Brewing Through Uncertainty:

Leadership Lessons in Resilience

A true story about navigating crisis, building trust, and leading through the unexpected

Resilience Track, Session 3

DoubleTree Burlington | Room: Emerald II

Speaker: Susan Loynd

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Would you rather?

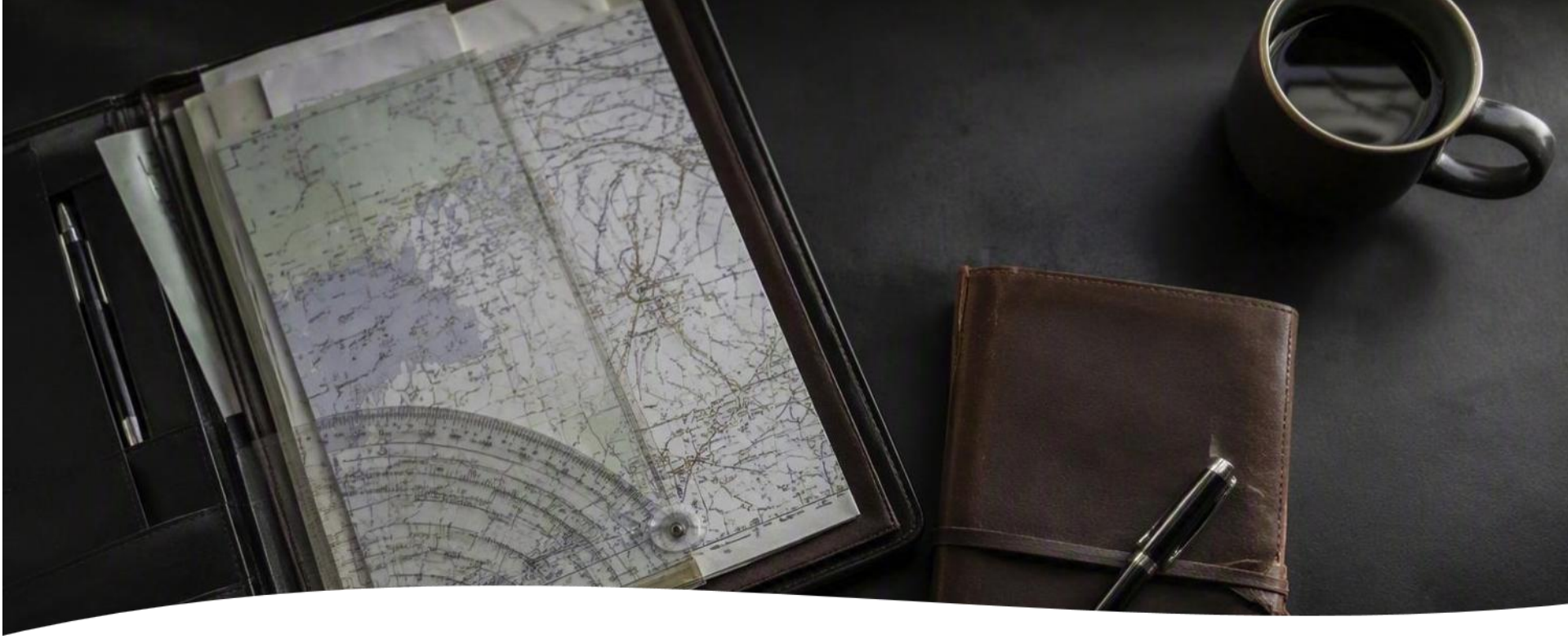




Would you rather have a brewery year with no surprises -OR- have chaos half the time (chiller failures, CO2 shortages, bad batches) and your best sales and press the other half?



- What does a brewery give up when it always optimizes for safety and predictability: the same core beers, the same lean staffing, the same plan?
- What do we gain when we let people take real risks, like a barrel program, a collab or a new taproom concept?
- How do hard experiences build resilience in a brewery team? Can the “bad batches” and breakdowns you have already survived prepare your crew for the next one?
- As an owner or manager, would you rather promise your team stability and low risk, or push for growth and change knowing setbacks come with it? What does your answer reveal about how you lead?



