



Fest Practices

**Jockey for successful
event presence**





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Contents

Part 1	Jockey for Successful Event Presence	07
Part 2	Assess Internal and External Factors	09
Part 3	Inventory Equipment	12
Part 4	Train Your People	14
Part 5	Promote Yourself or Get Lost	16
Part 6	We're Live! Now What?!	19
Part 7	Play Nice in the Sandbox	22
Part 8	Last Call	25

Jockey For Successful Event Presence



So you own a brewery. Or a cidery, distillery, winery, bar, restaurant, etc. You get it—you sell alcohol. In order to do so, people need to know you exist. If they don't, your doors close. If they do, but your product sucks, your doors close. If your brand isn't compelling or memorable (in the right ways), your doors close. Your job isn't just to not close—it's to blow the doors off the place and thrive.

If you're reading this, you likely have a vested interest in the brand you represent. To some degree, you have a direct influence on how successful you are (or aren't). Your company has or might be getting ready to invest thousands, if not millions, into launching a brand that I'll wager you wouldn't hate if it became recognized as a household name.



How Do You Want to be Known...And Remembered?

If you haven't thought about that question or can't answer it with conviction, stop reading this now. Grab a drink, go someplace quiet, and figure that out first, then come back. Okay, you're still here. Or, welcome back.

Do You Really Want to be Average?

There are concrete, non-debatable things you have to do in order to operate a business just to get it off the ground. And, there will always be ever-infinite lists of what you *should* and *shouldn't* do to distinguish yourself as above-average. Because, in the chance that your closest friends, family, investors, or loyal customers aren't being honest with you: average is for losers. If you're going to open a business and phone it in, just hang up.



“Those who move the needle are paying attention the details and refuse to be average.”

If you’re prepared to check your ego at the door and put the work in, you’ll flourish. Your customers expect you to.

Raise the Bar on Successful Event Presence

This shouldn’t be your first rodeo, but it may—if so, it’s all good. Either way, you have a choice. Most will go through the motions and blend in with the other hundred or so other exhibiting brands. To be fair, many attendees who are there to just imbibe won’t notice or care. However, *you should*.

Our industry isn’t slowing down. New taprooms open daily, and eventually, if not already, they’re going to open next to you or across the street. And, they’re going to compete for your business. Whether you like it or not, everyone is gunning for bigger or at least consistently reliable market share, shelf space, and butts in seats. Those who move the needle are paying attention to the details and refuse to be average.



It might be uncomfortable evaluating your brand’s event activation with an objective eye, but you have to do it. You also have to create a safe space for your employees and management team to be honest with you. That assumes, however, that you’re cultivating a culture that *wants* to be better than average, and values when it is. Establishing a standard higher than fake-it-until-you-make-it is going to require more work upfront and may result in a couple of scraped palms from failing forward, but you will quickly learn that it’s worth the effort.

This eBook hopes to help you shorten that learning curve. It compiles what we’ve learned from our customers and attending festivals all across the country. It will guide you with strategic, practical applications along the way. Hopefully, you’ll challenge yourself to raise the bar on what successful event presence looks like.



FEST PRACTICES | PART 2
Assess Internal and External Factors



“There’s one singular, most important reason why you’d participate in any event: sales.”

There’s one singular, most important reason why you’d participate in any event: sales. Is what you’re doing to activate your event presence leading to more dollars in your taproom or retail accounts?

Should there be other goals you layer into your strategy? Absolutely. You might be thinking: brand awareness, testing a pilot/experimental batch, teaching a new employee the ropes, introducing a seasonal offering, etc. However, if you’re only stoked to attend Annual Awesome Festival X to get wasted with your industry colleagues, you should’ve opted out of pouring and instead paid for a ticket like everyone else.

Consider Internal and External Factors

Maximizing event presence shouldn’t be daunting, but it should be taken seriously. There are many aspects that need to sync concurrently. And, it requires considering *internal* and *external* factors—before, during, and after any event.

We’ll begin to scratch the surface on addressing what you should consider before the event, *internally* within your organization. Specifically, we’ll start by assessing whether an event should be worth your time and whether you have the resources to pull it off the way your brand deserves.

We’ll wrap up what you should consider *internally* before events. Then, we’ll continue looking at the planning stage from an external perspective—how



to approach the event and its host organization, your industry and scene colleagues, and the audience (i.e., your potential consumers).



