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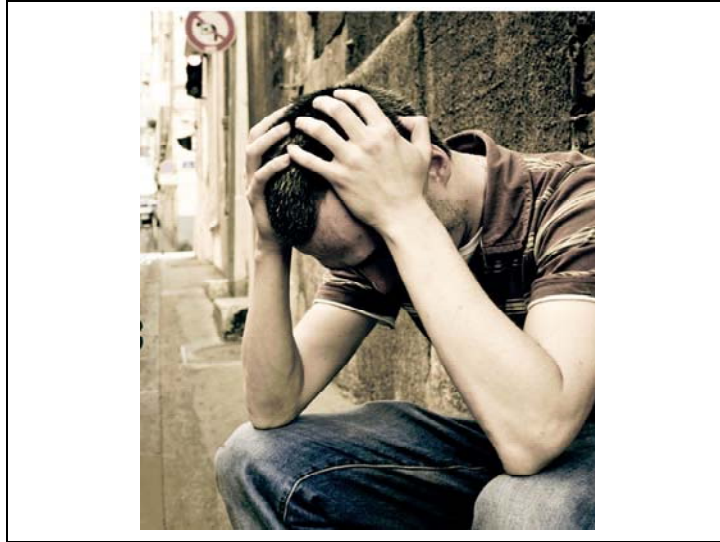


This presentation compiled by Karl+Kryslar Communications LLC. for the participants at the Export Educational Seminar presented by Wine Country Ontario and Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, March 24, 2011.

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Since 2009, I've organized four missions to wine country Canada: three to Ontario, one to British Columbia. As part of my responsibilities, I gathered candid feedback from the participants that included not only quality of the wines, but producer presentations and visitor experience. Additionally, I also was able to obtain feedback for the UK mission in January since their visit was concurrent with one of mine. The topics and suggestions covered in this presentation are a culmination of their observations, and mine, and suggestions for an improved experience.



Before I begin, I want to share with you a conversation I recently had with one of the participants in past incoming missions, who has been the recipient of feedback and critique. "Why are we continually failing?" they asked.

I am here to tell you that you are not failing and the proof of this is, in my recent call for participants on the last incoming mission that begins tomorrow, without exception, each person responded that they had heard great things from past participants and were either delighted to be able to take advantage of the opportunity, or deeply regretful that scheduling prevented them from doing so.

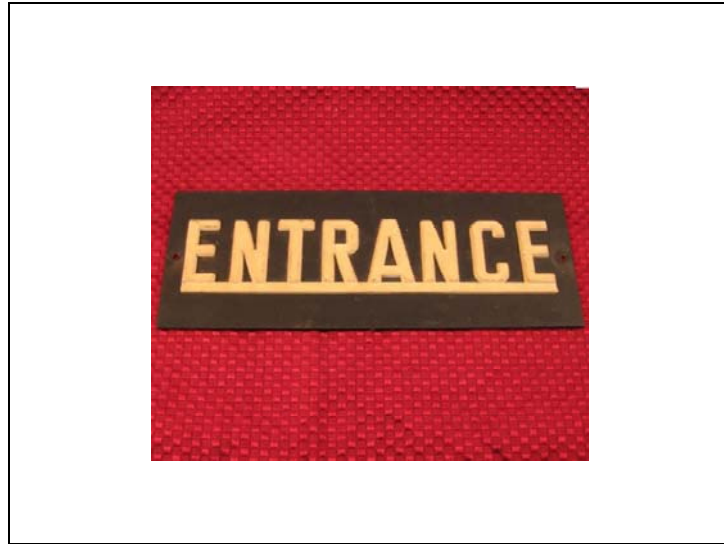
Past visitors have been very appreciative of learning about the region and terroir about which, prior to their trip, they knew nothing. A few producers provided excellent objective "Niagara 101" overviews. They enjoyed the wide sampling of wines they were offered, at producers and at meals because the wines themselves, both good and the not-so-good tell the story.