- Communicate with Confidence During Uncertainty
- Build Stronger, More Resilient Teams
- Turn Setbacks into Opportunities for Growth



7-8

3 Big Take-Aways

9



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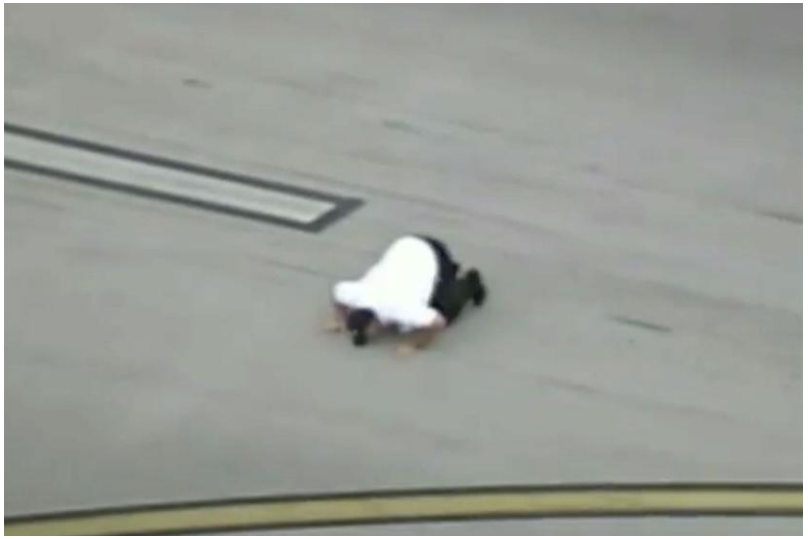





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1
Communicate with Confidence During Uncertainty

Communicate with Clarity & Purpose



Brewery lens: In the first hour, what do you tell your crew, your taproom guests and your distributors?

Stay Calm Under Pressure – Travel “Light”





- CARRY-ON ONLY



- BRING HUMOR



- MUSIC/BOOKS/MOVIES

Brewery lens: When the chiller alarm sounds, your crew takes its cue from you.

Practice & Preparedness Matter



Brewery lens: Run the drill before the glycol fails: who calls the tech, who moves the beer, who talks to guests?


2
Build Stronger, More Resilient Teams

Connection Builds Trust



Brewery lens: A quick check-in with the brewer, the packager and the bartender is part of the fix.