Internally | Assign Value to the Event

1. Is the event critical to your success? If not, the smart play might be to sit this one out.
2. Do you literally have what it takes to pull it off well? Note: I didn't say, "just okay." Consider your time and resources. If you're short on either, be prepared to invest in both adequately or you'll pay double for it later. If you show up with a dilapidated jockey box, for example, trust me—your competition will eat you alive for bringing a knife to a gunfight.
3. Do you *want* to be there? Don't just go through the motions. And, if you have to send other reps from your brand, make sure they want to be there, too. Your people can make or break your reputation, so don't send the guy who doesn't know how to smile, can't look guests in the eye, and says, "Yep" instead of, "You're welcome." But you already knew that.
4. What's your goal? If your answer is, "To show up, pour beer, and get our name out there," you're gonna have to come harder than that. Your name is on the line, and there are thousands of other brands that don't care that you don't.

Internally | Forecast Your Product Offerings

1. Have you budgeted for this event in terms of your production schedule and annual volume production? This will obviously be more significant the smaller you are and the less you produce.

2. Don't bring more than you need. Don't know how much to bring? Ask the festival host (who generally may have minimum and maximum requirements) or your industry colleagues who've done the event before.
3. What are you going to pour? Flagships and mainstays can be reliable, but if you were a fan of your own brewery (which you should be), wouldn't it be fun to try something new, different, and a little adventurous? Or, do you think your fans just want to show up and



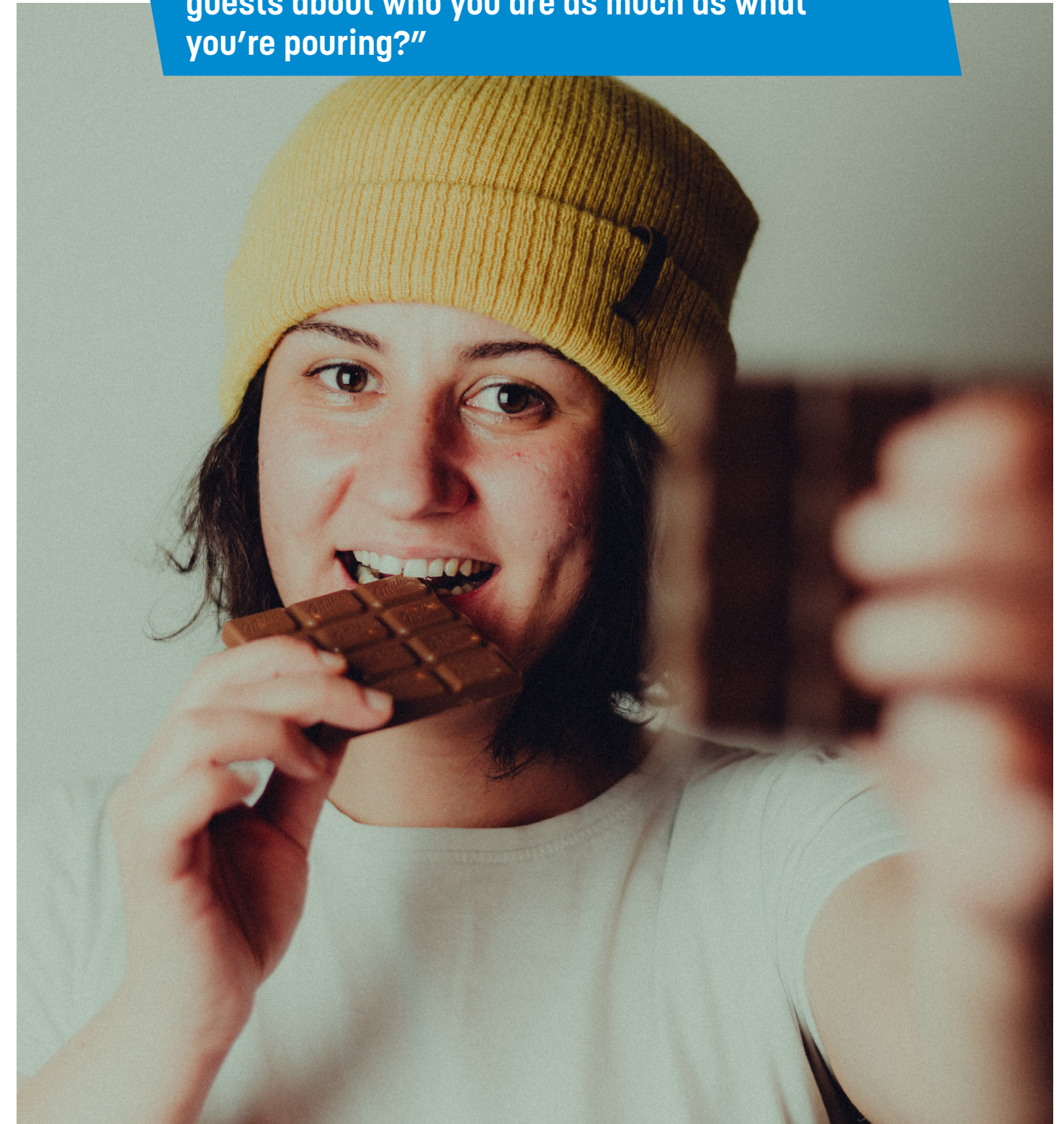
drink everything they can already buy on any store shelf any day of the year? (Spoiler: They don't.) Consider seasonals as well as letting your freak flag fly—test that crazy concoction you've been wanting to do forever, or collaborate with another brewery and co-op its promotion. Have fun with it, but not to the point where you lose focus of your goals.

