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HOW TO PREPARE FOR OPPORTUNITY: STRATEGIES STRONG PLAYERS ARE ADOPTING

Rather than just “battening down the hatches”, well-positioned wine business leaders are supporting their crew with tools, training and other lifeline supports to ride out the storm. Strong and strategically-focused leadership is vital in steering wineries through these challenging times. Here are some important practices and strategies to consider:

1. **Everyone on deck.** Everyone at small- and mid-sized wineries should be actively selling, on the road and in person, in constant communication with the trade, brokers, distributors, consumers and the media, through traditional means as well as the rapidly expanding online network communities that includes social media and bloggers.
2. **Increase productivity by developing your team.** With more talent available during this recession phase, consider hiring stronger, more productive people, investing in better communications and systems; and develop improved execution practices.
3. **Drive cash flow and profits.** Large or small, every business team should conduct an annual objective review of their product portfolio strategy, aligned with market opportunity. Each wine must be rationalized with an understanding of cost of goods, margin and overall performance to ensure it is delivering a sustainable return, or phased out if it is not.
4. **Grow your competitive advantages.** In a highly competitive market, most wineries need to assess and improve customer/consumer relationship management systems and disciplines; expand use of market and customer information; support constant improvement processes around production, packaging, distribution and supply chain.
5. **Investigate new ways to convert your customers to brand advocates.** Every brand needs to figure out how to engage consumers differently and to experiment with emerging social media tools more effectively. Rather than an ad hoc approach, implementation should be founded on a more compelling and authentic brand strategy, clear goals and relevant consumer value propositions delivered consistently.

For answers to questions, please call Deborah Steinthal: 707.246.6830.