3 Tips on Starting a Successful Wine Brand



How savvy entrepreneurs can bring veritas to the vino industry.

January 25, 2021 4 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

Always harbored a desire to enter the wine industry, but concerned you need special training and a grape-squishing background to be a success?

Brice Baillie, recently named a 2020 leader by “Wine Business Monthly”, has achieved international recognition as the CEO and founder of the Obvious Wines Brand.

Soon after his arrival in America from France, Baillie found the display of California wines on store shelves perplexing.

Though the bottles had labels revealing the appellation of the vineyard, that information did little to explain how the wine would taste and he realized the potential of launching a new brand with a label that would clearly communicate the flavors and mouthfeel to consumers.

This set Brice off on a quest to create, package, and market the bottles he would aptly name Obvious Wines.

Wine packaging secrets

The “back labels” of most stateside wines hold information about the producer and vintage. Baillie took this a step further by including information about where he sources the grapes, potential food pairing suggestions, facts about the acidity, body and tannin levels of the wine.

When asked about the factors that contributed to his success, Brice utters a single word: “Passion.”

“When I first started Obvious Wines, I didn’t know about viticulture or winemaking, yet I had a solid marketing foundation and knew how I would distinguish my brand from other wine brands on the shelves,” offered Baillie. “Ultimately I created the tagline: “Because you shouldn’t need a PhD to Drink Wine.”

Related: Winning with Wine

The next step on Brice’s journey was to pick up the phone: “Soon I found the best vineyards to source the grapes and winemakers to make the wine. Then I spent a lot of time calling importers and learning about the licenses I needed and gaining insight about the three-tier wine distribution system. A friend of mine designed the first wine label. Then I got some of the best restaurants in California to carry it by just making a personal appointment with the wine director or sommelier.”

Though Baillie freely admits to being an industry novice when he first began, he has an MBA and did a four-year stint at Price Waterhouse in Paris before moving to New York. In the USA he further sharpened his marketing savvy with a corporate position at the cosmetics giant L'Oréal.

Related: Where Award Winning Wines are Made

Brice's top three suggestions for wine entrepreneurs

Another factor in Baillie's success was an appearance on the small business/big pitch-themed show *"Shark Tank"* . When asked how he landed that coveted opportunity, Brice says the producers found it interesting that a "French guy was fighting against wine snobbism."

1) Ask for help
"When I conceived my idea, I didn't know a single person in the business. That first cold call led to referrals and I quickly developed several contacts in the industry."

2) Fill a need
"My first visit to a wine shop helped me discover a gap in the market that was not being served. I realized that, like me, many Americans wanted more information and transparency on a wine bottle."

3) Visit the providers
"Developing a personal connection was crucial in getting key restaurants and stores to stock my wine."

Baillie's success as a brand big shot underscores that passion, vision, and filling a need in the marketplace can overcome almost any other obstacle.
Related: The 3 Precautions to Take When Shipping Wine

loading…

Sign up for an Entrepreneur Insider subscription to access exclusive articles, like this, and additional business resources:

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/359947