Adaptability in Decision-Making

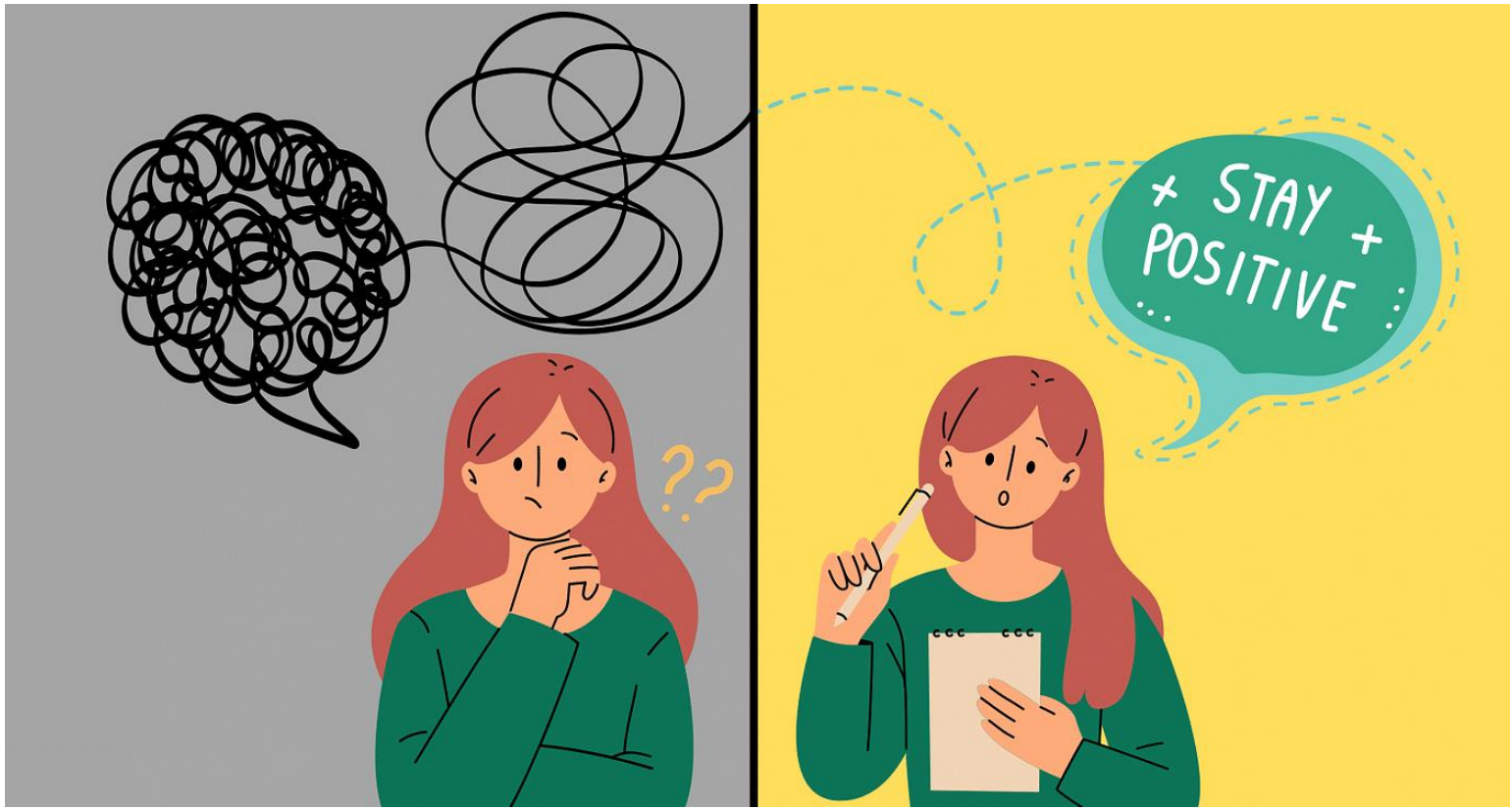
Let Lab Results, Tank Data & Sales Numbers Guide the Call