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So you are certainly not “failing.” However, there was telling feedback from past participants which suggests to me that there is an opportunity to improve their experience so that it goes from good to stellar: so that wine country Canada provides a visitor experience that is superior to that of other wine regions.

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There are three basic types of people who will visit your winery.

The consumer

The distributor/wine agent

Wine buyers

While there are similarities, the presentation approach to these groups is and should be different.

Consumers are usually relegated to tasting room staff who have been trained to be hospitable and engaging. By and large, they possess enough knowledge of your wines (as you have trained them) to answer any question a consumer might have. Consumers tend to be impressed with place/facilities and awards.

Distributors and wine agents usually visit as part of your relationship with them, rewards for sales incentives, and an opportunity for them to get to know you better so they can more effectively sell your product. Like consumers, they can also be impressed by facilities and awards and scores are very useful to their sales efforts.



Wine professionals on the other hand, are a different breed, particularly those that are certified MS, MW, or other professional certifications. MS and MW, in particular, have been through an astonishingly rigorous system of exams and, with all due respect, they know more about wine than you and I ever will.

These accredited professionals tend to have positions with prestigious high-volume Michelin-starred restaurants and chains or restaurant groups. Additionally, this group, having “tasted it all,” is most eager to find the “next new thing” to offer to their clientele.

When people like me are charged with identifying buyers to bring on incoming missions, one of the chief criteria is that they have prestige and a lot of buying power. Those that have the most are on the top of the list.

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We can be certain, then, that every other wine growing region has reached out to and accommodated these buyers. And other national wine regions, Chile, Argentina, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, France, and even regional wine associations in the US have, agencies that are light years ahead of Canada in terms of organization, funding and history.

So, given the “competition,” we need to explore ways that Canada can provide a superior visitor experience cost-effectively. And the most frugal way to set yourself apart from other regions is to give them an atypical experience.

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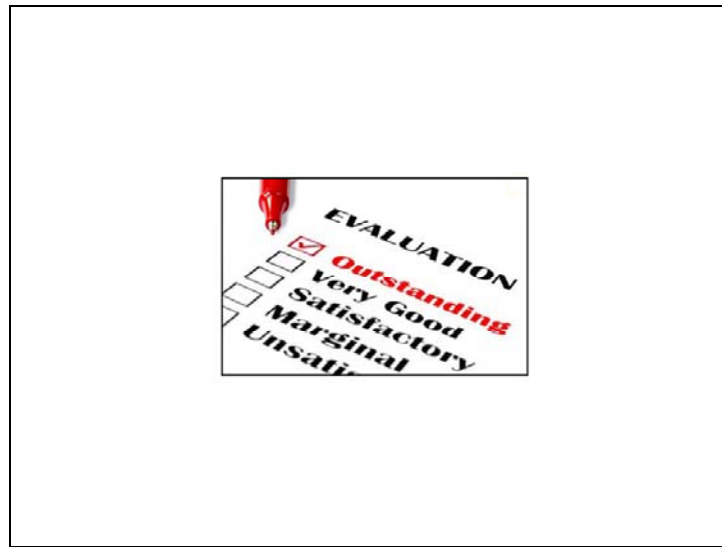
These buyers have been lavishly accommodated and entertained in historic chateaux, gone on safaris in Africa, and without a doubt have seen every single configuration of hospitality facilities as well as every press and fermenter down to the last hose.

While you are understandably proud of your facilities, unless you are adopting practices or procedures that are on the cutting edge of innovation or, conversely, adopting Old World techniques (such as concrete fermenters), you unfortunately do not have anything at your facility that they have not seen before many times over in one configuration or another.





The professionals that participate on missions to Canada do so for a number of reasons:  
It is an opportunity for them to explore a relatively unknown and young up-and-coming region.  
It is an opportunity for free travel.  
For Millennials (which a great majority are), they also view it as an opportunity to network, make connections, meet new people.  
It is an opportunity to discover new wines to list. Currently, Canada is at a disadvantage since so few wines are available in the US market.



