Building a Brewery Sales Engine

Modern strategies for Vermont brewers

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Saison Day at Zero Gravity, Burlington

Relationships that last. Sales habits you can put to work.

A Quick Introduction



Dan Nieves

Founder, Elevated Beverage Solutions

- 20 years in beverage sales
- Sales Management Experience with Jack’s Abby Craft Lagers and Allagash Brewing Company
- Distributor Sales and Management Experience
- On-Premise Sales, Off-Premise Sales, Chain Management, and Distributor Management Specialist

Sales consulting and fractional sales leadership

Helping beverage teams build stronger relationships and consistent sales habits

Good relationships get stronger when you follow through.

ELEVATED BEVERAGE SOLUTIONS

An open draft line…
A beer runs out.

The buyer needs a replacement.

Would your brewery get the call?



Show of hands: self-distribution, distributor, or both?

What you will leave with

- A clear-cut plan for sales opportunities
- Five accounts that deserve focused attention - Tier One Accounts
- A practical 30-day sales plan
- A simplified toolbox of sales skills to help you grow your brewery

Use the workbook to make decisions for your brewery.

Two routes to the same account

Self-distribution

Your team owns the sale and order process.

Delivery capacity, collections and service need time.

Distributor-supported sales

Agree who sells, supports and follows up.

Coordinate inventory, orders and account ownership.

Every model needs someone to own demand and follow-through.

Sales staffing has to fit the brewery

Owner or existing employee	Protect time for selling. Plan around other duties.
Dedicated salesperson	Provide clear priorities, coaching and realistic coverage.
Fractional sales leadership	Define leadership scope and who carries out field work.

Choose capacity your brewery can support consistently.

The work needs a name beside it

- Who finds the next account?
- Who supports the current placement?
- Who confirms the next order?
- Where is ownership missing?



Workbook 1 · 60 seconds to write, then one example

One accountable person, with a clear handoff and backup.

Consistency made me the first call

Nearly a year of relevant contact before an opportunity opened!

- An established buyer had no reason to switch
- A production shortage opened a draft line
- The relationship expanded across the group



Useful contact keeps you in the conversation.

Useful and consistent contact earns another conversation

- A reason to stop in
- Something useful to contribute
- A promise you can keep
- A next step that fits the buyer



Workbook 2 · One account and your next useful action

Make the next contact relevant to that account.

Strong account support starts inside

Keep your internal team connected

Understand production, inventory and delivery realities.

Share what the market is telling you

Bring account feedback back to the people making the beer.

Who inside your brewery needs to hear more from sales?



Building connections beyond the workday

Internal follow-through supports external trust.

Your distributor needs a partner

Show up with something useful

A clear sales story. The right account targets.

Make the rep’s day easier

Help with the work. Close the loop afterward.

What would make you easier to work with next week?



Distributor reps and managers visiting Allagash for an incentive-based trip

Distributor-supported or self-distributed: own the follow-through.

Self-distribution needs selling time

- Separate sales calls from delivery tasks
- Build routes around account potential and service needs
- Confirm order cutoffs and delivery expectations
- Track the second order and overdue commitments

What sales task disappears first when your week gets busy?

A full delivery route still needs a sales plan.

Trust shows up when news is difficult

Tell them early	State what you know accurately.
Offer a realistic next step	Confirm an alternative or agree on an update time.
Deliver on your commitment	Keep the buyer and your partner informed.

Confidence comes from reliable behavior.

The buyer said the keg cost too much

A high-volume waterfront account

An established competing wheat beer

A price objection that kept returning



What would you investigate before changing the price?

Discovery can change what the buyer is comparing.

The orange calculation changed the conversation

4–5 half barrels per week at peak summer volume in this account

- Fruit purchases and preparation added cost
- A different serving approach changed the comparison
- The effort showed how seriously I took their business



Understand the account’s actual cost and operating needs.

Discovery makes the recommendation relevant. Discovery questions work!

- What is moving, and what is sitting?
- Which customers are you trying to serve?
- What makes a new beer worth keeping?
- How will we know a trial worked?



The recommendation should follow the buyer's answer.

An account visit with a purpose

- Buyer: Our local four-packs are sitting
- One question to understand the situation
- One recommendation you could justify
- One next step you would agree together

Workbook 3 · 90 seconds with a neighbor, then two responses

A useful visit ends with an agreed action.

Account support can be creative

Build an idea around the account

Choose an event that fits their customers and staff.

Follow through after the event

Review what sold and agree on the next step.

What could you create with an account that fits their customers?



A pig roast with my dad for an Allagash tap takeover

A memorable event needs a business purpose.

The placement is the start of the work

On-Premise

Can guests find it on the menu?

Can staff explain it and recommend it?

Will the line stay supplied?

Off-Premise

Can shoppers find the package and price?

Can staff explain the beer?

Is fresh stock available for purchase?

A placement becomes valuable when the beer keeps selling.

