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**Ruth Yates, managing director, Corks Out**

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recommended in consumer wine columns. Hal Wilson, managing director of Cambridge Wine Merchants, spoke for the group when he said: "It would be great if this group can be spoken about nationally."

Matthew Hennings, managing director of Hennings Wine Merchants in West Sussex, felt there were clear benefits for the group in sharing experiences and learning how best to handle and minimise business costs. He said the retailers were all

faced with the same problems of scalability and rather than all go through them alone it made sense to pool ideas, share from each other and pass on advice to others.

Jamie Hutchinson, managing director of the Sampler, agreed: "We are all faced with similar challenges. So let's work together more."

Citing areas such as EPOS, carriage charges and stock control as areas they could work closer together on. "We are all

struggling to come up with the answers so let's learn from other people's experiences," he added.

Ted Sandbach, managing director of the Oxford Wine Company, felt anyone that wanted to be part of the Independent Wine Crew needed to be fully involved and feel like "they are really part of a group".

He was particularly interested in sharing ideas around managing cash flow better through business. "That is our biggest problem and the bigger your operation becomes, the bigger the problem becomes."

Ruth Yates, managing director of the small chain of Corks Out stores in the north west, said she would be particularly interested in looking at ranging and stock control issues, and how merchants can better understand those. She was also keen to address staff and human resources issues, particularly for multi-site operators.

"Independents need to stick together and share experiences. We need to drop our guard with each other and really learn from each others' mistakes," she said.

#### WHAT NEXT?

Over the coming weeks Harpers will look to recruit further members to the Independent

Wine Crew and bring merchants together at future meetings during this year. It will also be working with interested suppliers, distributors and producers keen to get closer to the independent sector in putting together future events, debates and tastings.

The members of the Independent Wine Crew will also be sharing their experiences and offering advice on key trading issues both in Harpers, but in the Top Merchant section of the relaunched [harpers.co.uk](http://harpers.co.uk). ■

The Independent Wine Crew, featuring: The Oxford Wine Company, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Hennings Wine Merchants, Corks Out, the Sampler, Jeroboams, WoodWinters and Red & White

#### GET INVOLVED

■ If you are a **multi-site independent wine merchant** and would like to get involved in the Independent Wine Crew initiative then please contact Richard Siddle at [richard.siddle@wrbm.com](mailto:richard.siddle@wrbm.com)

■ If you are a **supplier, distributor or producer** keen to find ways to work with the group then please contact Lee Sharkey on [lee.sharkey@wrbm.com](mailto:lee.sharkey@wrbm.com).