During the last mission in January, of eight stops, there were three that were rated as "best." At two of these wineries, we were met only by tasting room staff. Comments included: "it was great to be able to taste through wines without having to sit through a presentation."

It was also interesting for me to observe that, at these two stops, the tasting room staff engaged my group. ""Where are you from? Oh! Cold enough for ya'? Why are you here? Oh! You are a sommelier? Well then, you are certainly going to know more about these wines than I do. Here, taste this and see what you think." This level of engagement was not present with winery principal-hosted visits.

Additionally, the tasting room staff was egalitarian in their approach. "Where else have you been? Are you going to stop at so and so because they do a pretty good job?"

One rep went so far as to pick their brain: "What wines are really hot in Chicago?" "Do you think Canadian wines have a place in the market?"

During the March 2010 trip to British Columbia, the event rated as best by that group was a Sunday morning tasting of 40 or so wines with no representatives present. Again "it was great to taste through and discover all these different wines without a presentation."



The message here is that these visitors prefer not to meet with owners or winery marketing reps who, no matter what it says on the business cards, are viewed as sales people. And by and large, visitors have been subjected to sales pitches.

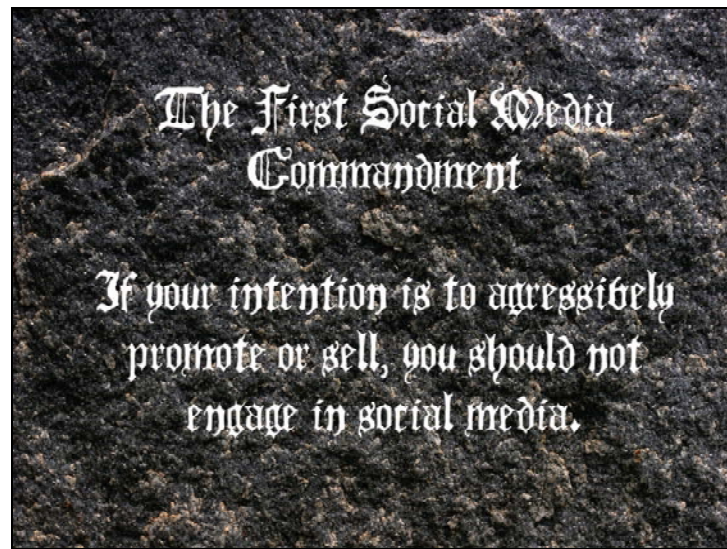


Since these are wine professionals with a lot of buying power, they are inundated by sales calls and requests for appointments on a daily basis. There is a love/hate relationship between these professionals and the sales people. On one hand, they need sources of wine and spirits. On the other hand, the relentless sales efforts are annoying to them. In some cases it is much the same as when we get telemarketing calls even from businesses or political groups that we may support.

This is very important to remember: they get sales pitches every single day.

Now these professionals are not naive and they know that the trade off for a free trip is to be subjected to propaganda and sales pitches. They've been there and done that. It's their payment in exchange for the trip.

So, the question is: how can you accomplish your agenda in a way that results in them in saying, "Wow! That trip was a lot different than most!" I advise that it is by adopting different practices and a different approach. One that is a soft-sell.



In the social media presentation, we saw that cardinal rule number one was: if your intention is to aggressively sell, you should not be in social media. I want to encourage you to think about applying this philosophy, to a certain degree, when you receive this caliber of visitor.



This is the one person they want to meet, the person who is performing the alchemy of turning grapes into wine. He or she is the artist, the rock star. The winemaker. He or she is the best person to tell them why they are tasting what they're tasting.

And, curiously, a lot—the majority of properties—have not made the winemaker available. Not surprisingly, those who did not, not only received low marks for presentation, but there was a sense of incredulity at his/her absence.