Build a Crew Culture That Shares the Load

Be Willing to Pull a Batch or Move the Release Date

Balance Speed and Thoughtfulness on Release Day

Perspective Shapes Resilience

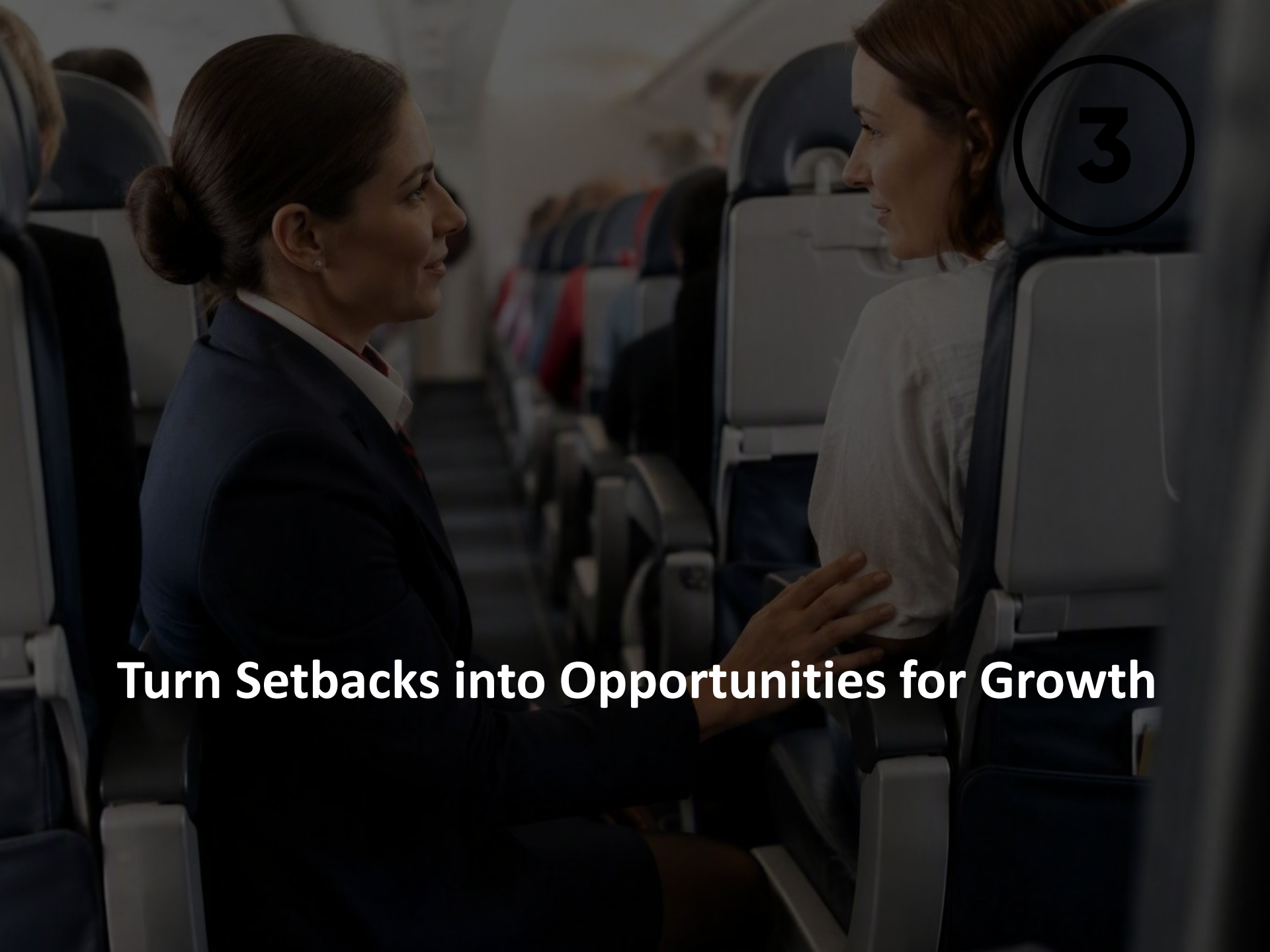


Brewery lens: A bad batch can be a one-off, a lesson and a story your regulars remember.

