2021

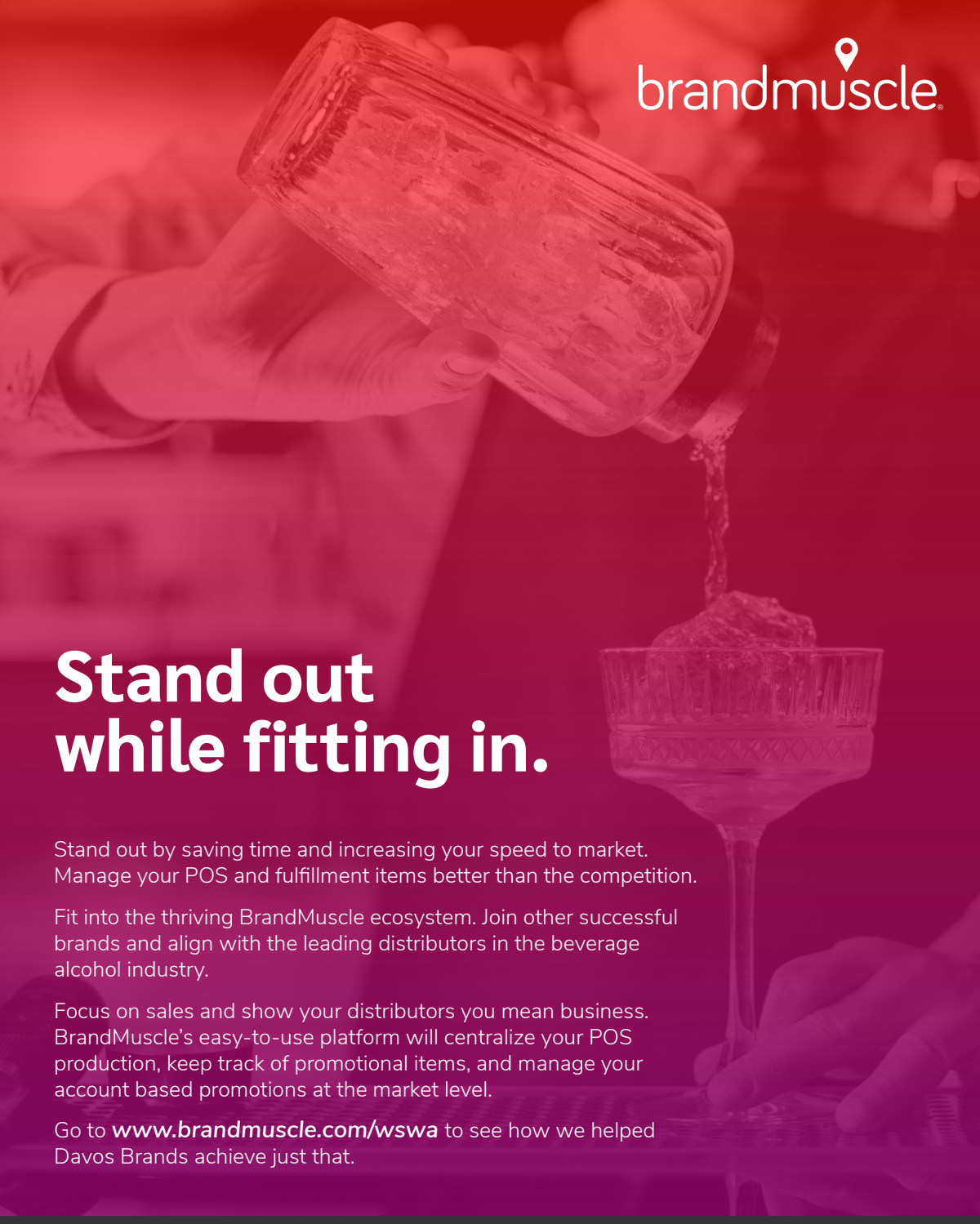
WSWA ACCESS DISTRIBUTION PLAYBOOK



WSWA-ACCESS

A HUB FOR CRAFT, START-UP AND SMALL PRODUCTION WINE & SPIRITS

www.wswa.org/access



Stand out while fitting in.

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Focus on sales and show your distributors you mean business. BrandMuscle's easy-to-use platform will centralize your POS production, keep track of promotional items, and manage your account based promotions at the market level.

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Introduction

Note From the Access Team

In January of 2021, the wholesaler advisors and brand representatives of the WSWA Access Advisory Council set out to create the wine and spirits industry's first ever Distribution Playbook.

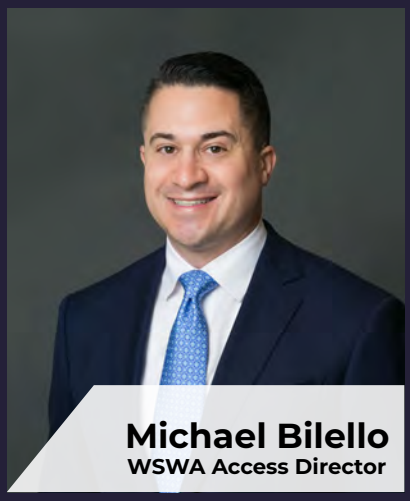
The team learned during initial discovery meetings that craft, startup and small production wine and spirits brands were asking for a template to follow when pitching their products to wine and spirits wholesalers. In addition, Access wholesaler advisors – craft brand development experts – were frustrated by inconsistencies in the new product pitches presented to them by these emerging companies. By helping producers craft their brand messages more carefully, we enable distributors to make better-informed decisions, increase the quality of both product and product information that gets to retailers (both on- and off-premise) and further increase the diversity of products available to consumers through licensed retailers.

We hope you read, follow along, tell a friend, and share the link to download this free Playbook available to our wine and spirits community. Inside you'll find a roadmap to distribution in the U.S. alcohol marketplace informed and reviewed by experts, hammered out over months of meetings with the most insightful and successful emerging brands in the industry as well as the craft brand specialists that make up the U.S. distribution network known as Access wholesaler advisors.

We are grateful for the hundreds of hours spent putting this together and acknowledge the 2021 WSWA Access Advisory Council members for their passion and dedication to our industry.

If you follow the recommendations given in this Playbook you'll be ready to pitch any wholesaler in any market throughout the U.S. We wish you the best!

CHEERS!

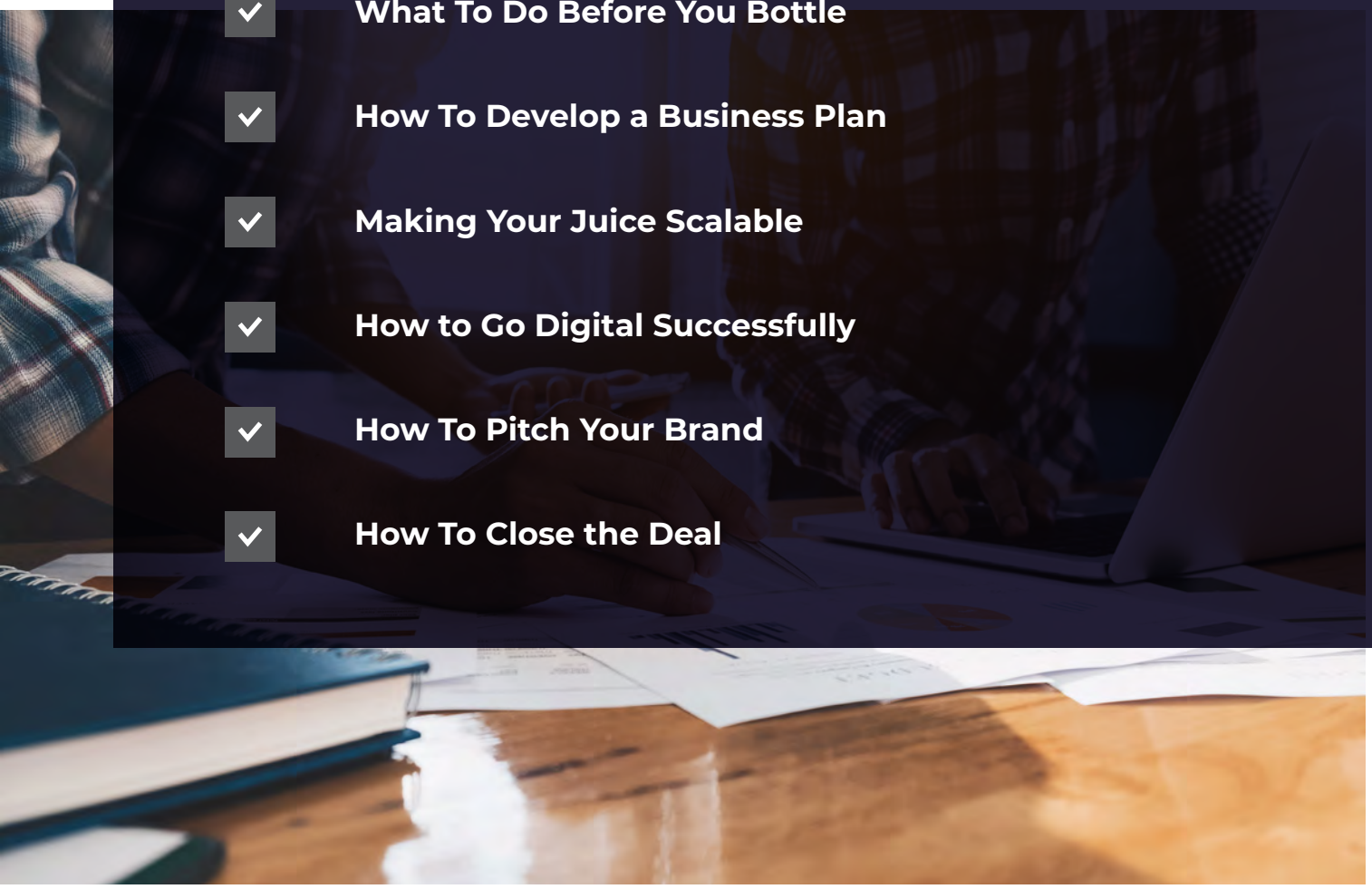


Michael Bilello
WSWA Access Director



How to Use the WSWA Access Distribution Playbook

- How to Use the WSWA Access Distribution Playbook
- The Value of Working With a Wholesaler Partner
- Who Is the WSWA Access Advisory Council?
- What To Do Before You Bottle
- How To Develop a Business Plan
- Making Your Juice Scalable
- How to Go Digital Successfully
- How To Pitch Your Brand
- How To Close the Deal





How to Use the WSWA Access Distribution Playbook







The WSWA Access Distribution Playbook has been created to be a first-of-its-kind resource guide for craft, startup and small production wine and spirits professionals and to be used to better position emerging brands with prospective wholesaler partners. Developed by the WSWA Access Advisory Council, a group of diverse wholesalers and emerging brand experts, the WSWA Access Distribution Playbook captures decades of industry experience and insight into practices, tips and resources that can help brands looking to earn widespread distribution throughout the most dynamic and competitive alcohol marketplace the world has ever witnessed.

This Playbook will help to guide you through the process of finding a wholesaler partner and help you to maximize the value of your brand in the marketplace. Inside you'll find tips, resources and best practices from top industry veterans.





"The WSWA Access Playbook captures decades of industry experience and insight."

The WSWA Access Playbook will provide you with tips, tricks and expert guidance on:

- How to pinpoint your unique brand identifier.
- Where to focus your market research to balance cost and data value.
- How to develop your brand story for today's unique audiences.
- What elements of a business plan are most important to wholesaler partners.
- How to develop a partnership with a wholesaler contact.
- How to be a great partner to your wholesaler and retailer contacts.

The Value of Working With a Wholesaler Partner

Why Work With Wholesalers?

Wholesalers are the logistics arm of America's three-tier system, but America's wine and spirits distributors do more than just store and move product, stock retailer shelves, and help conduct tasting events. America's distributors are brand builders. They work with brands of all sizes, and at various stages, to get to market and grow a customer base.

Wholesalers employ more than 88,000 Americans in jobs ranging from mixologists to importers, truck drivers, warehouse workers, sales and logistics experts, office workers and administrative personnel all working towards getting quality product on shelves and to American consumers.

While your local distributor provides invaluable expertise in your marketplace, helping you to align your on- and off-premise strategies and meet your business development goals, they can help to generate significant value toward your bottom line.