Pro consideration: If you're promoting that it will be available at an event/festival, perhaps it should also be available in your taproom. Yes, there may be strategic reasons why you shouldn't or contractual obligations why you can't. Otherwise, it satisfies both your loyal taproom fans who might not be able to attend the festival as well as those who might find their way back to your taproom to have a second helping of what they fell in love with at the festival, which is kinda the goal, right?

4. Added value. People care and want to know your story (if it's worth sharing). At least, they want to know what makes you special, worth waiting in line for, worth remembering. What can you do off-site at an event to educate

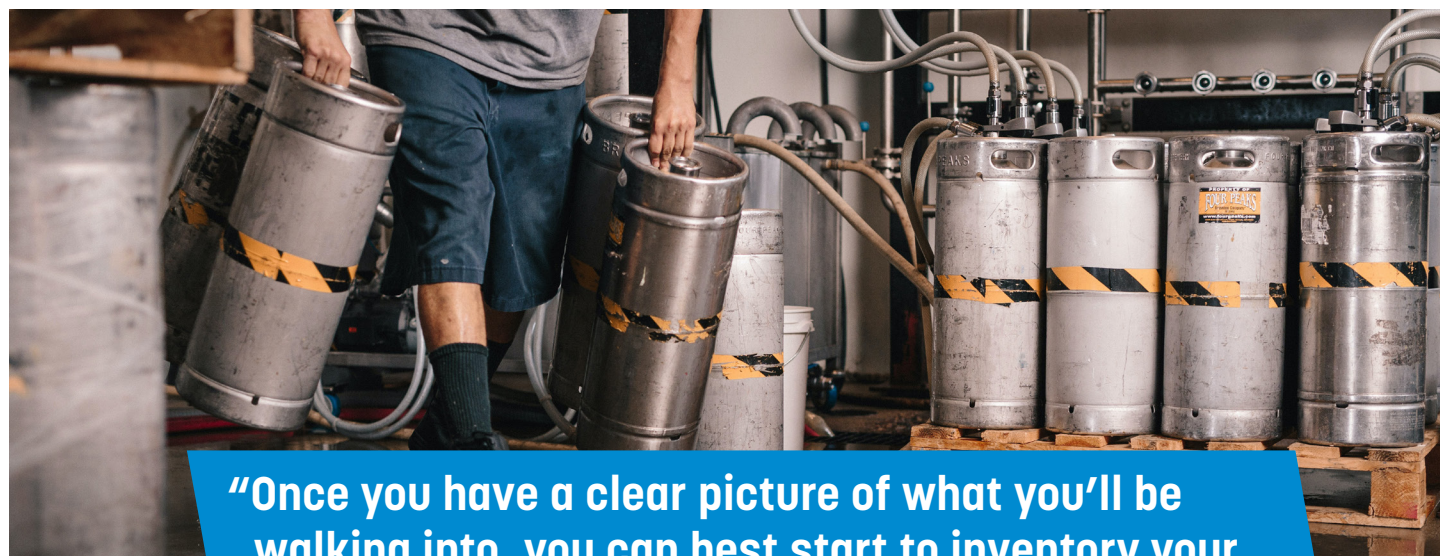
guests about who you are as much as what you're pouring? And, if you're looking to create easy, immediate buzz, try complementing what you're serving with a quick and easy food/snack pairing. Garnish your pastry stout with a nugget of candy, your wine with a sliver of cheese, your cider with a slice of crisp apple.