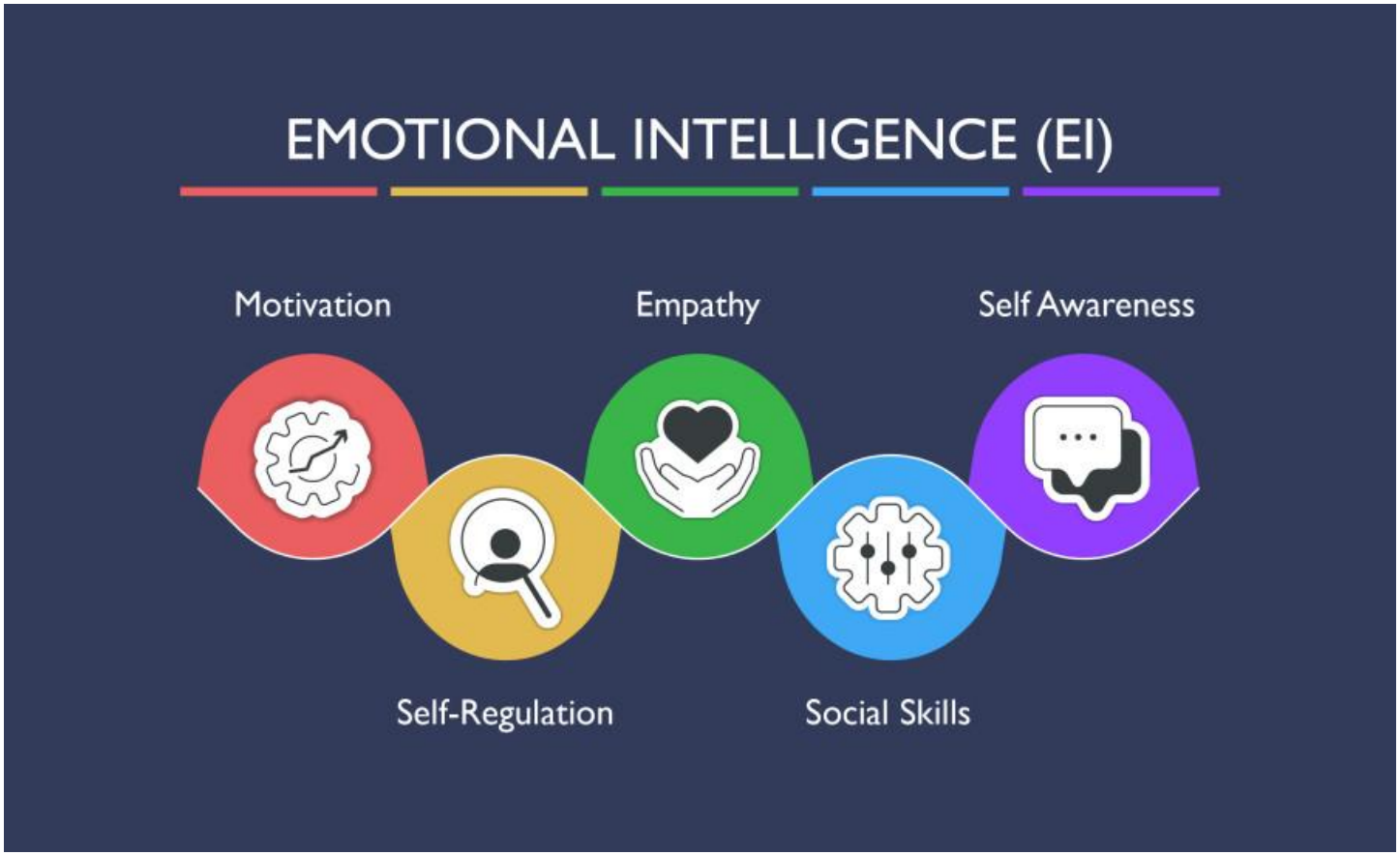
Debrief & Learn



Brewery lens: After a recall, flood or failed batch: what did we know, what did we say, what do we fix?


3
Turn Setbacks into Opportunities for Growth

Emotional Intelligence & Empathy



Brewery lens: A calm, kind word on a rough brew day carries the whole crew.

In-Flight Tips

- Don’t panic
- Sarcasm at 1,000 feet
- Bird strike w/ Seagulls
- Humor and empathy

Tip Your Fellow Passengers



Make someone’s day



Give directions



Customer service moment



Vacation vibe

Small acts of service set the tone.

In a crisis, people take their cue from whoever stays generous first, in the taproom and on the brew deck.

Roadblocks and Obstacles



1. Line up a backup brewer
2. No direct route → reroute
3. Handle late hops & down lines

The detour is usually where the story is.

Name the obstacle early, then decide who needs to hear it, from your crew to your distributor, and how fast.

Arrive Home



SAFELY & WITH GRATITUDE



APPRECIATE WHAT YOU'VE GOT



WHAT BUMPS?

Recovery is part of the response.

What did the crisis cost your crew, and what will you do differently next time?


TAPROOM

Taking Risks

Would you rather push for a new fermenter or taproom you believe in and risk your cash flow, or hold off and save your capital for a bigger bet?

- How do you weigh risk when a new fermenter or canning line is on the table?
- What separates reckless expansion from courageous leadership?
- How does a visible risk build, or erode, trust with your crew?