For every $1,000 worth of wine or spirits sold to consumers, the cost of production for wineries and distilleries is roughly $278.88. **Wholesalers add another $103.36 in value.**

Of this, 40% ($41.38) goes towards goods and services provided by wholesalers that would otherwise need to be managed and maintained in house and 53% ($54.14) is almost entirely direct savings from lowered labor costs. In total, **wholesaler partners save America's wine and spirits producers and retailers as much as $11.4 billion in direct operating costs[1].**

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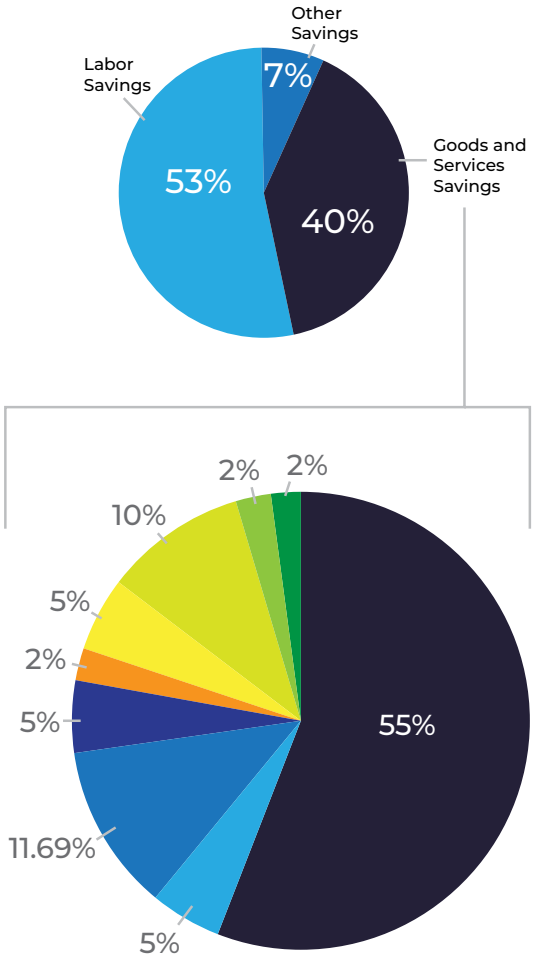


53% ($54.14) – labor savings

40% ($41.38) – goods & services savings

- $22.91 for warehousing and storage
- $2.08 for financial carrying costs
- $4.84 for transportation costs
- $2.10 for legal and accounting services
- $0.95 for communications
- $2.16 for displays and other promotional materials
- $4.19 for advertising services
- $0.99 for inventory control
- $0.85 for insurance

7% ($7.84) – other

53%
Labor Savings

7%
Other Savings

40%
Good and Services Savings

[1]The Economic Value of America's Wine and Spirits Wholesalers. John Dunham & Associates. August 2021. https://www.wswa.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/Economic%20Value%20of%20Wine%20and%20Spirits%20Wholesalers.pdf

Retailer Profitability

#01



#02



Private Liquor Stores

Private liquor stores have an average profit margin of

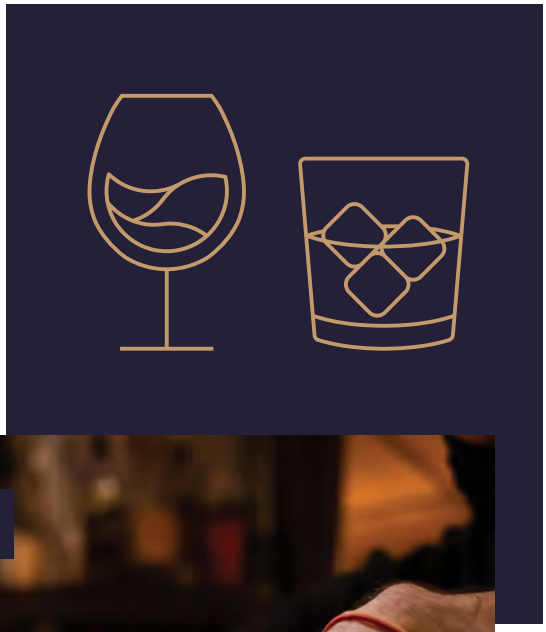
3.0%

Convenience Stores

Convenience stores have an average profit margin of

2.5%

Wholesalers also perform valuable services for retailer partners like stocking shelves, maintaining inventory, and collecting and remitting state excise tax. Without their wholesaler partners, America's wine and spirits retailers would struggle as they already have generally low profit margins.



#03



Grocery Stores

Grocery stores have an average profit margin of

2.9%

#04



Restaurants and Bars

Restaurants and bars have an average profit margin of

4.5%

The 2021 WSWA Access Advisory Council

Who Is the WSWA Access Advisory Council?

The WSWA Access Advisory Council is comprised of brand leaders from craft, startup and small-production wine and spirits companies, as well as WSWA members and industry partners collaborating to develop expert guidance, resources, and best practices to help brands navigate industry challenges and identify opportunities in an effort to further enhance a smartly regulated and successful U.S. alcohol marketplace.
Members include:



Kat Hantas
Brand Representative



Phillip Rawleigh
Brand Representative



Scott Neil
Brand Representative



Patrick Jean-Baptiste
Brand Representative



Bob Gunter
Brand Representative



Mimi Buttenheim
Brand Representative

The 2021 WSWA Access Advisory Council

Who Is the WSWA Access Advisory Council?



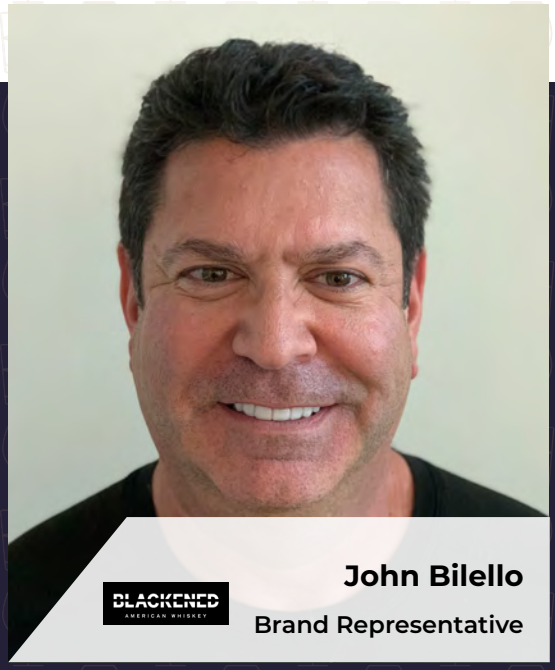
Subir Singh
Brand Representative



Alexei Khimenko
Brand Representative



Susan Lambert
Brand Representative



John Bilello
Brand Representative



Atlas Cheek
Brand Representative



Sara Harmelin
Wholesaler Advisor



Drew Levinson
Wholesaler Advisor



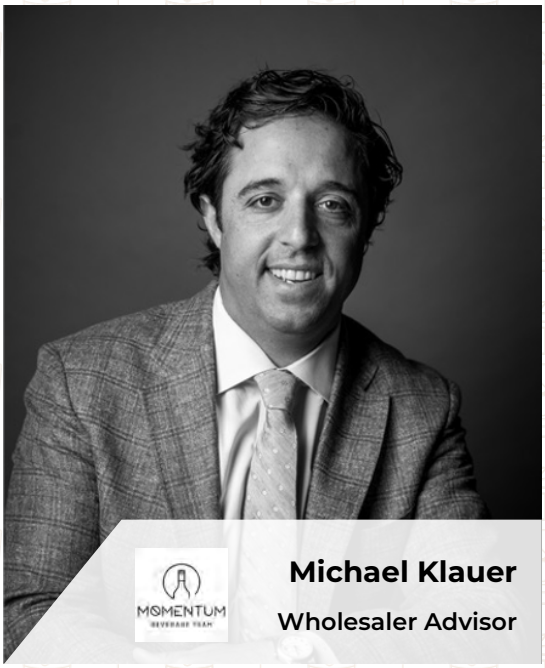
Rick Lopus
Wholesaler Advisor

The 2021 WSWA Access Advisory Council

Who Is the WSWA Access Advisory Council?



Cheryl Durzy
Wholesaler Advisor



Michael Klauer
Wholesaler Advisor



Ken Rosenberg
Wholesaler Advisor



Ray Lombard
Wholesaler Advisor



Michael Bilello

Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America, Access Director, Senior Vice President of Communications and Marketing

Before You Bottle

Doing Your Homework

Before you launch your brand, experts recommend you conduct your own market research to learn more about where your brand would, could, and should be positioned. Before you bottle a new product, you should be able to answer three key questions: Who is your consumer? Where are your customers? Where do you fit into your target category?

The more brainstorming you do about your target customer, the easier it will be to craft your messaging to them. Once you understand who your consumer is, other key brand elements fall into place: target markets, brand proposition, marketing, and building brand loyalty. Access Team member Ray Lombard, of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, recommends going deeper and asking yourself:

- What's the value proposition that you have to your consumer?
- When your customer drinks this brand, they feel like "X."
- What does drinking your brand say about your consumer?

Kat Hantas



CEO,
21 Seeds

Who is your consumer? Why it matters

For 21 Seeds Founder Kat Hantas and her team, knowing who her customer is drives the entire brand and business model — everything from marketing efforts, on- vs. off-premise strategy, and finding the right wholesaler partner centered on their customer.

"Our girl doesn't really like sitting at a bar learning about a cocktail, really. She's ordering her drink, she's hanging out with her girlfriends, or she's a mom and she's drinking at home. So, for us [we had to ask], 'Where does she go for discovery?' She goes online for discovery. She goes to Instagram, she goes to Twitter, she goes to Facebook. We're going to reach her there — it's called the 'outer premise' and that's really where we're building our brand."





"Your brand has to have the 'it' factor," Lombard says, "and there has to be passion behind it. ... How people have a personal bond or a personal connection with a brand, and time and time again, that's how great brands are built. That's how you have people who will drive a General Motors car their entire life or have been drinking Patron for the last 20-plus years from Crown Royal, multi-generational and so forth. It's because how people identify with the brands or what's the 'it' value — that's very important."

Drew Levinson, another Access Team member, adds, "Any brand that's coming to market, especially in this day and age, really has to have a clear reason for being in existence in that space."

So that's the trick... coming up with your reason to exist.

Levinson elaborates:

"Having that point of differentiation, knowing exactly who you are as a brand and what's your story and how that story is going to resonate, and being able to convey that not just to us as the wholesaler, but through to the consumer. So often we get kind of put in the position that we have to be the face of the brand, and we can do that to some extent, but ultimately the brand — its face, its story, its ethos — has to come through to the consumer, so that the consumer wants to go and actually pull that brand off the shelf or the bartender wants to put that brand into their cocktail. And so often, when we are talking to brands, we're trying to understand what is that whole opportunity, what is going to differentiate them?"

— **Drew Levinson,**
VP of Business Development,
Breakthru Beverage

Finally, our experts agree unanimously that the best planning you can do is within your own product category to find your unique brand identifier. Every year, product categories only grow more crowded, and it becomes increasingly more important for your brand to find its white space — or the reason why a consumer is going to buy your bottle over another on the same shelf. Being able to articulate this to both your consumer audience and a potential wholesaler partner is quite possibly the most important element in your branding strategy.

Year over year, the alcohol marketplace is providing consumers with more and better choices when they consume their favorite adult beverages. Last year alone, the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) approved nearly 170,000 Certificates of Label Approval (COLAs), nearly 60,000 more than just 10 years ago.



Finding space on the shelf

But don't be alarmed – while the industry is growing daily, COLAs can be misleading. When trying to gauge the overall size of the market, keep in mind that the total number of COLAs is not particularly indicative of the true number of available products. Several COLAs may be filed for the same product in order to accommodate different factors such as manufacturer's locations or container sizes, and old COLAs remain in effect unless approved, even if the manufacturer uses a new label design. For example, a popular consumer brand for cinnamon whiskey currently holds nearly 40 COLAs, some dating as far back as 2006. Remember that you too many need to apply for different COLAs – everything from bottling location to bottle size and logo development can increase the number of COLAs your brand holds.



John Bilello



CEO,
Sweet Amber Distilling

Standing out from the crowd

In one of the most crowded categories in the marketplace, Blackened American Whiskey has set itself apart by joining two masters of their craft — the band Metallica and famed late master distiller Dave Pickerell — to bring innovation to the aging process:

"We had these music icons and [we had to ask ourselves] how could we innovate? And it just so had happened that Dave had had an idea, something that had sat with him for many years, where he felt that really low frequency sound applied to aging whiskey could enhance those flavor profiles. And so what we developed ... [is] what we call Black Noise, where we actually use Metallica playlists and we apply that low frequency sound to the aging barrels.

"This whiskey is all well aged to begin with, so it's not a gimmick; it's simply that the cavitation that's caused by that low-frequency hertz that's hitting those barrels moves it and it pushes that whiskey in towards the Red Line and at night, when things cool down and it expunges out and it just adds additional flavor. So that was something that we were able to attract an interest from fans and music people in the Metallica world, and then it also gave us something to talk about with regard to some innovation on the whiskey side."

Developing Your Brand Story

Patrick Jean-Baptiste

President,
Crafthouse Cocktails



Finding your white space

"You need to know what white space you're going after. If you're coming into the marketplace and you're a new brand, understanding what space you're filling, what need you're filling, understanding how your product is going to be competitive in the marketplace, knowing your competitors as well, I think is step number one."





"Facts tell, stories sell."

Bill Rancic

Entrepreneur,
Restauranter, WSWA
Brand Battle Judge

Human beings are hard-wired to respond to storytelling. It's part of our DNA. One of the key parts of successful branding is creating a story that:



Starts from the beginning

Origin stories aren't just for comic book movies. Many brands begin in interesting ways — a chance meeting between two old friends or an accidental discovery that become the germ of an idea. Whether your beginnings were humble or earth-shattering, you may be able to talk about them in a way that elicits an emotion on which you can build your company's legend.



Focuses on the key players

Brands have something very interesting in common with political, social, and spiritual movements — they're all built on strong personalities. Your founders don't necessarily have to be larger than life to make for interesting storytelling. They just have to be interesting. Play on what makes them unique, whether it's decades of experience in the industry, no experience at all, success in other arenas, or even their celebrity.



Plays to your strengths

This is where your brand's unique value proposition comes into play. Shine a spotlight on the thing(s) that you do better than anyone else. If you can't think of any, maybe you need to rethink your brand from the ground up.