"What can you do off-site at an event to educate guests about who you are as much as what you're pouring?"



FEST PRACTICES | PART 3

Inventory and Equipment



“Once you have a clear picture of what you’ll be walking into, you can best start to inventory your equipment and materials.”

You’ve assigned value to the event and decided that it’s worth your time and resources. Since it’s a “Yes,” you’ve also allocated the product that you’re bringing. So, now—do you not tell anyone, wait until day of, then scramble trying to piece everything together in a panic? Oh, shit—you forgot to call Jane in on her day off to work the event. She can’t though—she’s out of town. So, you grab new-guy John, who’s never worked an event before. You’re in trouble and the event hasn’t even started yet.



Internally | Inventory Your Equipment

Before you assess how *much* equipment, materials, and supplies you need to bring, now is a perfect time to ask the event organizers what they’re providing and how *they’re* handling other FAQ’s.

Questions to Ask the Event Producer:

1. What are you (i.e., the event) providing—
 - a covered tent?
 - a table, tablecloth?
 - signage?
 - ice?
 - direct parking access?
 - food/hospitality?
 - token/ticket collection box?

2. What packaged format is preferred, allowed (e.g., jockey box vs. cans/bottles)?
3. Is there a minimum or maximum volume of beverages you’re expected to bring?
4. When’s the deadline for submitting your product lineup (i.e., names, styles, ABV, etc.)?

Pro consideration: What’s your tap list look like? Um... Yeah, you need one. A couple pieces of uncoated paper with sloppy handwriting aren’t going to cut it. And they’re going to get soaked and ruined within minutes. Have a banner made, and hang it. Or, if you’re handy—craft a custom chalkboard. Either way, your signage needs to be above eye level. Guests need (read: want) to know what you’re pouring (incl. style, flavor highlights, and ABV) before they get to the front of the line.



Otherwise, be prepared to recite your menu offerings at least 100 times. Now, imagine a line 50+ people deep. You’re going to get tired of doing it and eventually resent attendees for asking what you should be informing them by default.

5. Is there a call sheet for the day of (i.e., what time should you arrive, be set up by, etc.)?
6. How many staff members am I allowed? How do they get credentials day of?
7. Is it okay to sell merchandise from our booth?
8. What are you doing to promote the event? Is there a specific event social media handle or hashtag to use?
9. What’s your contingency plan for inclement weather?
10. What’s tear-down look like, what do we do with our empty container, etc.?

Once you have a clear picture of what you’ll be walking into, you can best start to inventory your equipment and materials.

While you can pretty much do everything with your phone except literally pour beer (for which I’m sure there’s even an app), we’re going to suggest you keep it old school for events and use an analog checklist. Yep, on paper. You’re gonna need a pen, too. Yep, with ink.

What’s Your M.O.?

If you don’t have a working SOP (standard operating procedure) for events or a checklist for what to bring, start now. You’re not going to be the only person to ever work them. Whether it’s the next festival or person you hire, you need to train yourself out of being the sole person who does everything and only owns the information in their head. If you put it in the “events pile,” put it on paper, then pass it on.

While you’re at it, think about training your team, too. Let’s assume you’re bringing a jockey box to the event. When was the last time it was used? Do you even know where it is? Do you or the person you’ve put in charge to manage the event know how to set it up?

Before every use... Pause. Let’s define, “before”: at least one to two weeks in advance. Before every use, you should test your jockey box to confirm it’s in working order, nothing’s broken or missing, and that you’ve got enough CO₂. Also before every use, make sure your assigned team knows how to clean a jockey box. You don’t want tomorrow’s event to taste like yesterday’s stale beer.

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If you have an SOP in place, this stuff should naturally take care of itself. However, your SOP and/or checklist should also tell you to check it anyway. See how that system of checks and balances becomes automated—even on paper? In the event that something’s off or needs extra attention, you’ve baked in a few days to account for repairs or ordering replacement materials.

Now, use those couple days to confirm your starting lineup for who you’re sending to work the event.

FEST PRACTICES | PART 4

Train Your People



“Everyone who works for you is in sales and marketing, especially when they’re representing you outside of your taproom.”

