



# Becoming a Beer Destination

BY MICHAEL KUDERKA

Positioning your business in the minds of current and future customers is extremely important for the growth of your store. In 2010 the Craft Beer category continued to grow in dollar sales and market share. Marketing your store as a "Beer Destination" allows you to capitalize on the growth trends in this industry, and lets your customers know that your store is an excellent place to buy great beer.

Simple things like signage, business cards and tag lines make a difference in the way consumers' view your business, and just because you have been "Dave's Wine & Liquors" for the past 30 years, there is no reason not to add a tag line that lets consumers know that your store features a "Monster Beer Selection of Over 900 Brands."

## Tips from the Industry

With a high percentage of your overall alcohol sales coming from beer (the national average is around 57%), beer should be up front and center in your store. Think about having three displays at the entrance that promote Craft, Import, and non-Craft Domestic/ Premium beer.

Use seasonal and holiday changes as themes for switching up the brands featured in these displays. Since these are the first brands consumers see, make certain that the pricing on these products is especially competitive. Even if pricing in the rest of the store trends high, offering these brands at a competitive price will set the customer's perception of your overall pricing.

Also, keep in mind that when you change displays, it communicates that your store offers a unique selection and variety. Showing your consumers the same brewers and brands, year after year, will have them looking for a new place to find their beer. Stay loyal to the base brands/ brewers that sell well, but always be open to bringing in and featuring something new.

Organize your brand selection: sell by ales and lagers, by beer style, by alphabetical order, by ABV%, by brewer, by food pairing. Come up with something that isn't difficult for customers to follow and assists them to easily find their beer.

If your state regulators allow tastings, go for it! Many stores view tastings and "build your own" six pack promotions as a logistical nightmare, but consumers love these and they increase store loy-

alty. Even if you only offer these events once a quarter, it is well worth the time it takes to plan and set up.

It shouldn't need to be said, but keep your store clean, and dusted. Customers won't pick up dusty bottles or dirty packages, and true or not, dust equals dud in the eyes of most consumers.

Finally, make sure your team has the "beer confidence" they need to hand sell beer. Training your staff on beer and making sure they know beer, is important to the success of your store and will noticeably improve the beer experience consumers have in your store.

## Tips from the Beer Consumers

Obviously the motivation for becoming a beer destination comes from wanting to create an environment in which beer inventory quickly turns, and inventory turns quickest when customers are happy. So what are the top requests from beer consumers? Our annual survey revealed a lot of important points to keep in mind.

### 1. A good selection of 1/6 kegs

Believe it or not 1/6 kegs are a fantastic way to differentiate your store. Kegerators are big, and promoting your selection and taking special orders are a very popular service right now. Plus, the 1/6 keg is a bigger ticket item and these consumers end up purchasing other beer as well.



## 2. A good selection of domestic and imported craft beer

Small breweries are popping up all over the world, following the American Craft Brewers success story. Many U.S. brewers are collaborating with these new entities, and these limited releases are a great way you get your customer based familiar with these non-US brewers and the quality of their brands.

## 3. Don't be a "Beer Museum"

Out of date and ancient products on your shelves translates to a lack of beer commitment, low beer knowledge ability, and risk in the eyes of the consumer.

## 4. Everyone loves a bargain

Being up front that you have products near expiration and selling them as a well marked "Close Out Sale - 50% off" can move inventory quickly and make many consumers excited about the savings.

## 5. Sell singles

Single and "create your own" six pack can move short dated and out of season seasonals quickly. Plus you can realize more profits from the cumulative singles than you would have made on the original six pack.

## 6. Shelf Talkers and better beer information

Although craft beer continues to sell well, consumers still need help selecting beer. Customers may come into your store wanting to try an IPA, but standing in an aisle of brown bottles can be intimidating. Basically, the more beer information at POS the better, because beer education creates a great opportunity to motivate your consumers to try beers with the best margins for you.

## Are You Thinking Out-of-the-Box?

How innovative is your store at selling beer? We would like to know. If you have promotions that go beyond refilling the cold box, we would like to hear from you and share your "out-of-the-box" thinking with our fellow Beverage Media readers.

E-mail me at [mkuderka@mcbasset.com](mailto:mkuderka@mcbasset.com) with your successful ideas for selling beer, along with your contact information. If we write about your program in our column we will send you a free copy of The third Edition of *The Essential Reference of Domestic Brewers and Their Bottled Brands*.

Michael Kuderka is the Managing Partner at MC Basset, LLC. The company designs beer selling solutions and training for on-and off-premise retailers. [www.thebeerbible.com](http://www.thebeerbible.com) – Contact Michael at [mkuderka@mcbasset.com](mailto:mkuderka@mcbasset.com).  
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## How Much Beer Do You Deserve to Sell?

...when your customers just see a wall of brown bottles



## Blow away the Competition with Style Trends™ Shelf Talkers



Create shelf talkers yourself on-line or let us create them for you.

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  - The Beer & Food Match
  - The Beer Color in a Style Appropriate Glass
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- One of Five Colors – Landscape or Portrait Print Style
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