Appeals to your audience

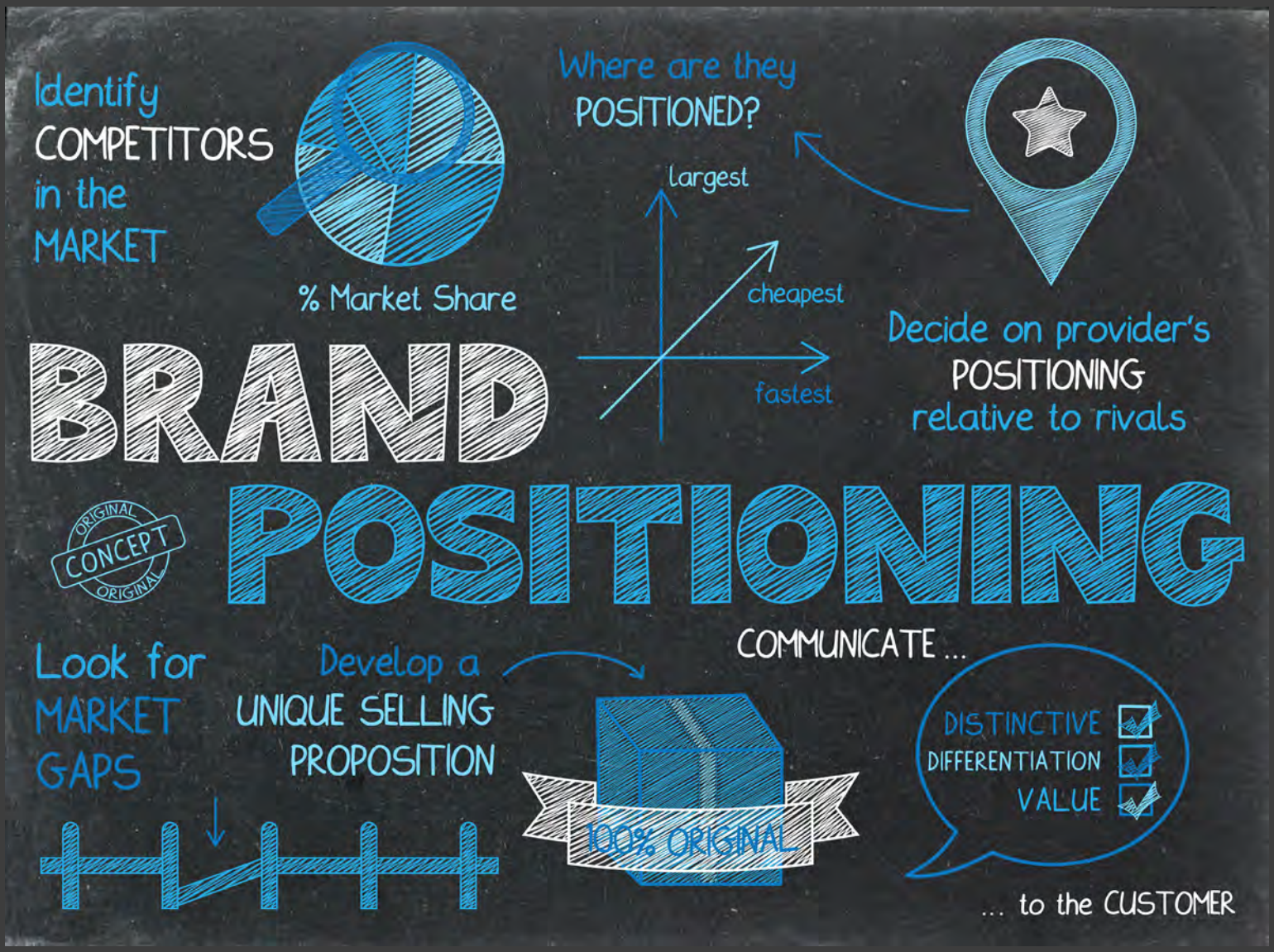


Whatever your story might be, present it in language and imagery that will ring true with your target consumer. Imagine you are talking to your ideal customer and then tailor the words and sentences directly to them.



Doesn't overdo it

It's a brand story, not a novel. It doesn't have to be long and drawn out. Make your points and then let your product speak for itself. There's no communication strategy more effective than leaving your audience wanting more.



If you're having trouble getting started with your brand story, first make a list of brands you trust. Second, compile a list of competitors in your product space. Third, come up with a series of products in other industries (food, clothing, consumer goods, etc.) that specifically appeal to your target audience.

Now go look at those companies' websites and read their "About Us" pages. Pay attention to the language, the images, the design. Consider how your own brand's story is both similar to and different from the stories on the websites you studied.

Then create your own. Set it aside, then show it to others. Rewrite, refine, get feedback — you'll get there.



WE KNOW YOU'RE GREAT AT YOUR CRAFT

CRAFT COLLECTION
LUXURY SPIRITS
FROM SOUTHERN GLAZER'S

Craft spirits play an important role in driving innovation in our industry. That's why Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits' Craft Collection Luxury Spirits selling division is dedicated to marketing and selling premium craft and luxury spirits across our national network. Our commitment to this thriving and diverse sector is also behind our support of WSWA Access, identifying route-to-market opportunities for craft brands. It's our desire to help entrepreneurs achieve their dreams, so we are offering all craft and luxury spirits distillers access to our distribution platform in your local markets.

Interested producers can send inquiries to newproducts@sgws.com.

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SOUTHERN GLAZER'S WINE & SPIRITS

SOUTHERNGLAZERS.COM

What's in a Name?

Jeff Kozak



CEO,
Whistlepig Whiskey

Naming can have cascading effects

"If WhistlePig was a fun brand to begin with, then it should remain a fun brand and we'll use a sub-brand like PiggyBack, which was a recent whiskey we launched a couple of years ago. A PiggyBack: that's fun, it's sticky. It takes some cues from the original WhistlePig name, and it doesn't take itself too seriously. That personality that the original brand has established, you have to double back on it."

An integral part of your brand's story is the name you choose — this includes the name of your company itself as well as the names of the individual products. Some makers start with a name and develop the product from there. Others create the product first, and name it later. However you decide to do it, you'll eventually have to settle on a name that encapsulates your company and product(s), appeals to your customer, and serves as a jumping-off point for your story.



Here are a few tips on naming your brand:

The best brands hint at their story right in the name. For example, the name “Captain Morgan” conjures up images of Caribbean pirates, while “Château Lafite Rothschild” makes us think of a stately castle in the south of France. And we won’t even get into 2021 Brand Battle Category Winner “Good Fucking Wine” — that one is in a class all by itself.

You’ll probably pair your brand with a logo or logotype (a word mark styled like a logo). Consider how your brand name might interact with the logo, or how the appearance of your logotype will help tell your brand’s story.

Be cautious when using foreign or made-up words in your brand name. Consumers may hesitate to order a product with a name they can’t pronounce.

One of the biggest pitfalls in naming and branding is settling on a name without first determining whether someone else is using it for a similar product. It's not enough to check local stores to see if they're selling something with a name that sounds like the one you want as your brand.



- Use the Trademark Electronic Search System (TESS) of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) to see if anyone is using a similar mark.
- Consult with a trademark attorney to make certain you're not infringing on someone else's intellectual property.
- Register your trademark with the USPTO as quickly as feasible to help protect your rights.
- Use your brand — in promotional materials, on your website, in social media — to help establish your claim on it.

Andre Mack of Maison Noir Wines has some words of caution about trademarks:

“Do your due diligence... Pay your attorney, [trademark] everything to make sure you own it and don’t think small. [Trademark] it worldwide, not just in the United States, and that way you can lock everything up. Don’t skip those steps because in the end, they can come back and bite you in the ass.”

Of course, your brand name isn’t the only name you need. In this digital age, you’ll also need a domain name. ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, provides a domain name lookup tool on their page. While you’re at it, you’ll probably want to make sure you can get a Twitter handle, Facebook user name, and Instagram account that matches your chosen brands.





Developing a Business Plan

Every business needs a plan. You probably already have one in your head. But have you put it on paper? As a fledgling craft wine and spirits company, there are three main reasons to create a formal business plan:

1. **To follow.** A business plan serves as a road map as you build out your company, develop your brand and produce your product. When in doubt, follow the plan. If the plan isn't working, don't be afraid to revise it.

2. **To solicit investment.** Whether you're applying for a small business loan or trying to attract an angel investor or venture capital, the person or people providing the money will want to see your business plan. A polished, well-thought-out plan makes it much more likely that you'll get the funding you need.

3. **To pitch to distributors.** Wholesalers want to know where you are in your company's development, where you're planning to go, and who is going to take you there. Because of that, having a formal business plan is crucial when you're ready to pitch to wholesalers.

One of the best general resources to help you build your business plan is the U.S. Small Business Administration, which has guides and advice on doing just that. If you Google "business plan template," you'll find dozens of free resources that can help you get started. Since this Playbook is specifically geared toward preparing you to pitch to wholesalers, we'll focus mostly on the elements of your business plan that will be most interesting to them.

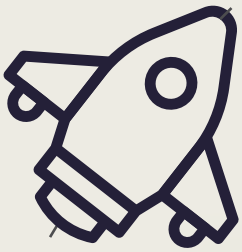




> ***"... It starts with the plan. ... Build the plan, work the plan, and the numbers will come."***
>
> **Luis Gonzalez**
>
> CEO, Old Elk Distillery

WHO ARE YOU as a company?

This is your brand story, told succinctly. It includes the white space you intend to address, what inspired you to fill that gap, and your unique selling proposition. As Access Team member Ken Rosenberg of Republic National Distributing Company says, "The product's got to have a great story, you've got to have a good direction of where you want to go with the brand, who's your target customer, consumers and retailers, and on-premise, price points. ... So there's a lot to it that we look at, and do we feel it's going to be a good long-term partner that we're going to help grow the brand together?"



WHO IS YOUR CUSTOMER?

The work you did in developing your brand becomes crucial here. You should be able to provide the defining characteristics of your anticipated customer base.



Behavioral:

The purchasing power, engagement level, likelihood to try new things, brand loyalty, and level of engagement with the brands they prefer.

Psychographic:

The personality and lifestyle elements that your likely customer might share, including interests, opinions, political views, values, and beliefs.

Geographic:

The markets — and even neighborhoods — where your typical customer lives, works, and (above all) buys. Obviously, you'll want to make sure that people with your preferred demographic profile are well represented in your target rollout markets.

Demographic:

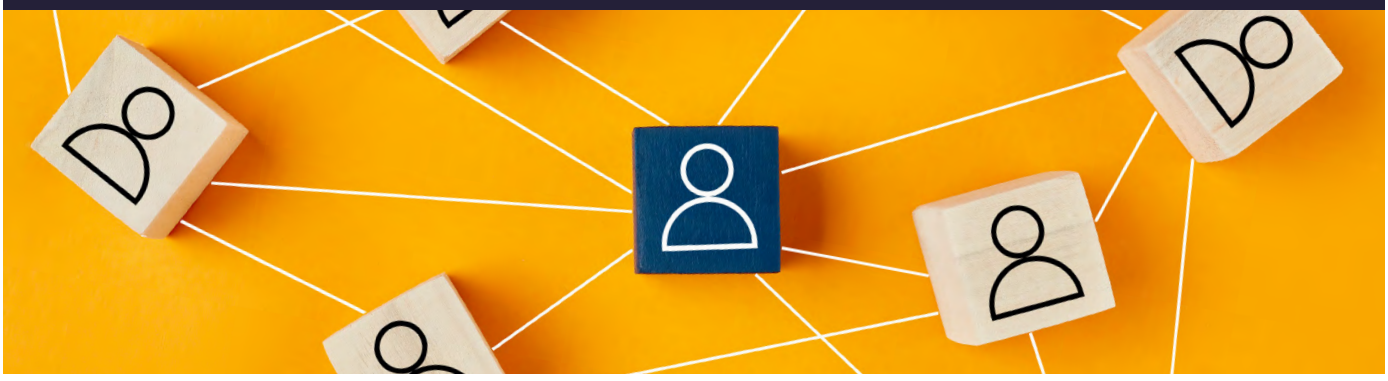
The age range, gender percentages, education and income levels, race or ethnicity, and household makeup of your typical customer.

WHO IS YOUR Leader?

You may already have your executive team in place, or you may create placeholder positions to fill as you gain investors and your company grows.

According to Access Team member Ray Lombard of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, most craft wine and spirits companies will need four key leaders:

"The brands that I've found that have had the most success are the ones that have cross-functional leaders or founders, where you have a CFO who has a strong financial background, [you] usually have a distiller or brand owner who's very creative. And do you also have somebody who brings that industry expertise — you know, as to how to navigate the state's title, navigate the distributor network and so forth? And that same person, many times, could also function as your production and supply chain lead. And having … that fourth person, which is your supply chain lead, that's important too."



Your business plan should highlight four “pillar” members of your executive team:

1. **President/Chief Executive Officer:** Brand owner and/or head distiller who manages the creative direction for your company.
2. **Chief Financial Officer:** Senior executive responsible for managing your company’s finances, including attracting investment.
3. **Sales Officer:** Takes the lead in acquiring accounts, entering new markets, meeting revenue targets.
4. **Supply Chain Manager:** Responsible for handling your overall supply chain, operations, and logistics.

As your company grows, you’ll obviously need some additional leadership positions in various areas. It’s helpful to show where you’re heading in terms of staffing. Since you’ll likely go into your initial market(s) without a big distributor doing the heavy lifting, you’ll need to think about how you’ll handle sales and distribution until you ink a deal with a wholesaler.



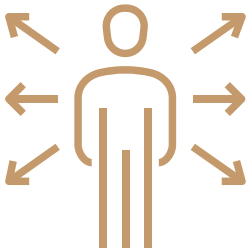
John Bilello

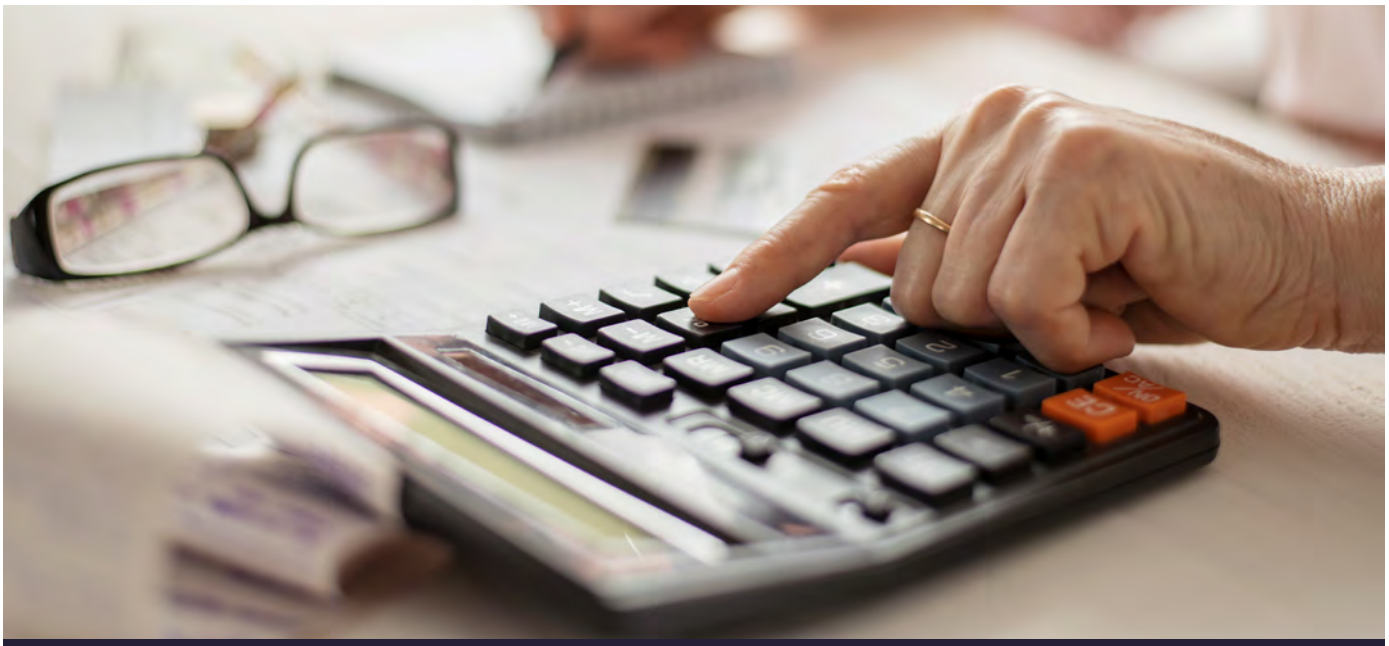


CEO,
Sweet Amber Distilling

Boots on the ground

“Will you have boots on the ground? This is critically important, and your distributor has a huge book and they're taking a chance on a new brand — particularly if it’s coming from an unknown supplier. So, will you have boots on the ground in market, or is it more regional in nature?”





