

North Bay Business Journal

SONOMA, MARIN AND NAPA COUNTIES



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August 22nd, 2011 06:25am

Wine: Profitability top wine business concern, survey says

Also: Crushpad names CEO; Gusmer opens harvest store and wine people news
By Jeff Quackenbush, Business Journal Staff Reporter

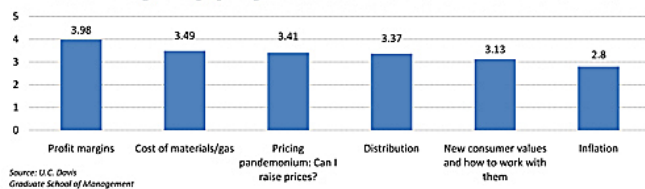


Profitability is the top concern this year for wine industry professionals, according to a **University of California, Davis**, survey prepared for the 20th **Wine Industry Financial Symposium**, to be held at the Napa Valley Marriott hotel in Napa on Monday and Tuesday, Sept. 19 and 20. The event typically attracts several hundred industry and financial services professionals.



Of 132 responses to an annual survey and analysis by Dr. **Robert Smiley**, professor emeritus of the Graduate School of Management, "profit margins" ranked the most significant wine business trend, garnering virtually a 4 on a five-point scale. Other major factors, in order of ranking, were "cost of materials" including fuel, "pricing pandemonium: Can I raise prices?" "distribution," "new consumer values and how to work with them" and "inflation."

WIFS survey: Top projected concerns at the end of 2011



One of the questions Dr. Robert Smiley, professor emeritus of the U.C. Davis Graduate School of Management, asked 132 wine industry professionals this year in an annual survey for the Wine Industry Financial Symposium was,

The theme for this year's symposium is "Flexibility in the Global Marketplace." Afternoon seminars that Monday will touch on tasting room management, vineyard management, wine company valuation, trends in equity and debt financing and direct-to-consumer sales metrics.

Speaking on global changes in the businesses during the Tuesday symposium will be **Jean-Claude Boisset**, president of **Boisset Family Estates**, whose recent acquisitions include Buena Vista Carneros and Raymond Vineyards. John Gillespie of Wine Market Council and Wine Opinions will be presenting new marketing research.

One of the panel discussions has founders of **Justin Vineyards** and **Seghesio Family Vineyards** and the respective acquirers, **Stewart Resnick** of **Roll Global**, which also acquired **Landmark Vineyards** in Kenwood more recently, and **Erle Martin** of **Crimson Wine Group**.

Event registration starts at \$225 to \$775 per person for the Monday seminars only or both days. To view the schedule and register, visit register.winesymposium.com.

Speaking of wine-related presentations, **Mario Zepponi**, a principal of Santa Rosa-based

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A Business Journal Event
IMPACT NAPA 2011 CONFERENCE
 Thursday, September 1
 The Meritage Resort, Napa
 Registration ends Friday, Aug. 26. Click to register.

Healthiest Companies IN THE North Bay
 CLICK TO NOMINATE YOUR COMPANY
 Nominations end Friday, Sept. 9.

A Business Journal Event
IMPACT SOLANO 2011 CONFERENCE
 Wednesday, September 21
 Hilton Garden Inn, Fairfield

wine industry transaction consultancy **Zepponi & Company**, will be among the speakers at the *Business Journal's* annual **Impact Napa** conference at the Meritage Hotel & Spa in Napa the morning of Sept. 1. He's set to talk about recent trends in vineyard and winery valuation.

Headlining the conference will be Beacon Economics managing partner and go-to pundit Chris Thornberg. He will be providing an overview of the national and local economic forces weighing on key Napa County industries such as wine.

In addition to a [new base of operations and high-tech tasting room on the premises of Sebastiani Vineyards in Sonoma](#) and a [\\$3 million funding injection](#), **Crushpad** has a new chief executive. **Peter Ekman**, who was executive vice president and co-founder of **Ascentia Wine Estates**, assumed day-to-day oversight of Crushpad, a custom-winemaking business for thousands of hobbyists and 100 small-scale pros.

Crushpad founder Michael Brill now is focusing on developing international partnerships and new products, such as Crushpad Syndicate and options for wine from international producers.

"We've been working on the idea of me focusing more of my energy on the areas where I'm strongest — product, winemaking, marketing and sales support — and bring on some fresh blood to take on overall responsibility," Mr. Brill wrote in the company's email newsletter. "The big difference now is that I can be a lot more effective in areas that matter to you — and me."

Mr. Ekman said he "strongly" believes in the Crushpad vision.

"With an intense focus on the customer experience, wine quality and the innovative use of technology, my plan is to bring Crushpad from its humble urban winery beginnings to a global company that enables millions of wine enthusiasts to achieve their dream of being a winemaker," he said.

Taking a cue from holiday-targeted stores, beverage industry supplier **Gusmer Enterprises**, which owns **The Wine Lab** in Napa, [opened The Gusmer Harvest Store](#) in a shopfront at 9025 Old Redwood Highway, Ste. C, in Windsor on Aug. 1. Gusmer plans to sell fermentation-related supplies such as the new proprietary direct-inoculation yeast **FrootZen** and offer certain on-site testing there until the end of November. Hopefully, the 2011 North Coast winegrape harvest will be done by then.