Depending on where you and your establishment are in your lifecycle, the goal is to have a team of trusted rockstars who manage events on your brand’s behalf and hold themselves accountable to the standards you’ve set. On their own, without being told (or micromanaged). But, that means you’ve got to set the tone upfront. And hire smart.



Internally | Train Your People

Of course, who you send is going to depend on the type of event, but what they do and how they execute it is always your call. If you’re still reading this you care. Remember the staff from that one brewery at last month’s event—you know, the crew who was drunk before they let in general admission? Well, they don’t even remember being there. Here’s the difference: You have standards. They think everything’s harmless and hilarious.

Have you considered the following for your team?

1. Is this a high-profile event that demands your seasoned A Squad? Or, is this an opportunity to bring up a hustler from the B Team who’s eager to learn?
2. If the event is themed or leans toward a specific genre of beverage (e.g., wild ales, wine and food pairings, cocktails with housemade

shrubs, etc.), it might make sense to send the person on staff who’s most well-versed in it and can speak intelligently. And if you can afford to, send one other person who can learn from that person.

3. Have you set CLEAR expectations for all things service and hospitality? If your staff is rude, dismissive, or unprofessional—simply *unfun*—I already don’t want to have anything to do with your brand. Your people have ruined my experience before I’ve even tried your product. And it’s your fault. Well, theirs too, but you’re going to be the one who pays for it. Hold them accountable, fire viruses who are infecting the rest of your staff (we all have them), and reward amazing behavior.



4. What’s your drinking policy? Sure, they’re working an event where the main function is serving alcohol. So what? What’s your tolerance for whether or how much your team is allowed to drink?
5. What are they wearing? Uniform is such a militant style, but do your people look like your people? And yeah, it’s okay to tell your staff to shower, wear a shirt that’s not wrinkled, and shave their neck hair. Slinging beer does not have to be synonymous with hipsters who try to ironically look homeless.
6. Is someone in charge or able to make a judgment call if something hits the fan? Are you or someone else on call in case of an emergency? Make sure your team knows who to call when the going gets tough.
7. If you’re selling merch, is your team trained on whatever mobile POS terminal you’re bringing? Don’t forget change—some people still roll with cash.

8. Do a dry run. You don’t have to set up everything, but think of it as a fire drill. If your team had two minutes to get out the door with everything, are you confident they could? If not, adjust.
9. Everyone who works for you is in sales and marketing, especially when they’re representing you outside of your taproom. What are you and they doing in advance of the event to promote the event and more importantly you being there?
10. AAR (after action review). Essentially, this is a report debriefing the event. What worked (and why), and what didn’t (and why)? Your call on whether it should be on paper, stored in Google Drive as a shared doc, or scribbled on a coaster. Either way, create some benchmarks that you want measured or commented on, and let the staff own it.



By creating systems that your staff can rely on and refer to (without having to bother you for the brain dump), you can remove emotional bias and make an experienced decision on whether you commit to doing the same event again next year.

Yes, they’re work and can be looong days, but events and festivals are fun. Send people who want to be there and are fluent in how they’re *supposed* to be managed. By doing so, you’ll see a return on your investment in training “up.” How will you know? Your staff will be your biggest indicator. If you hired the right people for the right reasons, they want what’s best for your brand. And whether your taproom is busy or crickets after an event will confirm it.

FEST PRACTICES | PART 5

Promote Yourself or Get Lost



By now, you should have a baseline for which events make fiscal sense while aligned with your company's goals. Based on what you're committing to, you're starting to communicate with the event hosts so you both can meet each other's expectations. This will help determine which products and what equipment will be required. And, training your people to perform to a higher bar should be threaded throughout every step of preparing for any event.

With your internal vision and activation plan firmly established, now it's time to tell the world about it.



If You Don't, Your Competition Will

Promote yourself or get lost in the shuffle. If you don't care that you're going to be there, why should anyone else? Let's assume we're talking about any event where your competition also exists—a lineup of dozens (or maybe hundreds) of brands all vying for a slice of the crowd's attention. If you can't hook me in advance—to entice me enough to go out of my way to find your booth in a sea of thousands of people—you'll be at the mercy of a game of chance, and the house always wins. You'll have lost the opportunity to earn new fans (and their money) after the event because you didn't give them a reason to seek you out during it.

So, how do you cut through the noise? By doing so while it's still quiet.