Presenting to any group is really not much different than a solo-act theater performance. A good performer knows what his audience expects and wants and endeavors to give it to them. During the performance, particularly in improv comedy, there is the term "reading the audience."



As Lucille Ball famously advised to a fellow talk show guest who was being long-winded on the Johnny Carson Show, "Bring it home, honey, you're losing them."

Reading your audience is one of the best skills and some would argue that it is an innate, and not learned, skill. I don't know. But I can tell you as I have been presenting to you today, based on facial expression and body language, I can tell you who finds what I have had to say as interesting, and who is bored or disagrees with me. Most likely, my social media presentation varied from my notes to accommodate this silent, but obvious feedback.





Therefore, the question to be asked is: in addition to the winemaker, who is the best person in our organization to host wine professionals? Who has the empathy to “read” the group, to stray off-message if necessary? I know: this challenges everything we’ve been taught or believe about ourselves as marketing people. But times are changing and a fresh, out-of-the-box approach is necessary.

Contrary to popular belief or perception, these visitors are not going to feel slighted if they do not meet with top-level management/ownership. In fact, I would contend that, in a majority of cases, a more effective presentation would be for the owner/management to receive and welcome them if he/she feels it is necessary, then turn the presentation over to the winemaker, remaining if he/she can act as a second banana or withdrawing if there is someone more adept at it.

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Then there is the of how to engage which, I know, is really difficult to balance when you feel you have one hour or so to get your message across.

But I want you to consider and get into a mind-set that in addition to your presentation, you have two other goals that should be achieved:



Acting as an ambassador for Ontario and engaging with your guests as much as possible. In fact, these should be regarded as your primary goals, with your wines as examples of how you are part of the larger culture. Because at this point in time, it's not just about selling your wine, it is about selling Canada as a wine-producing nation. Even with the popularity and wide-spread knowledge of Icewine, Canada is still a mystery to most people, even the professionals.

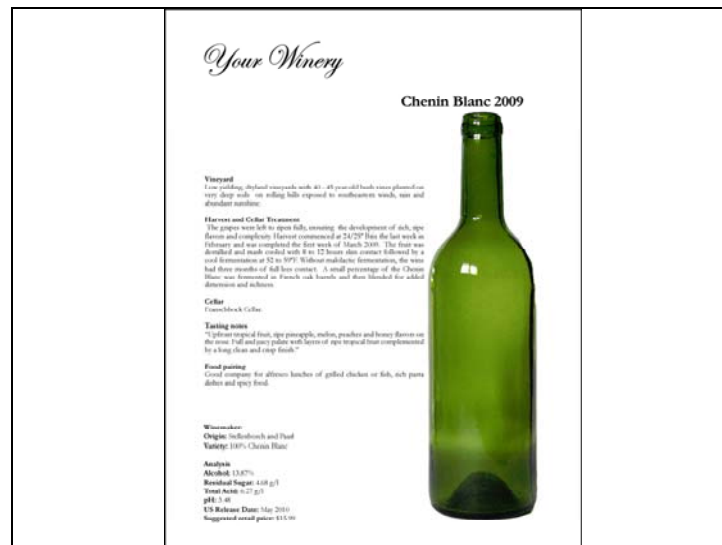
You should consider one of your paramount roles as being an ambassador for Brand Canada and, to achieve this, you must be inclusive, not exclusive.