George Petersen Insurance Agency is partnering with Lodi-based **SN Potter Insurance Agency** as the appointed Sonoma County broker for **WineryPlus**, a specialty insurance program for wineries, vineyard estates and custom crush facilities.

WineryPlus offers specific, niche-focused coverage such as wine contamination, spoilage, property and transit, wind drift and overspray, among others, specifically for the wine industry.

It is a national winery program that was established in 2006 by **SN Potter**, a specialty program manager, and is underwritten by **Argonaut Insurance Co.**

"Our agency has been insuring some of the finest wineries and vineyards in California for over 75 years," said **Doug Dilley**, chief operations officer and a partner at George Petersen. "We will continue to build upon our long-standing reputation as wine industry specialists." —*Dan Verel, Staff Reporter*

Edgewood Partners Insurance Center in Petaluma is hosting a workshop for winery and vineyard managers, titled "How to Stay Alive and Productive During Crush."

Registration ends Friday, Sept. 16.

Best Places to Work

GALA AWARDS RECEPTION

Thursday, Sept. 29 • 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Hyatt Vineyard Creek, Santa Rosa



Registration ends Friday, Sept. 23.



Upcoming Events

1 2 3 - more events »

August 2011

Wednesday, 24th: **Sonoma County Job Link and SonomaWORKS open house**

Thursday, 25th: **Accelerating Sustainable Performance Summit**

Friday, 26th: **Impact Napa Conference registration ends Aug. 26**

1 2 3 - more events »

Top News

St. Joseph Health System grants \$300,000 to nonprofits

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Michael H. on Winery health insurance costs rise 12 percent

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The workshop will highlight 10 essential safety topics that concern the wine industry. Topics include: night harvest, machine safeguarding, use of volunteers and non-employees, safe vehicle and forklift operation, emergency planning, owner-operator hauling grapes, claims management from the field, heat stress and Cal-OSHA notification requirements

The workshop will be led by **Rich Lawler**, EPIC's safety consultant who for 20 years has consulted with wineries. He is a registered environment assessor, a certified professional in ergonomics and is an OSHA 10 and 30 hour instructor.

The workshop is Sept. 1 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at EPIC's new 5350 Old Redwood Highway location in Petaluma. Space is limited. For more information call 707-794-7411 or email lperry@edgewoodins.com. —*Dan Verel, Staff Reporter*

The 17th annual **Staglin Family Vineyard Music Festival for Mental Health** is set for Saturday, Sept. 10, at the Rutherford winery. Sponsored by the **International Mental Health Research Organization**, the event features keynote speaker **Steven Hyman**, M.D., Harvard Medical School neurobiology professor and university provost, a concert by **Dionne Warwick** and appearances by Rep. **Patrick Kennedy**, part of the **One Mind Campaign**, and actress **Glenn Close**, who works with the organization Bring Change 2 Mind.

All proceeds go directly to scientific research and treatment programs at a number of universities groups, including Napa-based Aldea Children and Family Services. For tickets, which start at \$750 a person, call 707-944-0477 or visit www.music-festival.org. Admission to Dr. Hyman's lecture is free.

Wine People

Custom winemaker **Sonoma Wine Co.** named **Scott Loopstra** director of operations for the company's 116,500-square-foot American Canyon winery as part of adjustments to [accommodate growth plans](#). Previously, he held the same position at **Vintage Wine Estates'** Grove Street Winery in Healdsburg.



Terry Nolan

As part of the rampup of **VML Winery** on Westside Road in Russian River Valley, the owners hired **Terry Nolan** as general manager. Investor group **H.D.D., LLC**, which includes **Bill Hambrecht** and sustainable winemaking advocate **Paul Dolan**, started VML early this year.

For the past five years, Mr. Nolan was general manager of ultrapremium custom winemaker **Owl Ridge Wine Services** in Sebastopol. Before that, he was **Benziger Family Winery** director of winemaking.

Napa-based cork distributor

Portocork America named **Erick Rojas** to the new position of operations manager. For four and a half years, he was general manager for Santa Rosa-based distributor **M.A. Silva Corks USA**. Before that, he was logistics manager for The Coca-Cola Co. for almost 13 years.



Erick Rojas

Patti Fetzer and **Gregg Hileman**, proprietors of **Patianna Organic Vineyards** near Hopland in Mendocino County,

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named **Charlie Tolbert** winemaker. The previous winemaker, **Mike Lee**, died in May. Mr. Tolbert was director of cellar operations for Fetzer Vineyards in Hopland and has been involved with brands Chateau St. Jean, Haywood, Arrowood and Amapola Creek.



Brent Young

The 2011 **Sonoma County Harvest Fair** named **Jordan Vineyard & Winery** viticulturist **Brent Young** "Outstanding Young Person in Agri-Business." Mr. Young was selected for his extensive community service and leadership in the Sonoma County farming community. He joined the company in 2008 and has been overseeing sustainable farming initiatives, namely earning credentials in the new **Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing** program. Winners will receive awards at a gala in Santa Rosa on Sept. 24.

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Send items for this column to jquackenbush@busjrnl.com or 707-521-4256.

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