Internal Human Resources

Let someone else own it. If you're the person who has to wear all the hats because your resources are tapped, ask for help. There are savvy go-getters who are hungry for the experience, a promotion, or foot in the door to the industry. Fair trade, win-win.



Employ a graphic designer.

Find a good one on the cheap, and you're good. Find a great one, and you're golden. Hire someone you trust to be honest enough with you to tell you that your current logo sucks. Either way, pay them what they're worth.

This person will create all the digital and print assets you're going to need to promote your brand, products, and event. Then, turn over those assets to whoever runs your social media.

How do you cut through the noise? By doing so while it's still quiet.

Yes, you have to be on social media.

Who's the person on your team who's on their second write-up because they can't put away their phone? Put them in charge because they can probably run viral circles around you while you're still trying to recover your Hotmail password. Might be time to upgrade that email address, too.



If your graphic designer and social media manager work in tandem their work should inject life into your brand and your brand into your fans' lives. They should function like the rug from *The Big Lebowski* and tie the room together, dude.

Modest Investment, Exponential Return

You *could* cut every corner and (get lucky enough to) still achieve your goals without spending a dime. But, you're going to have to over-compensate your lack of investment with major-impact ingenuity and creativity. How sharp are you?

Whether you job it out or DIY, you're going to have to budget for at least the basics either in your time or money.

Pro tip: Create one overarching thematic piece of content then repurpose it as needed. Look like you know what you're doing and format the core piece of creative in both portrait and landscape orientations, ensuring that you'll be able to crop one of them down to a square without losing any critical elements.



Digital Assets

- **Flyer:** Think print-friendly size (4.25" 5.5," or 1/4-pg, will get your four flyers per sheet of paper if you're hustlin' your own).
- **Facebook Event:** Ask your staff to invite their network of locals, regulars, etc., but not to blanket-invite everyone they know five states away. If the event host has already created a sanctioned event page, you can auto-add it to your brand's page.
- **Instagram Story:** Post videos (up to 1 min in length, auto-divided into 15-sec clips), go live, or show the candid, behind-the-scenes fun stuff that proves you're human.

- **#hashtag:** Create a fun, event-specific hashtag for your fans to engage with. But, make sure you also follow that hashtag so you can respond.
- **YouTube:** Do you have an existing channel? If not, and you do a lot of events and have a knack for storytelling, this might be a great resource to start archiving them.
- **Press Release:** If it's a rather large, high-profile, exclusive, or particularly newsworthy event, the media wants to know about it. Bonus points, it seems, if a non-profit benefits. People gravitate to warm and fuzzy.
- **Website:** If it's your event, it's got to own real estate on your website or, at the very least, be highly visible on your social media. Period.
- **Newsletter:** If people are voluntarily subscribing to it, they want to know about the cool stuff you're doing. Tell them. Maybe they get a special perk that no one else does?



Printed Collateral

- **Poster for Your Taproom:** 11x17 is the go-to standard you see most often. Give everyone on staff one or two to tack up at their favorite (non-competing, of course) local hangs.
- **Flyer:** Done are the days of flyering cars in a parking lot. Instead, present them to guests at the same time you hand them a menu or with their tab.
- **Menus:** If you print new menus regularly, there should always be space allocated for promotions, new releases, etc.
- **Draft List:** You've already got my attention because I'm thirsty. Tease me about what you've got going on in addition to what's available on tap.

Communicate and Respond

You have to be willing to respond when your audience speaks. Whether it's a retweet from Taylor Swift, a follow from the person they're crushing on, or a simple heart or reply from their favorite brewery, people want to be noticed, heard, and appreciated. You don't have to nor should you stroke the trolls [honestly, F 'em] because you're never going to please everyone. However, as much as you can, you should be acknowledging or replying to as many fans who engage with you as possible. It not only makes their day, but they will tell others about it beyond what you'd ever pay for in advertising.