WHAT ARE *The* FINANCIALS?

One of the most important parts of a business plan is the description of both current and future funding sources. You may be starting your craft operation with your own money, or with funding from outside backers. You may need to seek additional funds at a future point — if so, where will you go? What is your plan for the long run?

You'll also need to indicate any significant assets owned by the company. Do you own buildings, for example, or significant capital equipment? If you're a winery or a grain-to-glass distillery, do you own fields or vineyards? If you're leasing property, what agreements are in place, and what will happen when the current terms expire? What plans do you have to expand and when will your needs require it?

All of these are important considerations that potential partners, investors, and distributors will need to know about before they get involved with your company.

What are your priority markets and how do you plan to get into them?

> *"Any good business plan starts with proper funding."*
>
> **Drew Levinson**
>
> VP Business Development, Breakthru Beverage Group

Thanks to the three-tier system, the U.S. beverage alcohol market is the strongest, safest, and best-regulated market in the world. Except it really isn't just one market.

As Rick Lopus of Great Lakes Wine & Spirits states, "The problem is there are 50 [markets], and the difference and all the different methodologies and the rules and regulations is stunning. Like in Michigan, everything is exclusive, there are no duals and triples, and stuff like that. And we're also a franchise state. So, when you marry us, we're married. So then in other states, in Illinois, you don't like what's going on, you move tomorrow."

You may choose your initial markets based on priority — your own back yard. Or you might choose them because they have a high concentration of your customer base. You might also pick markets based on state regulations, and how easy they are to navigate without a distributor partner. Whatever your methods, potential distributors and investors will need to know which markets you'll open with, and what your expansion plans look like.

What are your products and how will you price them?

Eventually, it all comes down to revenue. You need to be able to show that your business will turn a profit.

Pricing is based on a number of factors: cost of goods, cost to produce, overhead, your competitive set. Customers want value, which is the intersection of quality and price. Be very specific about where you plan to fit into the array of existing products in your target markets.



"What do you want to be when you grow up? Where do you see yourself in three to five years? And that's important because again, back to not only supply issues, but are you moving both the funding of the brand as well as the resourcing of that brand, whether it be human or others?"

John Bilello

CEO,
Sweet Amber Distilling

Where will you be in three years? In five years?

To a great degree, your long-term plans will be determined by your brand story. Your company values and ethos can have a big impact on how you grow and what happens along the way. Not every company shoots for global domination of a product category. But some won't be happy until they achieve it.

Ray Lombard points out several of the various contingencies you might want to call out in your future plans: "Many times, you might have a producer who has forgotten a step in the supply chain process, including securing liquid for their aspirations, or sourcing the right resources to be able to bottle, cap, and place in a case. So, understanding the supply chain, their infrastructure, their business continuity, it's something that's important."



What research have you used to back up your projections?

This can be the most difficult part of a business plan because it requires market research, which can be pricy. But it can also help you to develop retailer partners, a consumer base, and a plan for scalability. Answering these key questions can pinpoint more specific points that you need to address when developing a solid business plan:

- Where are your customers?
- What are they drinking already?
- Are they drinking at home or in the on-premise?
- What are other people drinking?
- In the market? In other prospective markets?
- How much are they willing to spend?
- If they drink your product, what will they stop drinking?

A good place to start for general market research is the U.S. Small Business Administration. They provide links to some invaluable resources for data on:

- General business statistics on industries, business conditions.
- Consumer statistics on potential customers, consumer markets.
- Demographics, to help you segment the population for targeting customers.
- Economic indicators such as unemployment rates, loans granted and more.
- Employment statistics and trends for your market(s).
- Income statistics and earnings data.
- Money statistics and interest rates.
- Production and sales statistics, including demand, costs, and consumer spending.
- Trade statistics, indicators of sales and market performance.
- Statistics of businesses in specific industries.

Drilling deeper, you'll definitely need to get some industry-specific data to help steer your course. We recommend WSWA's quarterly SipSource Report as the best source for aggregated distributor depletion data. It includes both on- and off-premise channels, and gives rolling 12-month trends so you always know what's happening across the various categories and states.

Another paid data source mentioned by the Access team is Nielsen, which can provide market-specific information. Some of the data is rather expensive to acquire, though.

Another good source of information is industry newsletters. "Industry News Update" (called "Mark Brown" by those in the know) is a valuable source of information sent out daily ... and it's free!

You can subscribe by sending an email to mbrown@buffalotrace.com

This source aggregates information from lots of other sources, including Nielsen and Infoscan. It makes sense to sign up for other industry newsletters, as well as subscribing to your competitors' mailings.

And don't forget your friends in the industry. You might know someone who is willing to share information that you ordinarily would have to pay for. The more data you have, the better you'll be able to plan for what's to come.

"...When I was at Constellation, I had access to everything at my fingertips daily. I could pull any kind of data that I wanted at any moment; and even at Fever-Tree, we had great access to Nielsen data. And now, working for an emerging brand, it's very limited. You get some, what I call 'bones' from your wholesalers when they throw you a little Nielsen data every once in a while, so you can see how you are doing. But it's expensive, and when you're prioritizing how you're using your funding, unfortunately, at some point, usually this is where you sacrifice."

Atlas Cheek

Chief Sales Officer,
Treaty Oak Distilling Company

Getting Expert Help

You know your brand, and you know your craft. Whatever segment of the market you're entering, you probably know your recipes and methods backwards and forwards. What you might not know, though, is the industry you're getting into.

While it's possible to learn — by doing research or by making mistakes — one of our biggest recommendations is to bring in someone to help you navigate the complicated waters of the beverage alcohol business. According to John Bilello of Sweet Amber Distilling, "You can save so much time with hiring someone early on that is an industry expert." Whether it's a full-time hire or an outside consultant you can lean on heavily, industry expertise is crucial.

"What I mean by that," Bilello continues, "is have the experience — both on the supplier, and even better yet, on the wholesaler side — to guide you with a lot of these things. If you don't know what you're walking into and you're just figuring it out as you go, you're obviously going to make mistakes. And even if the wholesalers can and decide to help, ... they've got an awful lot to do."

Ray Lombard



EVP, Supplier Management & Business Development, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits

Gut check:
Do you really know what you're doing?

"So, are you going to have somebody at a national level assigned to your portfolio that could give you guidance, that could help you navigate across the footprint? Are you going to have somebody at a regional or state level that could help you with the local market intricacies? In New York, you've got to post pricing for the following month by the 25th. So, many people getting into the industry wouldn't know that. And you've got to file the assignment by the 5th. You have to file the pricing. In the Mid-Atlantic, there's certain intricacies. Minnesota, a lot of them don't know that everyone sells spirits in Minnesota... So, you might not be in all 50 states, but if you're picking 10, 12 states, every single one of them is going to have its own differences and intricacies for everything from getting set up to communication with the state, to what pricing is, what margins customers work on, etc. All that varies, so what resources are being made available to you at a state, at a regional, or at a national level is also important to help you navigate that."

Making the Juice

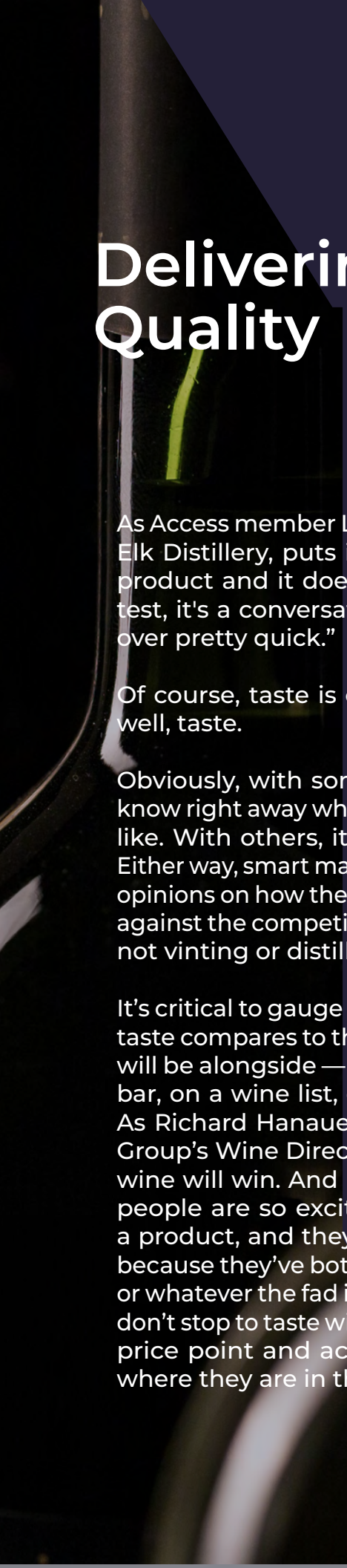
We can't tell you how to produce your product, so we're not going to try. As you move into production, though, you'll obviously need to ensure that you comply with all federal, state, and local requirements relating to producing your product. This includes obtaining the correct licenses and permits, obeying food and beverage regulations, carrying the required insurance and complying with employment and tax laws.



Beyond just creating a product, there are some other important considerations.



> ***"Does it taste good? Do I want to spend that price point on a bottle I don't know if it's good or not?"***
>
> **Jimmy Sharp**
>
> Head Distiller,
> John Emerald Distilling



Delivering Quality

As Access member Luis Gonzalez of Old Elk Distillery, puts it, “If you taste the product and it doesn't pass the taste test, it's a conversation that might be over pretty quick.”

Of course, taste is often a matter of… well, taste.

Obviously, with some products, you’ll know right away what it’s going to taste like. With others, it’s a waiting game. Either way, smart makers will get outside opinions on how their product stacks up against the competition because you’re not vinting or distilling in a vacuum.

It’s critical to gauge how your product’s taste compares to the other products it will be alongside — whether on a back bar, on a wine list, or on a retail shelf. As Richard Hanauer, RPM Restaurant Group’s Wine Director, says, “The best wine will win. And I think that a lot of people are so excited about making a product, and they feel so successful because they’ve bottled wine or tequila or whatever the fad is this year, and they don’t stop to taste wines at a very similar price point and actually understand where they are in their value.”

Hitting the Price Point

Taste is one aspect of quality. The other controlling factor is price.

“It’s not just about taste, by the way,” says Rick Lopus, V.P. of Sales Development for Great Lakes Wine & Spirits. “There are different price points, so you know, the level of quality can vary, based on what your marketing niche is going to be. And we factor all that in when we taste them.”

As in any business, price is always a huge consideration. Overhead. Labor. Cost of goods. These are all things that you and your investors will be keeping a close eye on as you begin production.

This is where your market research should help guide you. If you know what products you’re going head-to-head with, you’ll know what price point you have to hit to be competitive (assuming the taste is there). When you first start producing product, you may not be as efficient as you’ll eventually need to be. It will be up to your entire production team to find the right way to produce, package and distribute your product at a price point that makes sense.

Luis Gonzalez



CEO,
Old Elk Distillery

Vanity vs. Sanity

“But I think that once you get past that point, it’s really about the product, and a lot of people say, ‘Well, I want to have a $70 product.’ And are you positioned well for that $70 product? And back to that, vanity and sanity? Sell-in of a $70 product is vanity and sell-through of a $70 product is sanity. And so, it’s really trying to understand what is their strategy, where are their gaps, from either a product positioning, a product category, or a product price point.”



Scalability

When we talk about quality and price, we also have to talk about scalability. If you're a craft distillery or a small-production winery and you want to stay that way, you probably won't need a distributor because your goal is likely to stay small and local. On the other hand, if your goal is nationwide distribution and near-universal brand recognition, you'll need to think ahead three, five, or even ten years and consider how you'll increase production as your product catches on.

For example, if you're packaging your "juice" in hand-blown artisanal bottles, it's one thing to order those by the dozen, and another thing entirely to need 100,000 or more per month.

According to Michael Bender of Ole Smokey Distillery, scalability is "the ability to grow, to expand across the United States, to engage with more consumers, but doing it in a very planned way in a partnership with our wholesale network, and doing it in a way that doesn't jeopardize product quality or customer service." As you begin producing product, you'll need to keep the big picture in mind because potential wholesalers will want to know what your plans are to ramp up operations.

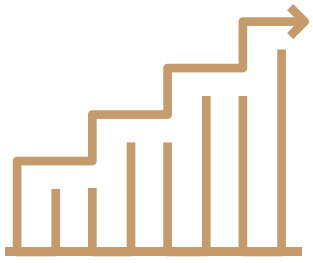
Jeff Kozak

CEO,
Whistlepig Whiskey



Scalable by design

"Think about scalability or even automation. If you design a label or a product and then you realize you can't scale it to whatever your eventual case goals are, then you should just stop and pause. So again, if you're trying to be a small micro-brand, then you can go as crazy as you want. If you eventually want to be commercially viable, then you've got to think twice about how does that packaging fit together and can it be automated?"