Shelf talkers help shoppers choose

Hard to use

A long brewery biography

Small type and several messages

A sign covering the product or price

Worth testing

Brewery name and clear beer style

One specific reason to try it

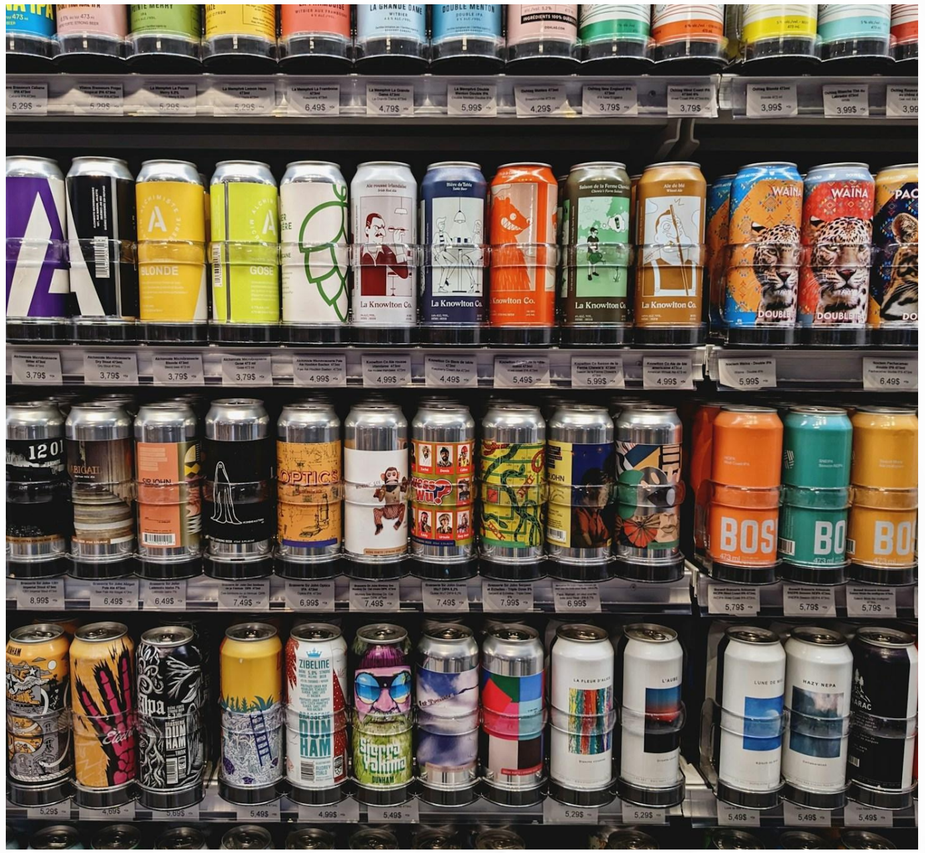
Readable text beside the right package

Workbook 4 · What would you simplify on your shelf message?

Help the shopper make one clear decision.

Shelf position changes visibility

- Discuss a visible position with the retailer
- Consider handle-side and eye-to-thigh placement
- Keep product, pricing and freshness easy to check
- Agree on a test and review the result



Track the change in that account before expanding it.

Lips to Sips = Sales

- The right account, timing and presenter
- Enough stock and a visible purchase location
- Staff who can continue the conversation
- A follow-up on sales and reorders



Workbook 4 · Who owns the follow-up after the tasting?

Five accounts deserve a specific plan

- Strong customer and product fit
- Realistic potential within a workable route
- Staff willing to engage
- A useful action and a clear owner

Workbook 2 · Select five accounts and plan the first action

The weekly sales review

Every brewery

Overdue promises and accounts needing attention

Placements waiting for a second order

Next actions with owners and due dates

Add for your model

Self-distribution: routes, cutoffs and collections

Distributor sales: inventory and order handoffs

Both: what stock can we support confidently?

Twenty focused minutes can keep the work moving.

Measures that tell you what to do next

Measure	What it helps you investigate
New placements	Is prospecting creating distribution?
Reorders	Are first orders becoming ongoing accounts?
Units per account per week	Where does rate of sale need investigation?
Inactive accounts and overdue promises	Where are retention and follow-through slipping?

Choose two measures you can maintain and act on.

Your first 30 days

- One responsibility to clarify
- One account action to execute
- One measure to review
- A name and a date for each



Workbook 6 · Two minutes to commit, then one response

Give the first action a deadline within seven days.

A sales engine people can rely on

- Relationships earn access
- Consistency keeps you in the conversation
- Honesty protects trust
- Ownership and measurement keep work moving



Use these habits with your team next week.

Questions and your brewery

Complimentary 30-minute brewery sales consultation

Bring your completed assessment.

We’ll identify your biggest sales challenge and practical next steps.

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Subject: Vermont Sales Consultation

Your workbook has the email and next steps to take home.