

TOP MERCHANTS TEAMS UP WITH THE WILSON DRINKS REPORT

As part of the Top Merchants programme, merchants are looking to work with independents to collate sales and trading data direct from their stores, in order to help build up a better national picture within the independent merchant sector.

The Wilson of the Wilson Drinks Report is working with Harpers together and analyse this anonymously provided data and was able to give a stark overview of the initial findings at the seminar.

He said you can quickly build up a very different picture for independents, from overall off-trade national data from Nielsen. For example, independents are leading national trends in wine and sparkling wine, but doing less well in spirits. When looking at country breakdowns, independents in our small sample appear to be doing less well in the US and California, but better in France and Chile. The research will also allow us to see what proportion of independent sales are going through retail stores, wholesale and online.

Anyone signing up to the scheme will be given exclusive access to the main overall findings. All data is held on a confidential basis, no personal information will be shared with other merchants, and it will appear as anonymous data in the results. If you are interested in taking part, then please email richard@wilsonofwines.com.



Above: Nicky Burton and James McWhinney

and he has no vision, no contacts, nothing shipped – but still he sells himself a wine merchant.”

Feedback said to be a successful wine merchant you need five criteria – vision, quality, staff and luck. “You need an idea of what you want to achieve. I have vision, but the path isn't easy. Better like a professional builder, that building may be shed debt, or you suddenly find you need a more computer. You have to go on to investigate a computer or all over the day.”

The wine trade's turnover is down there and lots of people who want to work in the business, and are passionate about it. “There are a lot of people who aren't simply motivated by money, which is a good thing.” Feedback said it's important to allow your staff to manage themselves as you can't be everywhere by always listening.

When it comes to quality, feedback said to be successful you need to be seen to be by having all wine listed. “Customers were complaining about our Petal Chablis, so we did a blind tasting and our list partner's reaction, was more the first, was we didn't have a problem? “I was more merchants buy for convenience, claimed feedback. When pushing the supplier in the bid, the danger is you allow other eyes over.

Luck is the final factor required for a successful wine merchant. “What I would have said, although it's said luck is a case of preparation meets opportunity. Ultimately, you have to be brave, strong and decisive, look after your staff and you will have the makings of a good business.”

Nicky Burton, founder, Artisan & Vine

It might seem like a mad venture to go into for specialising in biodynamics, English and organic wines while the country into the throes of recession, but that's exactly what Nicky O'Mara, founder of Artisan & Vine in Bournemouth, south west London, did in 2007.

Artisan & Vine has post-funded the critics and gone from strength to strength, and O'Mara attributes a lot of her success to three of social media.

“I love social media, particularly Twitter, although I think Facebook is a bit overused now,” she said.

“To be honest it's all I can afford. I send out relevant tweets most days, and talk about which wine-makers are coming to our bar, or what special offers we might have on, but it's not all wine related.

“I think Twitter has helped us to get where we are today.”

O'Mara also said it's a weekly newsletter to her subscribers, which keeps them up to date with what's happening at Artisan & Vine, whether that is a special offering, a vineyard update, or something new on the menu.

“I think social media has helped us to become part of the local community and I certainly wouldn't have met so many people without Twitter.” ■



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