Bottles and Labels

Like it or not, people do judge a book by its cover. Your packaging — bottle and label and so on — is the first impression potential buyers (and distributors) will have of your product. Your label(s) serve three primary purposes:

1. **Branding:** Identify the product brand and class/category, and help set it apart from competing products.
2. **Information:** Indicate the alcohol content, the product's origin (domestic and imported), the net contents by volume, whether or not the product is organic, and also any allergen warnings.
3. **Compliance:** Satisfy the requirements of the Federal Alcohol Administration (FAA) Act, as regulated by the TTB.

WSWA Access has an entire webinar focused on labeling: "Labeled for Success — What Goes Into a Label." It's a great resource for anyone developing a beverage alcohol product and brand.

Before you begin designing your label, it's a good idea to study the label guidance put out by the TTB for wine and distilled spirits. Make a checklist of the mandatory elements and be very clear to your designer(s) about the size and presentation of those requirements.

Then go back to your brand story. **Ask yourself again: what's unique about my brand and my product?**

It's worth reiterating the three brand elements suggested by Access Wholesaler Advisor Ray Lombard:

- What's the value proposition that you have to your consumer?
- When your customer drinks this brand, they feel like "X."
- What does drinking your brand say about your consumer?

Your label — and the bottle it goes on — should answer these questions at a glance.

It should go without saying that you should avoid trademark infringement. If your label looks too much like a comparable product, you're inviting both confusion and lawsuits. Besides, why would you want to emulate someone else's brand when you have a unique one of your own?

Resist the urge to cram too much on your labels. As Jeff Kozak of Whistlepig says, "You can't put everything on the label that you want to tell a consumer, your history or all the other facts that

they should discover, but if you don't convey your three strongest pieces, whether it's functional or whether it's that element of soul ... you'll never get there." It's up to you to determine what those three strongest pieces are.

Smart label designers provide at least one pathway that lets consumers navigate from bottle to brand. Whether you include a QR code, a website or a Twitter handle (or all three), it pays to make it easy for shoppers to get more information about your product and your company.

Unlike liquor distribution laws, which vary dramatically from state to state, labels for alcoholic beverages are uniformly controlled at the federal level by the TTB. Before you sell product in any market, you'll need to apply for a Certificate of Label Approval/Exemption (COLA). The TTB has an online portal that enables you to create and submit an application for a label for free. You can track the status of your application through the approval process.

If your COLA application isn't approved the first time, you can revise your label and resubmit. Some of the most common reasons for rejection of a label include the size of the government warning (the TTB is very particular about font sizes) and not complying with the TTB's standards of fill.



Jeff Kozak



CEO,
Whistlepig Whiskey

Label tips and hints

"We have a couple [of rules]. The consumer has to be able to see the label name and be able to pronounce it. We'll take a label and put it in a dark room, preferably one that looks like a bar, and make somebody say the name and call it like they're sitting in a bar. If they can't see it and they can't say it or they don't feel comfortable, then don't do it. It's got to be something that not only will make them buy it the first time, but buy it the second time. Second, the label should give you an idea of where the price should be on that product. If you're guessing is it $20 or is it $100, then you should probably try and narrow it in."



Liquid to Lips

Going Local

As you begin bottling your product, you need to begin getting it into the hands of customers. Since you don't have a deal with a wholesaler yet, what that means is going out into your local market and selling local accounts. It also might mean opening an onsite tasting room or holding tasting events at local bars and restaurants.

First of all, whatever you do, make absolutely certain that you comply with state and local regulations governing craft wine and spirits. Running afoul of the authorities is a great way to end your career as a producer before it's even begun.

Second, you'll need to get creative with your efforts to get out the word — and the product — to potential consumers. In the on-premise, you can sponsor happy hours, with drink specials that feature your product and special menus that tell your brand story. You can negotiate to get your wine on the wine menu in a restaurant that's a good fit for your brand image. Be ready and willing to train the wait staff and bartenders and give them opportunities to taste the product.

In the off-premise, you might focus on smaller, independent retailers who are more likely to be able to make direct purchasing decisions. Make an appointment and be considerate of their time. If you can provide point-of-sale materials at this point, even better.

"If you can't win in your backyard, if you can't win amongst your friends and your neighbors, it's going to be challenging."

Rick Lopus

VP Sales Development,
Great Lakes Wine & Spirits



"In addition to doing your market research at launch or prior to launch, you hear a lot of people saying, 'Look, you need to be really strong in your backyard before you look elsewhere."

John Bilello

CEO,
Sweet Amber Distilling

While these are all great ways to promote your brand, some activities in the on- and off-premise may not be allowed in certain areas. Whatever you do, make absolutely sure that you're in compliance with state and local regulations governing distribution and marketing of craft wine and spirits. WSWA's State Law Database is a great resource to figure out the dos and don'ts of your market.

Once you have a foothold, you can promote your on-premise and off-premise accounts across social media, driving traffic to your partners and creating additional buzz.

And by the way … each time you talk to a bar proprietor, a restauranteur, a night club owner, or a retailer, you're practicing for the pitch you'll eventually give to the wholesaler that will take your product to the next level.

Kate Latts



Chief Marketing Officer,
Heaven Hill Brands

The importance of on-premise

"Consumers do not want to just hibernate in their house all the time. They invite every single thing they can from their phone. But to get them to go into a store or into a bar or an event or whatever, it has to be an experience. It has to be fun, right? So … part of that evolution is us working with our distributor partners and working with retailers to figure out how we, as suppliers, can bring that fun experience vis-a-vis point of sale into the retail space — into the on-premise account … whether it be education or just really aisle-violating amazing display type things. … A person is a kind of point of sale, doing tastings. So, all of those things, I think, are as critically important than ever before, maybe even more so because the importance of giving someone that experience to close the sale, because the vast majority of sales are still happening in the retail store, not online. We cannot think we can walk away from it."

Going Digital

One of the first things you'll need to do as you launch your brand is create your website. If you've already secured an appropriate domain name (YourBeverageBrand.com) and hosting services, you're ready to build a site. Most companies will hire this out, though it's certainly possible to do it yourself.

Spend some time scrutinizing the websites of your favorite brands — large and small, startup and established, alcohol or not — paying careful attention to how the brand story forms the core of the messaging. Again, remember your target consumer and remember to appeal to your audience. Whatever your story might be, present it in language and imagery that will ring true with your target consumer. Imagine you are talking to your ideal customer and then tailor the words and sentences directly to them.

At the very least, you'll want a home page that introduces your brand, an "About Us" page that tells your story in greater detail, a page for each item in your product family and a "Contact Us" page that lets others get in touch. In accordance with industry standards, you'll need to have an age affirmation mechanism to grant of-age visitors access to the site while blocking underage visitors.

As you establish local accounts, you'll want to create a distribution map or list that shows visitors where they can purchase your product. This is especially important for emerging brands. For example, if someone tries out your wine or spirit at a restaurant, bar, or nightclub and then wants to pick up a full bottle to enjoy at home, you'll want to facilitate that. Plus, it helps both your on-premise and off-premise accounts when you drive traffic to their sites.

Another useful page is one that allows consumers to opt in to messages from you. Depending on your brand and target customer, you may want to use email, text messages, or both to keep people informed about events, partnerships, product launches, and other company news.

Don't forget to link your website to your social media platforms, and vice-versa.



> ***"When I first met Kat [of craft tequila startup 21 Seeds] and saw her product, I went on the website, I knew who they were in one minute, and the juice happened to be great — that was a bonus!"***
>
> **Sara Harmelin**
>
> VP of Digital Innovation,
> Allied Beverage Group

For more information about best practices for building your website and promoting your brand, here are some good resources:

- **DISCUS:** Responsible Practices for Beverage Alcohol Advertising
- **Wine Institute:** Code of Advertising Standards

Media assets

One of the tools distributors often wish for is an online collection of product information and media assets for the products they're considering. They like to see this both before and after the pitch. An easy way to do this is to create a media library on your website that provides all the text descriptions, label information, and high-resolution product images that a distributor or retailer would need to add your product to their database. Retailers, e-commerce platforms, and even on-premise establishments may also ask for this information.

Pay attention to the needs of the various platforms. Some might need short blurbs as well as longer product descriptions. Having copy-and-paste text assets and easy-to-download product photos in various sizes will make it much easier for distributors to say "yes" when you pitch to them.

As Phillip Rawleigh, Brand Representative for 291 Colorado Whiskey, says in "Getting Craft Brands to Market," "You have to stay in front of A, your customer, but B, you also have to support your liquor stores in your on-premise … What can we do to make this easy for you and your customer to stay in front of your face?" And one of the best ways to do this is to provide the media assets they need to promote your brand.

Lily Pantaleon



E-retail Manager,
Moët Hennessy

Assets enabling e-commerce

"I think it's the mix of getting the basics right in terms of product information on the digital shelf, no matter is if it's coming from a third-party provider, such as, Drizly or MiniBar, or if it's coming from a national account, or if it's coming from a very local mom and pop shop that they're starting to build their own e-commerce expertise themselves. I think brands need to be very, very aware that having the right product information on those product pages is even more important than having it on the shelf at the actual, physical store. So, e-commerce allows us to include those product accolades, any specific tasting notes or even content images and videos."

ITALIAN WINE & SPIRITS



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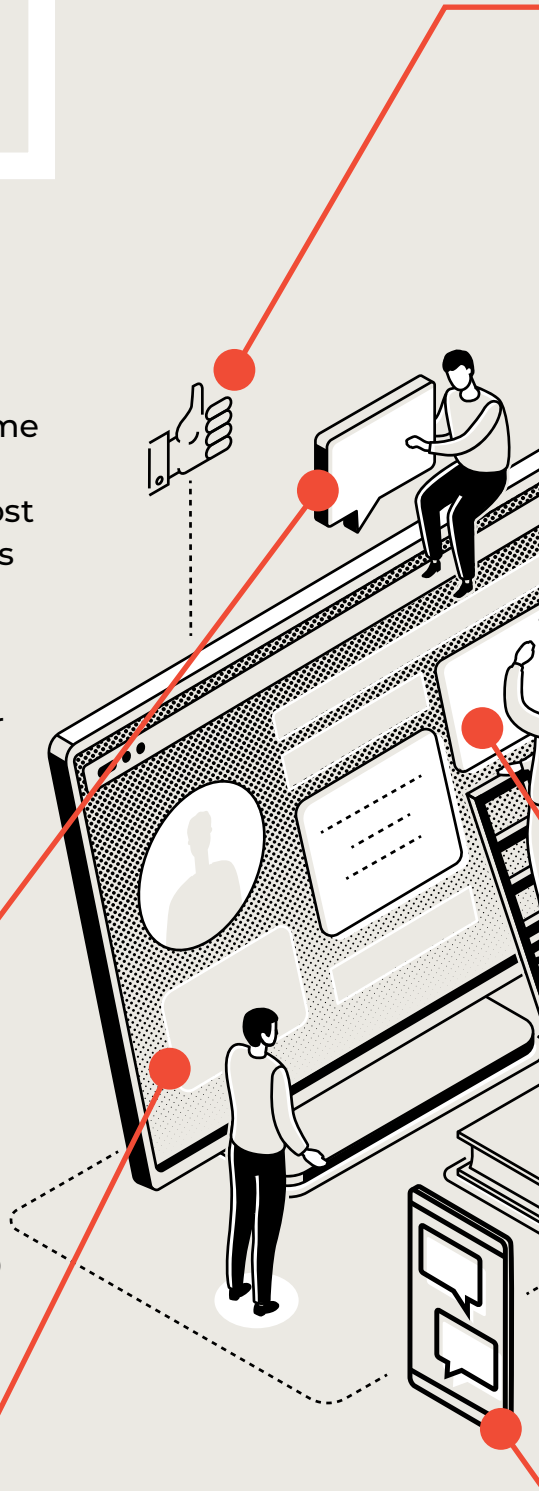
Online Advertising

There has never been a better time to bring a product to market than today. In the past, traditional media such as newspapers and magazines, television, radio, and out-of-home (billboards) were often so expensive, they served as a barrier to entry for up-and-coming brands. They also provided almost no mechanism for tracking their effectiveness, so companies never really knew what was driving sales.

With the advent of online advertising, though, you have virtually unlimited opportunities to reach customers on their phones, their computers, and their mobile devices. And you can literally follow them wherever they go.



Search Marketing

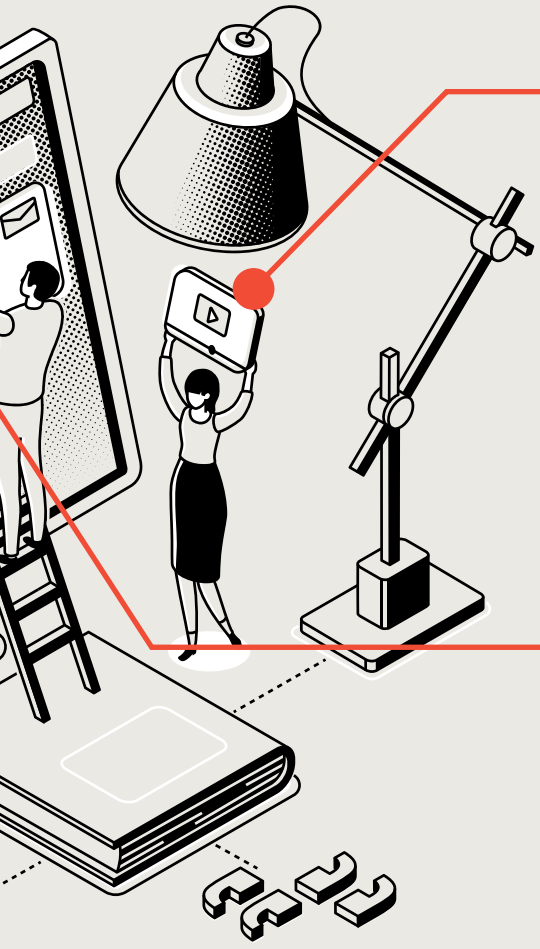
Also known as pay-per-click (or PPC), search marketing allows you to target specific terms on search engines. When someone searches for a particular word or phrase, an ad appears. The best part: you only pay if the person actually clicks on the ad. Costs are based on the popularity of the search phrases you're bidding on, and you can spend anywhere from a few dollars to millions per day, based on your budget.