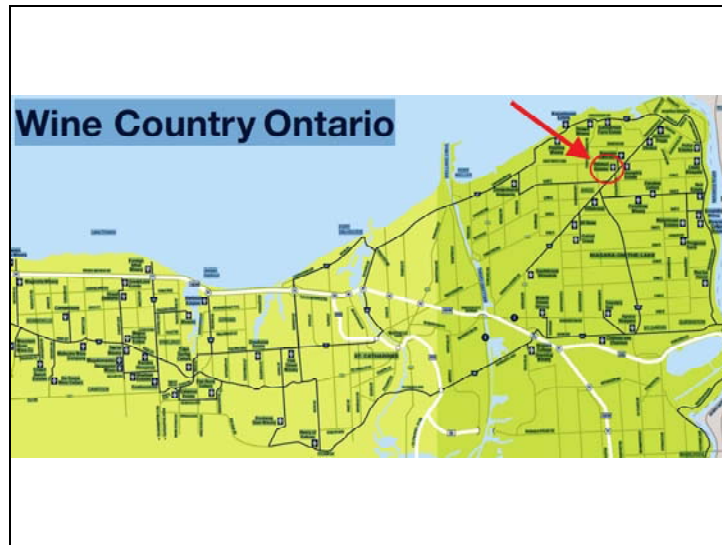
Like social media, it's part of the not "me, me, me" philosophy of approach. Toss some give and take in there. During the tasting, you might notice that someone is not making notes, not reading your materials...just patiently sitting there. This is an excellent opportunity to ask them a question about themselves...just like the tasting room staff does.

While you know in advance who they are and where they are from, it is certainly all right and even desirable to pretend you don't and ask where they work, when did they get into wine, where else have they been, have they seen practices in Canada that vary greatly from other places they've visited? This is not going to disturb others that may be engrossed in tasting: they know how to tune out.

Anticipate and be prepared for information these guests want. From feedback after four trips, these are materials that participants have indicated they appreciated or missed and, conversely, found no use for:



1. Printed wine fact sheets which include tasting notes, vinification methodologies, chemical analysis and pricing. People's interests are all over the board. Some are concerned with residual sugar. Others are curious as to strains of yeast used. Quality vs. price is hugely important to them. Having this information at their fingertips saves you from reciting it and allows you the time/opportunity to engage. Some will make their own notes on your sheets, some prefer their Moleskines or notebooks.



2. Maps that show/compare/contrast where you are in the scheme of things. These people understand and are very interested in terroir and gain quite of bit of appreciation for your wine style when they understand your location and how it differs from other properties that they've visited.



3. Vertical tastings can be very useful in demonstrating where you have been and the direction you are headed. It gives these visitors a historical perspective in a way they can absolutely understand and relate to. They can extrapolate where your wine will be in a few years and, perhaps, leave with a “this is one to watch” opinion.



#### What is not useful

1. Lengthy tours of the facilities. Like I said, they've seen it all before. If you have an architecturally or sentimentally significant room you want them to see, hold the tasting in it. Also, skipping the tour (unless a visitor expresses an interest in it) gives you more time to engage.





2. Attention to awards, accolades and medal wins. Think about it: what winery do you know of that has never won an award or gotten an important accolade and doesn't trot it out? While awards and accolades may help them down the road in selling your wines, they are meaningless (and mundane) at this point of discovery and introduction. Additionally, there is the implication that "these people liked our wines so you should too."

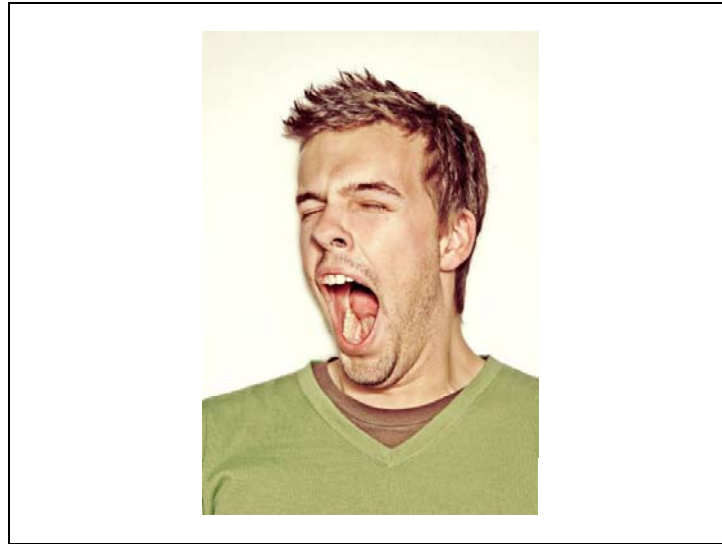
While they get this over and over from properties, and tune it out, they do notice when this information has not pushed at them, and appreciate it. Because it was rarity. This is key: be different!



