snacks and began distributing meat snacks to local convenience stores. By the 1990s, Link Snacks had begun producing Jack Link's Beef Jerky and distributed the product to retailers nationwide.

## **The demand for convenience**

As consumer demand for convenient, high-quality snack food increased, so did the company's offerings, including a wide variety of shelf-stable products in various sizes, forms, flavors and textures.

Less than five years ago, Jack Link's share of the meat snack category was a respectable 27 percent. Since then, with a strong, strategic marketing program in place, accompanied by a solid sales and distribution network, the Jack Link's brand has achieved a 50 percent market share. Today, Jack Link's is the undisputed meat snack category leader and the No. 1 U.S. brand of jerky.

Looking forward, the company has an aggressive plan in place that sees it growing by 15 percent annually through 2015.

## **Positive power of business**

Link attributes the growth and significant increase in market share over the past five years to quality, perseverance, timing and an unwavering confidence in his product.

Link's core philosophies have evolved into "Jack's Way," which began with the premise that product quality begins with soap and water. Jack's Way promotes clean plants and a safe working environment for employees, which Link believes lead to an excellent product experience for customers.



Beyond the workplace, Link is involved in Students in Free Enterprise, an organization started by the late Sam Walton that creates a better, more sustainable world through the positive power of business. Link is also a main supporter of the Northwood Education Foundation, which helps raise money for local northern Wisconsin K-12 schools. To date, he has raised more than a half million dollars for the foundation, including more than \$100,000 in 2009 alone.

Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2010 National Finalists in the Retail and Consumer Products Category

In addition to Link, The Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® national finalist in the Retail and Consumer Products category are: David Giuliani, Co-Founder, CEO of Bellevue, Washington-based Clarisonic, a company that develops and markets technically advanced and clinically proven products that make a clear difference in skin care; James A. Haslam, III, CEO of Pilot Travel Services LLC of Knoxville, the largest travel center operator in the United States with 307 locations; and Russ Hornsby, CEO of Clayton, Missouri-based Cepia LLC, a boutique designer, manufacturer, and marketer of toys, electronics, and games for kids of all ages.

#### **About Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur Of The Year®**

Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur Of The Year® is the world's most prestigious business award for entrepreneurs. The award makes a difference through the way it encourages entrepreneurial activity among those with potential and recognizes the contribution of people who inspire others with their vision, leadership and achievement. As the first and only truly global award of its kind, Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® celebrates those who are building and leading successful, growing and dynamic businesses, recognizing them through regional, national and global awards programs in more than 135 cities in 50 countries.

#### **About Ernst & Young**

Ernst & Young is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. Worldwide, our 141,000 people are united by our shared values and an unwavering commitment to quality. We make a difference by helping our people, our clients and our wider communities achieve their potential.

#### **JACK LINK'S BEEF JERKY – Feed Your Wild Side**

Headquartered in Minong, Wis., Jack Link's is the No. 1 U.S. meat snack brand and fastest-growing meat snack manufacturer worldwide. The Jack Link's brand represents a heritage of quality and consumer trust. Jack Link's products are available in retail outlets worldwide. Visit [www.JackLinks.com](http://www.JackLinks.com) for more information on the Jack Link's brand.

###