Display Advertising

Sometimes known as banner ads, online display advertising is usually sold on a per-impression basis. Each time a banner is displayed, that counts as an impression. Online display is best used as an awareness generator. Another popular application is in retargeting. With retargeting, a user who has visited your website or clicked on its content can be tracked and retargeted with banner ads on other sites, reinforcing your brand message to someone who has already engaged.

Social Media Marketing

A large portion of your customers spend hours each day on various social media platforms. Besides engaging users through your organic posts and content, you can also pay the platform to push messages — both to those who have “liked” you and to those who haven't. Since these platforms have lots of personal information about their users (including the most important one: their age), social media marketing can be very effective. Different platforms have different offerings. Be sure to set up your social media with business accounts, as promotion opportunities may differ from those available to personal and community pages.



Content Marketing

Maybe it’s an article on a popular website, or a segment on a podcast or online video, or it might be a post on your own website. Any time you create written, audio or video content that informs or entertains your audience while also promoting your brand and its products, you’re doing content marketing. Hand in hand with content is search engine optimization (SEO), which is the art and science of making your content “bubble up” in the results of a targeted web search.

Email Marketing

Though it’s now considered a little “old school,” email marketing is still effective for certain audiences. Whether it’s sending out product messages to your own list, or piggybacking on the emails of a partner, email puts you right in your customer’s in-box. Decision-based campaigns, which send cadenced messages with follow-ups based on recipients’ actions (like reading/not reading, clicking/not clicking) allow you to get very granular in your email marketing activities.

Mobile Marketing

Permission-based text messaging can also be impactful as a marketing tool, which is why you’ll want to capture mobile numbers as part of your customer data information. Mobile is especially effective with younger consumers, though you have to be careful about not sending out too many texts.

Lily Pantaleon is E-retail Manager for Moët Hennessy, a perennial powerhouse in the wine and spirits industry. In the webinar, “So You Want to Go Viral,” she highlights the importance of different types of digital advertising, and what can be learned from each one.

Lily Pantaleon



E-retail Manager,
Moët Hennessy

Digital marketing, by a digital marketing industry expert

“There’s a lot of different digital channels, right? How do we get different metrics and assign different KPIs [key performance indicators] to different types of campaign? So, let’s say when we’re trying to get more awareness, for us it’s really important to measure impressions of a campaign — how many people are actually seeing a specific ad. And how many people are actually clicking and engaging, that will give us a really good measure, an idea if this campaign has worked or not based on the specific benchmark from the past and then in terms of conversions, right? … Also, we try to listen to our customers all the time, so we’re constantly talking to our on-premise operators, off-premise operators, and learning from them….”

You can’t manage what you don’t measure, but luckily, both digital marketing and social media give you huge amounts of data regarding impressions, engagement, conversions, costs, and much more. Smart businesses don’t just consider the results of a particular effort; they slice and dice and analyze the metrics behind the results to see what can be done next time to achieve an even better outcome.

“I think one of the things that has worked very well is making sure that we understand what the consumer wants. We’re constantly utilizing our business intelligence team and learning more from other companies and other industry professionals on what has worked best in the past and how those trends are shifting throughout the way. One of the things we saw last year when COVID started was like the acceleration of e-commerce growth in our industry, and how can we tackle that quickly. Social media helped us a lot in that aspect, making sure that the way we were building the campaigns were quick and straight to the consumer, always segmenting and targeting the right consumer for the right brand at the right place, right, so I think that’s one of the most important things in terms of digital that it allows us to shift really quickly. … There’s a lot of nuances that digital has … and, of course, the metrics that we get from those digital activations are key.”



The specific campaigns you run will depend on your brand and the customers you're targeting. Whether you engage an agency or do it in-house, online advertising is basically non-negotiable today. It's not whether you do it, but which strategies and platforms will do best for your audience. Sometimes, the best ideas involve combining more than one method — such as email marketing with social media — to entice consumers to click through, opt in, or go out and buy your product.

As Katie Latts of Heaven Hill Brands points out, another feature of digital marketing that was never really possible with traditional marketing is A/B testing, which involves pushing two different versions of an ad and tracking which one produces better results. "So that's a really inexpensive thing to do," she says, "...A/ B testing of different ads, It doesn't cost a lot of money to qualify which messaging is going to work better for you."

Though we seem to have reached the tipping point where digital advertising has more proven effectiveness than more traditional channels (print, television, etc.), your customers themselves will determine what other types of marketing you'll need to include in the mix to get the word out effectively. If you have an older, more traditional bricks-and-mortar customer, consider working with a traditional advertising agency to make sure you can reach consumers who aren't constantly online.

Going Social

Rick Lopus

VP Sales Development,
Great Lakes Wine & Spirits



Social is a deal-maker

"One thing — I think it was Ray that said, they also look at a new winery's or new spirits brand's social media presence as part of their consideration, which I think is brilliant...."

Now, more than ever, digital storytelling is critical to success. And there's no better channel for you to tell your story these days than on social media. At least in its most basic form, social media is free. But it takes time and creativity to find relevant things to share and post, and it takes consistent effort to develop a following and keep your followers engaged.

Platforms abound, from Facebook to Instagram, Twitter to Pinterest. Don't forget YouTube; that's social, too. Also, new platforms are popping up all the time, with TikTok taking the world by storm over the past year or so (and somehow, bringing back the sea shanty as a form of popular music). You may think you can't do it all, and that may be true — at least, to start with. But these days, you can't not do it.

"I've gotten pitches and they don't even have Instagram set up," says Sara Harmelin, Vice President of Digital Innovation at Allied Beverage Group. "That is easier to set up than the rest of them, so get it done first. It's part of [basic] marketing at this point."

The content you create and share all comes down to your brand — that should be the controlling theme. Everything you say, every image you post, every link you share, and every partner you promote must be in line with your brand and its story.

John Bilello,

CEO,
Sweet Amber Distilling



Social is all about engagement

"Social media starts with being social ... it's [about] engaging content. It shouldn't be only bottles and drink recipes and pretty pictures. It needs to be something that engages your target consumer and gets them to hit 'like.' A lot of smaller brands have significantly higher engagement rates on social because they do content instead of just doing advertisement. ... People respond to that. Having a dialogue back and forth with your consumer is what you're aiming for, rather than just shoving pretty pictures at them."

Act now to begin front-loading your social media accounts with images, videos, commentary, and even shared content so when the wholesalers you pitch your product to scroll through your feeds, they see active engagement and social connections. Make sure you set up your profiles as business accounts so you can take advantage of paid promotion opportunities to build your audience. If you do onsite tastings or retail sales (in places that permit that), be sure to set up a presence on Google Maps, Yelp, and other location-based platforms. It's never too late to start social media, but it's never too early, either.

As Heavin Hill's Kate Latts notes, social should always have a call to action, whether it's to sign up for an event or to request a coupon or to buy your product. She suggests "adding 'buy now' buttons to your social posts and trying to encourage people to send them to Drizly or other retailers in their local place." If someone sees your post and wants to try your product, don't make it difficult for them.

Also, don't think that once you've figured it out, it's figured out for good. As we saw with TikTok last year, new platforms and opportunities are constantly emerging, with nothing but white space to fill up. As Heaven Hill's Kate Latts says, "Every month there's a new tool to be exploring and assessing and trial and error, so there's so many options just depending on ... what your objectives are."

Lily Pantaleon



E-retail Manager,
Moët Hennessy

Consider all avenues for social

"We've seen the on-premise being very big on social media for awareness, either coming from restaurants, bars, casual dining and nightlife — but also from chefs. You know, all these celebrity chefs are also having a very special relationship with our brands as well, so I think social media plays a very important role in the on-premise."

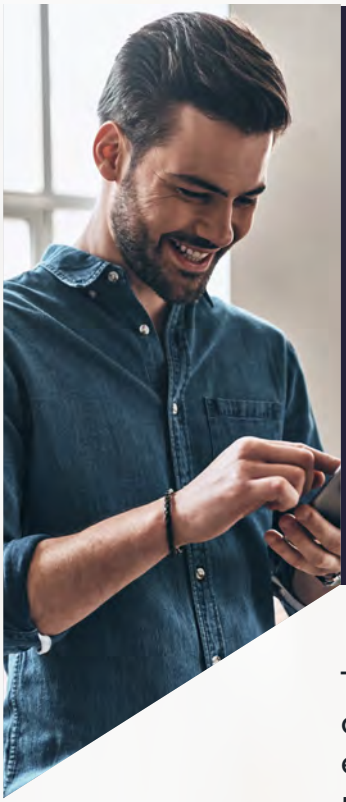
Ray Lombard



EVP Supplier Management &
Business Development,
Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits

In social, the small can outplay the large

"It's amazing how many small brands might already have 15, 20,000 followers, which is more than probably a lot of brands I've been around for 10 years that are a viable brand. And other brands that don't have the presence at all."



Social Influencers

Though you might be the main brand ambassador for your company, you probably don't have much of a "reach" beyond your existing business contacts, friends and family. One method of promotion that is gaining traction in the wine and spirits space is social influencers.

Basically, a social influencer is someone who has found an audience and cultivated it. They may be famous for their knowledge and expertise, or for their looks, or just for being famous. Whatever they've done to build their fan base, they will often promote brands that align with their interests, their audience, and their goals.

As Lily Pantaleon of Moët Hennessy notes, "In the past, influencers were just one-off content creators who would do it as a hobby. But now it's the whole strategy of social media marketing. Now, when we have agencies that are actually managing these influencers, activations and plans and evaluating which different brands is this influencer resonating with — your type of consumer.... This is a whole other industry in terms of social media and how do we utilize the best message to communicate with the consumer."

Pantaleon notes the importance of finding the right influencer. Obviously, you'll want someone who fits your brand's story and image, one who you can trust to maintain your standards for content and age-appeal, and one who won't damage your reputation with outrageous antics. When you're just starting out, you may find a local influencer who is willing to work with you on a reasonable basis. Once you've proven the concept, you can expand to other markets, other states, or even nationwide.

In rare cases, an influencer will actually promote your product without you even asking. That was the situation Kate Latts of Heaven Hill Brands found herself in when Deep Eddy vodka became known as the "TikTok vodka." One of the ways she leveraged this unexpected viral sensation was to send Deep Eddy-branded pinatas to TikTok stars. "[It was] something so simple," she says, a "surprise and delight kind of thing — that doesn't have to cost a lot of money." The inexpensive strategy paid off when the TikTok influencers helped get her brand in front of thousands more prospective customers.

Kate Latts



Chief Marketing Officer,
Heaven Hill Brands

The TikTok … vodka?

Last year, Kate Latts, Chief Marketing Officer of Heaven Hill Brands, noticed a trend of young influencers referencing their product Deep Eddy as "the TikTok vodka." Because of peculiarities of TikTok as a platform, the company had to get creative in order to capitalize on Deep Eddy's viral ascent.

"So, last year we really saw this phenomenon happening. … When we saw … what was going on in the TikTok space and knowing … responsibility, in terms of everything we do in Heaven Hill across the industry, is so important and that's from authenticity and brands — what we're putting in the bottle all the way through to how and where we are marketing and communicating about our products. And, you know, we're all held to a really high standard and we're in this industry together and want to make sure that we, as an industry, are working in partnership to make sure we are doing that in the right way."

"And one of the current topics has been in this — not even emerging, it's emerged — platform called TikTok. And, unlike Facebook and Instagram and other places in the digital social space, where we have all come to participate, TikTok cannot, from a media-buying perspective, verify what its audience is. So, one of the DISCUS standards is that you cannot advertise in a place that is not certain to be more than 75% older than 21. TikTok cannot guarantee that. So, across the industry, we are hopefully all holding ourselves to that standard and not engaging in that, because that would not be responsible."

"Nonetheless, we can't control what consumers are doing. So, last year, we saw consumers making this perpetual thing that Deep Eddy was now being called the TikTok vodka. So how can we, as a brand, capitalize on that in a responsible way?"

"What we did was, we were able to actually cross-match who some of these influencers were and find them on Instagram, age-verify them to make sure they were indeed of legal drinking age, and then interact with them in that way. So, recreate that experience in a different platform. So, it takes a little creativity, but at the end of the day, it's so important for all of us in this industry and the long term, health and vibrance of where we all want to take this, our brands and our companies."

Keep Communicating

John Bilello

CEO,
Sweet Amber Distilling



Keep engaging with the consumer

"In my view, I always say this to my marketing team, you know social. Media starts with being social, right? So, I think for me, it's engaging content. ... It should not be all bottles and drink recipes and pretty pictures. It needs to be something that engages your consumer — that's what gets them to hit 'like.'"

