

THE TASTING PANEL

GAZINE

MARKETING

Can PR equal ROI?



Our PR panel (left to right) at Wingtip in San Francisco: Sam Folsom of Folsom + Associates has more than 30 years of experience, including current clients Robert Mondavi Winery, Castello di Gabbiano and Gary Farrell Winery; Kimberly Charles of Charles Communications currently reps the Lodi Winegrape Commission, Gallica in Napa Valley and Neyen in Chile, among others; and Tim McDonald of Wine Spoken Here has been at the game for nearly four decades and clients include Distillery 209, Peachy Canyon and Steele Wines.



THE TASTING PANEL GATHERED THREE BEVERAGE PR EXPERTS TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION

by Michael Cervin / photo by Kent Hansen

Entrepreneur Richard Branson once said, "A good PR story is infinitely more effective than a front page ad." In the wine and spirits world, can PR equate to verifiable ROI?

The Tasting Panel gathered three beverage PR experts with nearly 100 years of combined experience: Kimberly Charles of Charles Communications currently reps the Lodi Winegrape Commission, Gallica in Napa Valley and Neyen in Chile, among others.

Q So, what exactly do you do?

Kimberly Charles: We hone the story. We also provide media training, speech writing, partnership marketing, special event creation, web content and strategy, benchmark tastings and video content.

Q How can a PR firm secure ROI for a winery/distillery?

KC: Getting the wine or spirit in the hands of a capable and respected reviewer is a building block. Writing compelling materials to get attention—a press release, press kit or web content—will ensure you stand out. Having a review that directly links back to one's site or a seller site is key.

Q What's the most misunderstood part of your job?

KC: It's a marathon not a sprint when working with the media. It takes talent, training and attentiveness to really excel at being a spokesperson. You'd be surprised at the number of people who think their story is compelling enough that they don't need to listen to us.

Q Final thoughts?

KC: The best relationships and outcomes we've had have been with clients who, like a solid marriage, commit to the long view together. Some years are extraordinary, some are challenging, but there are rewards for growing the relationship.



Sales sustainability, new distribution, and healthy depletions rely on PR to be successful in the long term. It's four important items: features, scores, awards and accolades.