Positive Thinking

Would you rather work for an owner who is relentlessly optimistic about growth but out of touch, or one who is realistic about the market but demoralizing to the crew?

- When has optimism carried your brewery through a hard stretch?
- Can pessimism ever help when planning for a flat market?
- How do you balance hope and realism with your crew?



Empathy

Would you rather pause packaging to support a struggling teammate, or protect the order deadline and address personal concerns later?

- How does empathy change a small brewery crew under sustained pressure?
- What does emotional intelligence look like on a slammed Saturday?
- Where is the line between empathy and enabling?



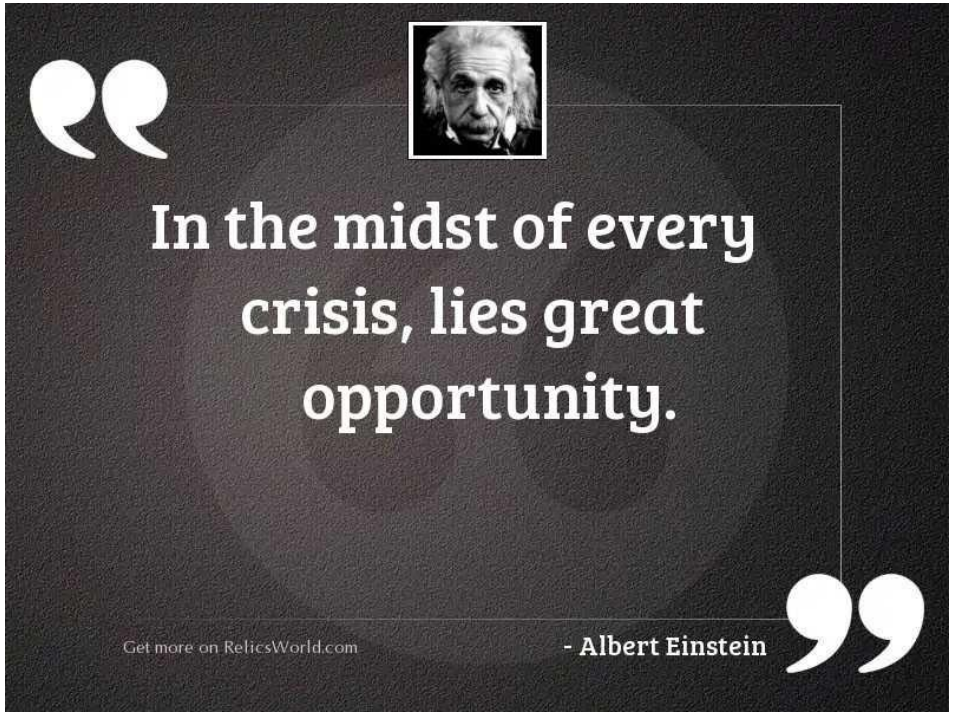
Humor

Would you rather work for a head brewer or owner whose humor holds morale up on a bad brew day, or one who stays serious and task-focused throughout?

- When has humor helped you or your crew cope with real stress?
- When does humor cross the line in the taproom, and who decides?
- How can leaders use humor without minimizing what people feel?



Would you rather run an honest debrief after a failed batch that names what leadership got wrong, OR move on quickly and protect the crew's confidence?



What's your Legacy?



Would you rather be remembered as the brewery leader who solved the crisis, OR as the one who helped everyone else stay calm, connected and effective through it?



Pick one and commit to following through by saying it out loud at your table.

- One piece of equipment, supplier or process you will plan a backup for.
- One practice you will change in how you communicate under pressure.
- One conversation you will have in the next 90 days, with your crew or a fellow brewer.

THANK YOU!

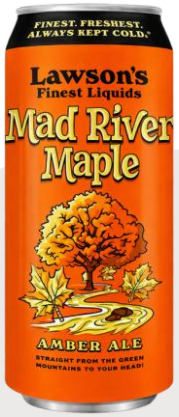


CHEERS!!

Susan's Info

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Scan to save contact details



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