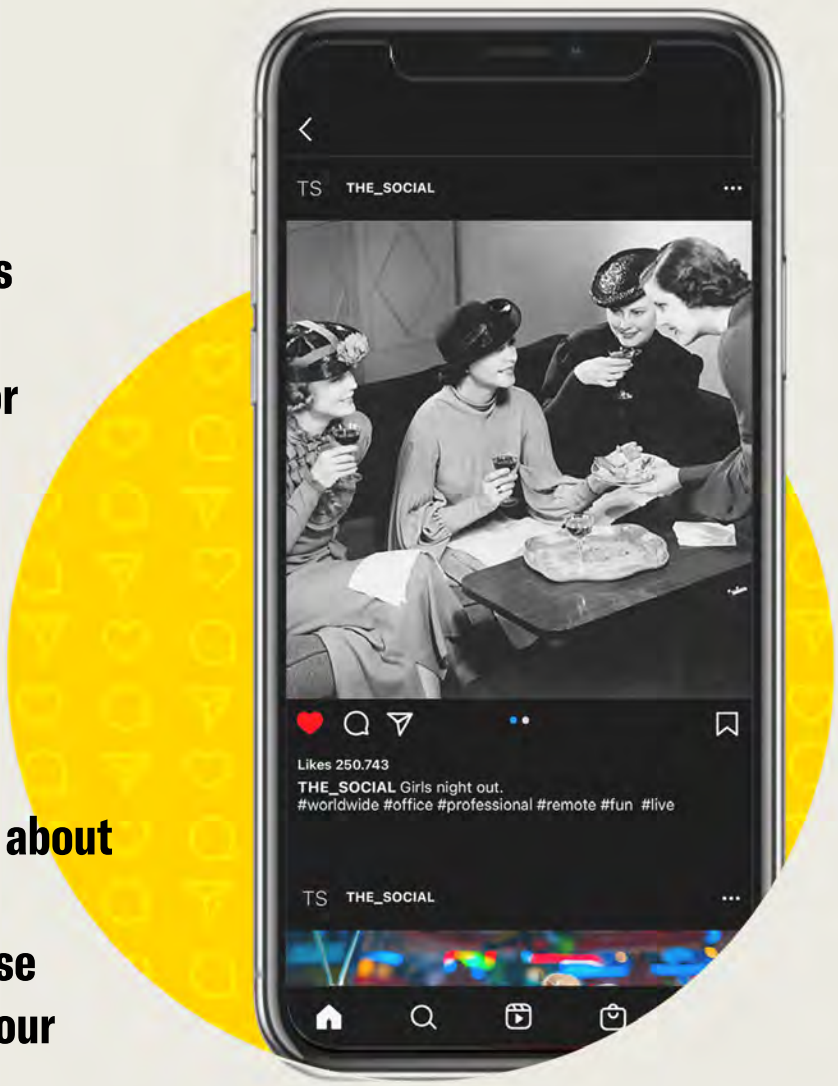


Building a brand requires careful planning and constantly communicating. As you develop content, keeping true to your brand, you'll need to always be coming up with new ways to introduce your company and its product(s) to the world. Whether it's through virtual winery/ distillery tours, cocktail recipes, product photos, food pairings, and so on, you'll want to be constantly brainstorming new things to say and new ways to entice consumers into your community and culture.

As you get product out, supporting your accounts and the businesses and influencers that support you with fresh content is a critical part of your responsibility as a brand. It doesn't have to take a lot of money, but it will take time and effort — and above all, consistency.

Remember: You're trying to engage. Beside getting your message out, you're trying to get people to do something:

- Hit 'like'
- Leave a comment
- Share content with others
- Sign up for a newsletter or promotion
- Attend an event
- Support a partner
- Support a cause you care about
- Go somewhere (on-premise or off-premise) and buy your product



If you're not sure how to start or what to do, look to comparable brands for inspiration. This should include your competitors, both in your market and in other markets, and it should also include brands with a similar personality or target audience.

Kat Hantas



CEO,
21 Seeds Tequila

Help others promote your brand

“There’s a part of it that does want to stay local and that’s a really trusted person, and so now arm that person to spread your message, right? That person’s slammed, so give that guy or girl who owns that independent — who’s more likely to use this information, good content to blast out — ‘Here’s an easy cocktail recipe.’ And you write the email ... that’s going to go out to that guy’s entire email group and send it to him and say, ‘Hey, I know you’re busy on a Friday, will you send this out?’ We do that all the time, and it works. And the local people who buy from that purveyor are going to read that email and actually be a much better micro-influencer.”



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Pitch, Please

You have a brand, with the associated infrastructure. You've built a business plan and you're following it. You've got your label approved and are producing and selling your product ... on at least a limited scale. You're actively engaging with customers on social media, building likes and followers and are also collecting contacts for later push communications. You're ready to scale up quantities and expand into new territories.

You're ready to pitch your brand to wholesalers.

The Wind-up

Luis Gonzalez



CEO,
Old Elk Distillery

Culture is everything

"Culture is really at the forefront of everything. You can have the best price, you can have the best product, the best distributor, and if you have the wrong people, nothing works. So, culture is at the front of everything. From there, it's really about brand position — and not necessarily just a specific product in a specific category, but what's the philosophy behind the business? Are you going to be a house of brands, where you're going to be very strategic and intentional on what you do? Or are you going to be a branded house, where you try to develop a product across one brand name and everything's for everyone? And unfortunately, in our world, ... there's vanity and sanity that we have to really rely on. And vanity is trying to be everything to everyone at all points. And sanity is being very targeted and strategic about what products you're putting into the market, at what price point and at what time. From there, it really, really ties into intentionality. How intentional have you been about your planning and your positioning? The reality of it is that when you approach this industry with the intention to be a player in this industry, you have to be ready to be supplemental to your distributor and your customers, and not distracting."

It's critical to go into a pitch prepared. Everything you've read so far, and everything you've done in response to what you've read, was preparing you for the pitch. It's a multi-step process: the presentation and the tasting — though the tasting may happen outside of the pitch itself. Be prepared for a third step, when the wholesaler representatives ask you about your brand, your product, and your plans.



Brand Battle.

If you've never sat through a pitch before, you're in luck. WSWA's Brand Battle tournament is the Olympics of product pitches in the beverage alcohol industry. They're all available to watch on YouTube, and they serve as case studies in world-class pitching. Watch them all, paying particular attention to your own product category. Once you've viewed the pitches from the tournament and listened to the questions asked by the wholesaler judges, you'll be much better prepared to craft a pitch of your own.

Pick the right person to pitch.

The person giving the pitch should be the person who's most passionate about your brand. Often, that's your founder, the person who started the ball rolling. Sometimes, though, a company's founder isn't comfortable giving presentations. If that's your situation, you'll want to develop an evangelist who can represent the brand. This person should be firmly rooted in your company's culture and very knowledgeable about your products and capabilities.

As Sara Harmelin of Allied Beverage Group says, "... I think, in the end, the person who's pitching — if they're part of the brand, that is — the personality is much more important than any number."

If your presenter is excited about your product but inexperienced in the beverage alcohol industry, consider bringing your designated industry expert along to "fly co-pilot," so to speak. In the words of Patrick Jean-Baptiste of Crafthouse Cocktails, "...You definitely give yourself a head start by bringing someone in that is experienced and actually can speak the language."

Patrick Jean-Baptiste

President,
Crafthouse Cocktails



Who represents your brand?

"If you bring your personality to the table, and … the distributor understands that that personality is going to ring true, and they can understand how you're going to support the brand — you know, moving forward in terms of visibility. Definitely on social media and everything else along those lines, that they know that you're engaged, that you're living and breathing this brand and anything that the distributor needs at any time, you're going to be receptive to taking that advice and implementing it and activating it. That, to me, is a very clear path to success."



Make sure you're talking to the right person or people.

Most distributors have divisions that handle different types of product. Sometimes the structure is entirely based on product categories; in other cases, they may have a separate group that handles craft brands vs. large, established companies. When you make your appointment to pitch, make sure the people you'll be pitching to are the best ones to handle your product and brand.

Figure out the format.

Will this be an in-person pitch or an e-pitch? Pitches didn't stop happening during the COVID-19 pandemic — but they did change. Safety concerns, travel restrictions, and lockdowns pushed most pitching to remote conference systems like Zoom. Though in-person pitching has returned to a degree, some distributors are continuing to conduct at least some product pitches via videoconferencing systems.

When you set up your pitch appointment, find out which format works best and plan accordingly.

If your pitch will be in person, ask about the room setup. Will you be in a conference room? In a private office? Will there be a projector or large monitor so you can show your PowerPoint slides? What kind of video connectors do you need? The more you know about the physical setup beforehand, the less time you'll waste searching for a video cable or adapter. Experienced pitchers always bring printouts in case of technology failure. Paper may seem old school, but it never needs a special cable to work. (Plus, it works well as a leave-behind.)

If your pitch will be virtual, make sure everyone on both sides has access to the software and bandwidth necessary to have a good teleconference experience. Some company networks have trouble with specific platforms, so make sure the people you're pitching to can access whatever system you will be using.

Regardless of whether you're pitching in person or virtually, find out in advance how much time you've been allocated and be sure to reserve some of that time for questions.





Plan the tasting.

Product samples are a critical part of every pitch. Branding is important, but the juice will make or break the pitch.

Different distributors have varied preferences regarding when they want the tasting to happen. Some want to taste the product before the pitch, while others like to do it face to face, as part of the pitch meeting. Another option is afterwards, when distributor representatives can sample the product at their leisure once they know more about your company, your plans, and your capabilities.

The first key to planning the tasting is to find out your contacts' preference on timing. Do they want to taste before, during or after? This preference will impact how you prepare:

A. In-person tastings, during or after the pitch:

With "live" tastings, you can deliver the liquid yourself, and you'll have some control over how it's presented. Be sure to bring enough for everyone in the pitch meeting, and make sure it's at the correct temperature for the best tasting experience. You can provide other necessities such as glasses, ice, salt, and lemons.

B. Remote tastings (including those before an in-person pitch):

You'll have to ship the product to be tasted. Make sure the product arrives in advance of your meeting and that it gets to the correct person or people. Some companies get elaborately creative about the packaging; remember to stay on brand. Also, be aware that you'll have little control over the conditions of the tasting: temperature of the product, type of glass, etc. You can provide recommendations, but don't expect that they'll be followed.

Be sure to provide enough product for everyone who needs to taste it, but don't go overboard. (Bring or send a bottle per person — not a case.)

Many distributors prefer to have a one-page spec sheet on the product in front of them as they're doing their tasting. As John Bilello says, "One of the things I also recommend is in advance of your pitch meeting, whether it's via Zoom or in person, send your product samples, send a one-page spec sheet … so that those that you're going to be meeting with already know some of the specifics. It's a six-bottle case versus a 12, it's a 90-proof whiskey, it's a blend, etc."

If you're pitching in person, bring the relevant product info with you. If not, ship the literature along with product.

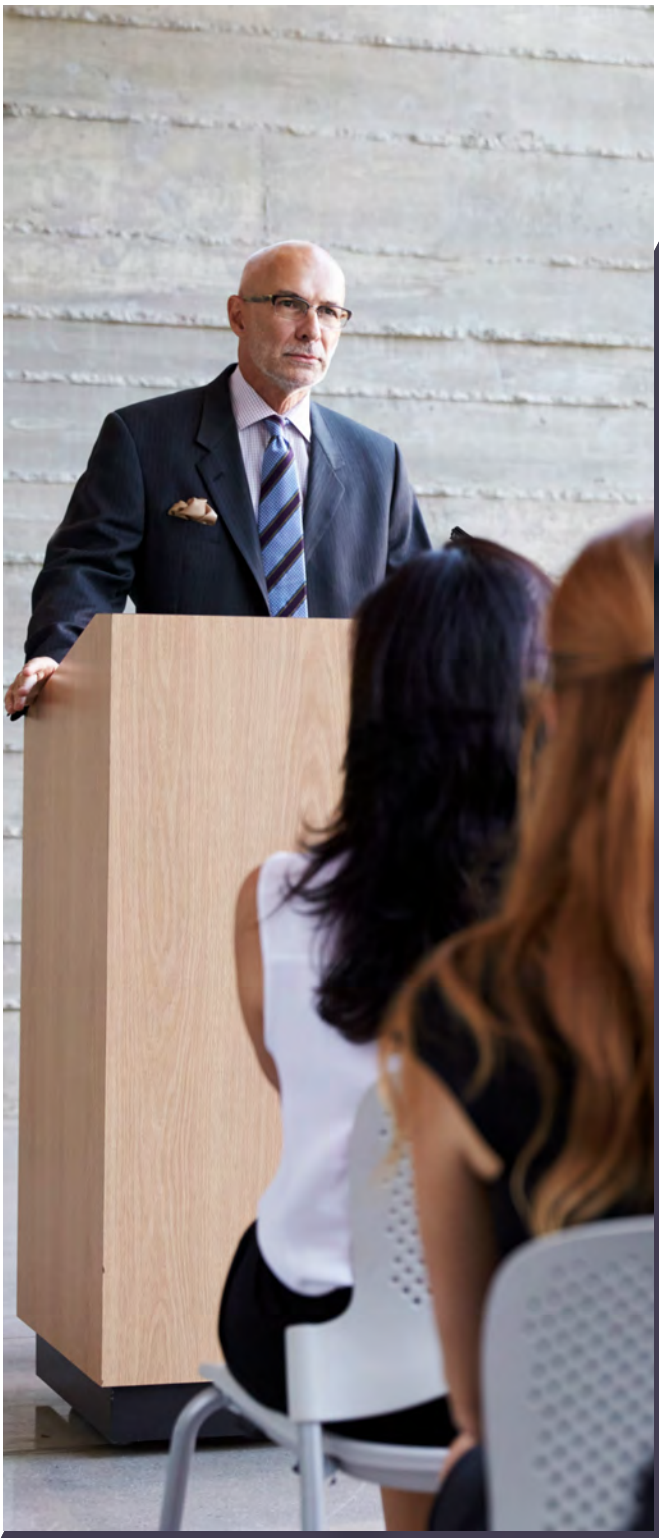
It's possible that the distributor executive you're working with won't have time to review your materials and taste the product in advance. But if you get to your pitch and find your audience already primed with information, complimenting you on a product they've already sampled, that's a really good sign they're interested in what you have to offer. You can often skip the introductory materials and get right to the meat of the conversation — resulting in a much more efficient use of everybody's time.

Don't arrive uninvited.

This should go without saying, but members of the Access Advisory Council say it happens more often than you'd think — somebody shows up with bottles in hand, expecting the distributor to drop everything they're doing and make time for a pitch. It's a great way to give your brand a black eye. Don't do it.



The Delivery



All the rules that go with a standard business meeting apply to a product pitch. Arrive or log in on time or a few minutes early. Dress professionally (or alternatively, dress appropriate to your brand). Be prepared. Make introductions. Offer an agenda and follow it.

Whether in person or remote, most pitches lead with the brand. As John Bilello says, “For me, and with regard to a pitch, it starts with passion.” Begin with a slide or two (or a minute or two) and tell the story of your brand. Highlight what sets you apart from other brands and makes your product unique.

Next, provide a quick summary of your business plan. You don’t want to hit every fine point; just give the highlights. The two areas the Access Team wants to know most about are markets and pricing.

Rick Lopus

VP of Sales Development,
Great Lakes Wine & Spirits



Goals for growth

"Specific things we look for … you know, we don't want to see their Dun & Bradstreet, so to speak, but we want to know what their short-term, long-term goals are. We want to … see what kind of structure they have. We've actually had a few brands we've been excited about that we got on early because some of the best brands, you want to get on early before they get … cornered by other people. But sometimes we actually can outperform them…there are wineries out there that we can probably sell their entire inventory. So those kinds of things we want to make sure we know in advance what their growth goals are, what their capacity is — you know, expectations. We always talk about expectations as well. Some people are just happy to say, 'My wine's available in Michigan.' But some people want to be in every account that has electricity, so we like to have those things determined in advance."

