

Bottles Build Brands

After nearly 20 years in small business and trying to figure out the marketing mix that works for our company, I have come to only one solid conclusion – everything works a little. You can't focus on only one strategy or one delivery method. Done properly, all of the ways you sell your product should support each other and your overall brand strategy. Your labels are a key to this integrated approach.

Face of Your Product

The label is the face of your product – and it has to reflect the image you are trying to project. David, of New Old Lompoc, says, “It’s a signature for us. We need to have that yellow logo on there first and foremost. Some of these beers we’ve spent up to four years making. They’ve been in barrels, they’ve been moved from stainless to barrels, back to barrels. They’ve been re-infused. They’ve been inoculated with wild yeast. There’s a lot of work that goes in, and just to slap something on would not work for us at all.”

Additional Income Stream

Thomas Kerns of Big Island Brewhaus is bottling to provide an added income stream. “We are in a small town and there is a limit to the amount of beer we can sell here. With bottling we will be able to get the product to Oahu and tap into a much larger audience.” Like many, Big Island Brewhaus has been selling out of their brew pub for about 18 months, and now they are ready for the next step, but they are taking it slowly. “You only get one chance to begin branding”, Kerns said.

Once you have a great design that shows off your brand, here are some other considerations:

1. Proper material. We have learned many lessons over the years about what materials print well, apply cleanly to the bottle, and don't bubble in the cooler. Test your label stock through the entire production process to ensure it works as advertised.
2. Bottling Service. Most brewers use a mobile bottling service like Green Bottling (www.greenbottling.com). It is critical to coordinate with the label company and the bottler to be sure labels are wound correctly on the roll, the material will work well, and the roll size maximizes the efficiency of the bottler's equipment.
3. Delivery Time. Beer is perishable, and when scheduling a very busy mobile bottler, you must make sure your labels are delivered on time. Keeping the shelves stocked is the only way to keep building the brand.
4. Government Regulations. Like all areas of your business, you need to do things right and get the proper government approvals prior to printing your labels. This can be a time consuming, frustrating process, but it has to be done. Go to ttb.gov or ask your label provider for details.

Keep these points in mind as you bottle, and you will be on your way to reaching new markets, providing a new income stream, and building your brand. Cheers!