3. Putting them on the spot by asking questions about your wine/property. "What do you think of this wine," is the same as "does this outfit make my butt look fat?"

If they have not volunteered complimentary feedback, it is best not to ask potentially uncomfortable questions. As guests, they certainly don't want to insult or offend you so they have to struggle for something complimentary to say

While you are no-doubt eager to know their thoughts, be contented that those they do not volunteer during your meeting will be provided to you in post-visit feedback.



4. Lastly, and this is the most disappointing feedback that I have to report: producers featuring only Icewines tastings were consistently the least-favored stops. In this, there is unanimous agreement from the participants. Comments included, "Canada makes Icewine, we get it," "Kill us with Icewine in one day and get it over with," and "we could have skipped that producer entirely."

While it was hoped that these missions would help rekindle interest in and sales of Icewine, the response was the opposite: it was one of resistance, polite boredom and viewed as necessary evil to be endured. All of these professionals are well-acquainted with Canadian Icewine; several have or had it on their wine lists. Participants unanimously expressed that their primary interest is to discover the new things, namely table wines. So not only have we failed to attract interest in Icewines as hoped, but the Icewine-only experience has proven to be a detrimental component of these missions.

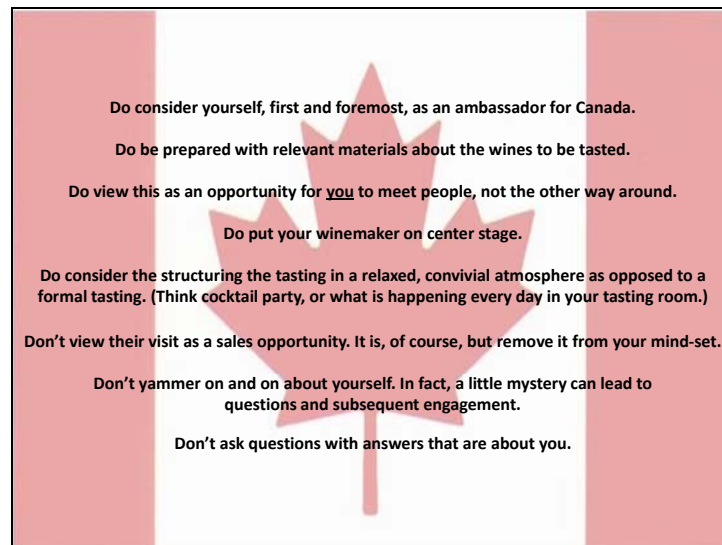
Yes, Canada is well-known for outstanding Icewine, but the world is looking for—expecting—more from you. And you have it!

Therefore, I highly recommend that Icewine-only exporters explore other methodologies in reaching out to buyers. While there are certainly plenty of opportunities to increase the sales of Icewine, participation in these missions has proven to be an ineffective method.



Again, it's not that you have been giving *bad* introductions to your brand. You have been giving them the same kinds of presentation that most every other wine producer in the world does. So when comparing to what is being done in other regions, you're doing the same thing. The expected thing. So, why not do it differently and stand out from the pack? On the few occasions that "outside-the-box" presentations have been made, whether by choice or circumstance, they were warmly received, appreciated, and created a lasting positive impression.

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## Takeaways



If you can accept and follow this unconventional approach, I *promise* you that you will give your jaded visitors a refreshingly unique experience and they will hold you and your brand in high-esteem. Additionally, you will have made a great contribution to their overall Canadian experience, which is crucial for your emerging region.

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Karl+Krysler Communications LLC  
March 24, 2011



End.