John Bilello

CEO,
Sweet Amber Distilling



The inverted pyramid

"Now you've got that distributor's attention, and it's time to move on to what I call the inverted funnel, or I should say the inverted pyramid … where you're starting broad and you talk about the category, and particularly the market that you're presenting or pitching to, whether it's the state of New York or for that matter, it's a county in Maryland. At the end of the day, what you want to do is you want to start to get into the specifics and start broad category consumer that you're targeting, and then narrow down and get very specific about your brand and what you bring to the table. And again, it's category data, it's consumer and market dynamics and how you see your product fitting in."

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Talking markets

Your wholesaler knows your markets better than you do. Focus on how you fit into the market and what white space you fill rather than overarching market trends. They want to know that you did your research and are willing to put boots on the ground … if you haven't already.

Be sure to articulate your short- and long-term goals regarding the markets you want to get into. Demonstrate that you understand the regulatory environments there. You should also highlight how your production capacity will be scaled up as new markets are added. Be realistic on both sides — about the markets you think you can penetrate and your own ability to stock those markets with product.

This is a time for rational numbers, not pie-in-the-sky platitudes.



Drew Levinson



VP Business Development, Breakthru Beverage

Being realistic

"I've been in [pitches] where I asked, 'What is your expectation?' and they said, 'Global dominance.' And you know, we say, okay great. … If that's your expectation, we're going to not be aligned on where we're going with this. So … that alignment and reason for being in a very, very clear, concise focus on where the effort's going to be."

John Bilello



CEO, Sweet Amber Distilling

Make the ask

"Specifically, don't forget to make the ask and that ask should be specific. What is it that you're looking to do from a distribution goals point of view? Are you focusing on-premise? Are you looking more off-premise? Are you looking at all territories in the state? Just the metro area? These are things that are important for them to know with regard to their decision process, but it's also for them to learn about you. So, all in all, I think it's one that makes sense and it's been honed over time, and it seems to have been successful for us."

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Talking pricing

There are differences of opinion among various wholesalers regarding how the pricing discussion should go.

For example, Sara Harmelin of Allied Beverage Group says, “We want their pricing and we’ll have an idea of where the competitive set falls.” In contrast, Ken Rosenberg of Republic National Distributing Company says, “The pricing aspect of it is really not something that you should be getting involved in, but you can talk about price ranges. Pricing needs to come from the distributor.”

However you decide to play it (a range or a specific shelf price), be sure you can pinpoint where your product falls in the competitive set within your specific market(s). Remember to highlight how the quality of your product compares to the other options your prospective customers might choose from.





Atlas Cheek



Chief Sales Officer,
Treaty Oak Distilling Company

Being up-front about pricing

“When you’re having these pricing conversations, approaching a wholesaler about a new brand, it would be good to have that transparency between not only the wholesaler, but also the supplier to make sure that you are pricing your goods in the appropriate space that it’s going to give you the best leverage to enter the marketplace at your desired shelf price. It can really be damaging to a brand, because once it’s out there, it’s really hard to change price.”



The perfect tasting.

Perhaps the most important part of the pitch is the tasting. This is where you literally put your money where your mouth is. Of course, the tasting might not even happen during the pitch itself — but that doesn't make it any less crucial to the pitching process.

If the distributor rep requested to taste your product in advance of the meeting, they'll be coming to your pitch having already sampled your product. (Or not; plans change, and stuff happens.)

If the rep has requested that the tasting happen "live," as part of the pitch (in person or via videoconference), be sure you leave enough time so the tasting isn't hurried. Give everyone plenty of time to sample the product and review any accompanying literature, and be ready to answer whatever questions they might have. It goes without saying that the tone you strike during the tasting should mesh well with your brand.

If the rep wants to do the tasting after the meeting, out of earshot of you and your team, make sure they have enough product and provide your best recommendations about how to sample the juice. Aside from that, there's not much more you can do. Your product, and accompanying marketing materials, will have to speak for your brand.

Some other successful pitching tips from the experts:

- **Highlight your current sales efforts,** with special emphasis on "feet on the street." Having a sales force actively generating business shows your commitment to the brand and demonstrates that you're not expecting the distributor to do all the heavy lifting.
- **Know your specialized terminology.** Like every industry, the beverage alcohol industry has terms and acronyms that help identify outsiders vs. insiders. (Study the glossary in the appendix if you need to brush up on your vocabulary.)
- **Summarize your digital marketing.** You can demonstrate your commitment to customer engagement by showing that your website is up and running, your social media is building awareness and your other efforts are bearing fruit. The distributors may check it out before the pitch, or they may do so afterwards. Either way, having a steady stream of activity that predates the pitch is a huge advantage. Optimally, they should see a solid brand identity, quality product images, and lots of engagement.
- **Videos, slide decks and leave-behinds** are a great way to underscore your pitch. A flash drive works, and so does a link to a special location on the cloud.
- **Don't wear out your welcome.** It's better to leave them wanting more than to see them looking at their watches and checking their phones.



Luis Gonzalez

CEO,
Old Elk Distillery



Be the unicorn

"All those things together, product development, innovation, aggressive growth, managing the cost and passing margin, and the center of that is that unicorn for all suppliers, that is profitability and growth."



Follow-through

As with the pitch itself, standard etiquette protocols apply to what happens after you leave. Be sure to send a follow-up email to participants to thank them for their time. Ask if they have any further questions that you can answer. Find out what the next steps are and see if you can get a time frame for when they will happen. Being professional and courteous goes a long way in any business transaction.

Most importantly, if you made any promises during the pitch, make sure you follow through. Take careful notes on information that was requested by the wholesalers … and then deliver. Provide answers to open-ended questions. Being quick and forthright on deliverables sets the expectation for the whole relationship that is to come.

John Bilello



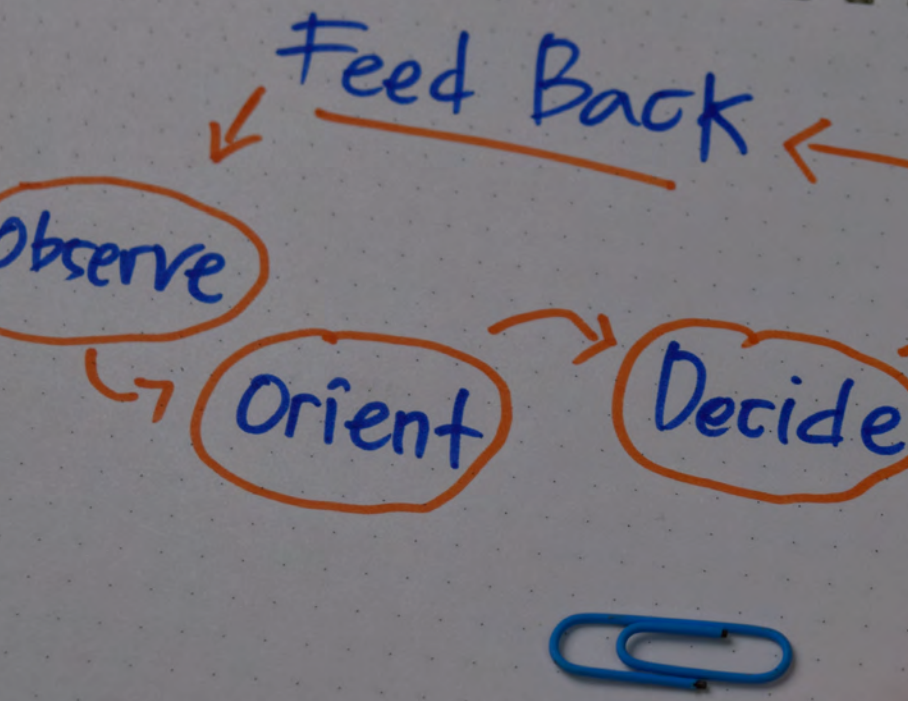
CEO,
Sweet Amber Distilling

Fulfill your promises

"The biggest piece of advice I could give you is that this is a very small business; as large as we are, we're small. And do what you say you're going to do. The kiss of death with a distributor network is to make a lot of promises and then fly back off home and never deliver. That's the absolute number-one thing. Do what you say you're going to do."



If you get a yes, congratulations! You're on the way to the next step in your brand's journey. If you get a no, don't be afraid to ask for feedback that you can use to improve your pitch for the next distributor. You may not get much of an answer, but asking, "Do you mind if I ask why?" may provide valuable insight into where the pitch didn't quite work.



Alexei Khimenko



Owner and Founder,
MyStory Wine Company

Feedback on the pass

"I think it's going to be a huge help if somebody's passing something [and] they actually let you know, 'Hey guys, we look at your brand and would pass [on] it. This is why.' Because I had multiple situations ... and we just started last year, but it was really hard to just ask wholesalers to take the samples. And so, when they took the samples they kind of got lost. And this was multiple times, I never heard from them again. And I think it's going to be really, really helpful for new brands.... Because we're all super proud of our brands. We think this is the best brand to ever happen in the face of the earth before. It's the best label, it's the best juice, it's the best whatever — best stories. But if somebody can give a feedback, say, 'Hey, we don't like ... the label is not good, or the juice is not good or the price is too high or something.' It's going to be a huge help for the specific new startup."

Appendix: Glossary of Industry Terms

accounts sold: the number of accounts that have taken in a SKU. Single account with multiple SKUs.

activation: promotion of your brands within accounts.

billbacks: portion of wholesaler spend that the supplier is responsible for based upon mutual agreements. Can include samples, sampling tools, spends on premise, POS materials, and so on.

BTG: by the glass; wine sold on-premises by the glass rather than by the bottle.

COLA: Certificate of Label Approval; this is the mandatory approval the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) provides to beverage alcohol labels that allows the label's holder to bottle and remove the product from the production location or customs custody.

control state: a state (or county) in which the wholesale purchase or retail sales (or both) of wine and spirits are controlled by the state government.

competitive set (internal vs. external): brands with similar pricing, within a category. An internal competitive set would be within the wholesaler's portfolio, while an external competitive set comprises all competing products in the general marketplace.

depletions: the rate of sales from a distributor to a retail account.

DA: depletion allowance; a pricing structure to provide quantity discounting to attract larger-scale purchases.

franchise state: state franchise laws give in-state distributors assurance that they cannot be abruptly terminated by their suppliers without "just cause," allowing smaller wholesalers to operate competitively and invest significant resources into building a brand within the marketplace without the fear of the brand leaving for a larger distributor once it becomes successful..

FOB: free on board; the contract term used to describe the responsibilities of seller and buyer regarding costs and risks associated with the delivery of goods. Depending on the contract, the seller or buyer could be fully, partially or not at all responsible for costs of shipping and risk of loss during transit.

GSM: general sales meeting; monthly divisional meeting where suppliers present, provide tasting and samples and interact with entire sales teams.

IRC: instant redeemable coupon; a sales incentive that is permitted/prohibited on a state-by-state basis. Where allowed, they enable the consumer to redeem the coupon at the store for a discount on the product. Many state-specific restrictions apply to the use of IRCs. Check out the WSWA State Law Database for guidance on what's allowed in the various states.

juice: industry slang for the wine or spirits in the bottle — the consumable product you're producing.

MIP: manager incentive program; in some states, where it's Illegal to pay cash directly for placements, sales can be incentivized by creating programs for earning a payout, special item or trip.

MIR: mail-in rebate; a rebate where the payout is done by mailing a coupon and receiving a check by return of post. Any promotion is subject to state and local laws, so be certain you know the rules before you create one.

on goal: wholesalers and brokers have focused goals for execution; being part of the focus period would result in being on goal.

on-premise: refers to the side of the beverage alcohol retail marketplace selling products for consumption at the licensed premises — such as bars, restaurants, and night clubs.

off-premise: refers to the side of the beverage alcohol retail marketplace selling products in sealed containers for consumption elsewhere — such as liquor and grocery stores.

OOS: out of stock; used by both producers or supplies to indicate no product is currently on hand for delivery.

RIP: retail incentive program (New Jersey only).

POD: point of distribution; another way of tracking new placements. One product at one account.

POS (materials): point of sale materials; these include shelf talkers, sell sheets, and other materials provided to retail accounts, within federal and state requirements, to help market a beverage alcohol product.

programming: coordinated pricing, incentive and marketing plans between supplier and wholesaler. A solid program will consist of both sales strategies as well as sales tactics.

SIP: sales incentive program; can take on different forms in different markets.

SKU: stock-keeping unit; represented by a combination of alphanumeric characters or a scannable bar code, to identify a specific product from a manufacturer to track pricing, inventory, and movement of stock.

SPA: special pricing allowance; applicable to control markets. A determined discounted sale allowance.

TTB: the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau; this agency administers the Federal Alcohol Administration (FAA) Act, which governs alcohol production, importation and wholesaling. In particular, the TTB is responsible for overseeing distillery permitting, product labeling and trade practice requirements.

VAP: value-added product; limited edition SKUs (popular during the holidays) that contain an extra item like mugs or glasses alongside the product bottle, for the same price of the bottle.

VOR: vendor of record; particularly applicable in control states.

work with: scheduled visits into the field between supplier and sales rep or manager.

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Lead your business through these uncertain times by accessing the most reliable trends from almost 200,000 on-premise accounts and almost 140,000 off-premise accounts.

Receive timely data on a monthly basis to make informed decisions in your planning meetings with distributors and supplier partners.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Largest number of retail accounts covered by any data source! Almost 200,000 on-premise accounts and almost 140,000 off-premise accounts
2. Subcategory trends by price tiers
3. National and regional trends

WHY SIPSOURCE

- Benchmark your performance – are you keeping pace or seeing opportunities?
- Covers the largest volume of bona fide alcohol sales
- No estimates, samples, or projections
- Identify channels and product segments trending up, down, or flat



Notes



WSWA

ACCESS

A HUB FOR CRAFT, START-UP AND SMALL PRODUCTION WINE & SPIRITS