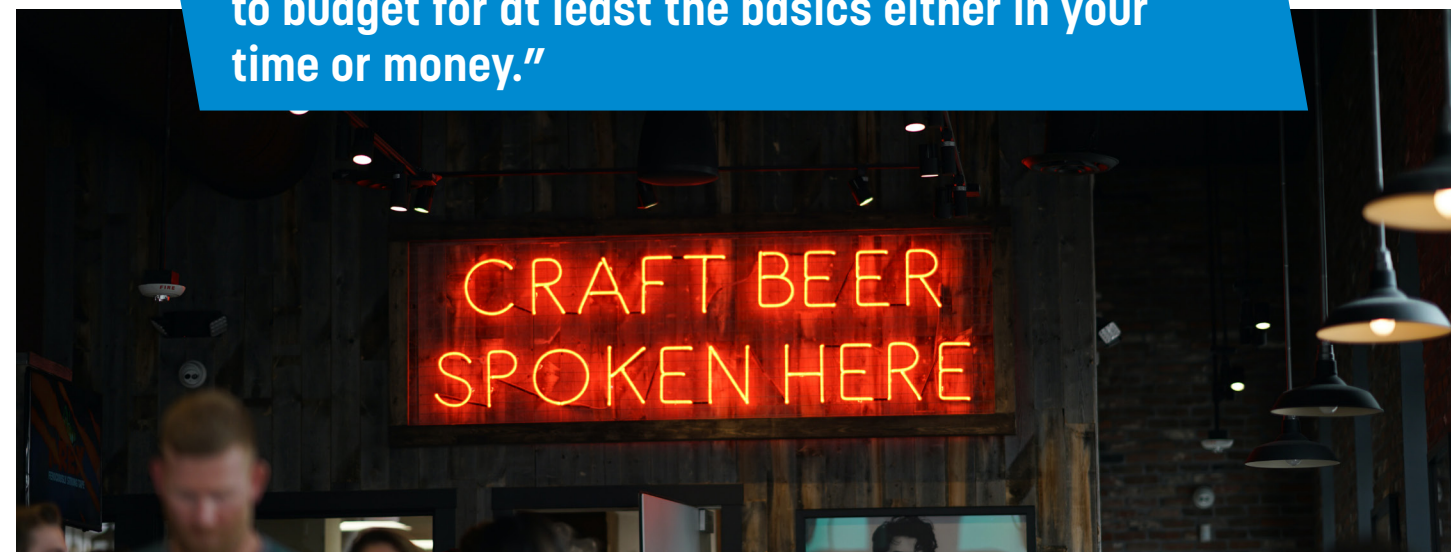
**We're Live!
Now What?**



"Communicate before so you don't have to apologize after."

We continue with how to put what you've learned into action, and yes—it continues with how well you've trained your people. Today's your event. Doors just opened. You've planned for this. You got this. Get 'em!

"Whether you job it out or DIY, you're going to have to budget for at least the basics either in your time or money."



Equip and Empower

By now, you will have already set the expectation for staff performance. Who you hired weeks, months, or even years ago—and to what degree you hold them accountable—will influence how smoothly operations run today. Assuming you've done right by them and have set them up for success, you shouldn't have to micromanage anyone because they're vested in your mission and the brand they represent. Because they trust you. Because you've treated them with dignity and respect, and given them the tools they need.

360°

Keep your head on a swivel. We often only heed this warning in dangerous situations when we might be at risk. And just like that, by arming ourselves with intentional self-awareness we can prevent most preventable scenarios. This means not only being conscious of ourselves but every complementary and competing factor that may influence our next move. Aside from occasionally getting in our own



way, the two most critical common denominators will be your beer and your guests—both are necessary and exist to propel the other.



Self-awareness 101. Do you have a brand-new beer or a rare, highly sought-after one on tap today that deserves some special recognition? If so, make sure you understand how to answer the ever-popular question, “What’s your best beer?” They are *not* asking which one is your *favorite*, but for some reason bartenders and servers always botch this opportunity. They feel obligated to respond with, “Well, MY favorite beer that we have on right now is...” Thanks, but I don’t care; that’s not what I asked.

Granted, some nervous, novice customers may ask for your opinion because they don’t know well enough, and okay, sure—throw ‘em a bone, but excited and curious customers want to be educated without bias. Being at the mercy of your personal (and potentially different) tastes could mean that I just missed that one other beer of yours that I would’ve fallen in love with. Instead, you gave me the radler because you don’t like “hoppy” beers. So, give me the facts: the beer’s flavor profile, its stats, noteworthiness, and when it makes sense—whether it has undeniable, *mass* appeal.

The Mob Goes Wild

You could have worse problems than a line of people excited about what you’re serving. This comes with a caveat that’s twofold: 1) They really don’t *want* to wait, and 2) If they have to for any extended period of time, they’re going

to be disappointed if you haven’t articulated the expectations, and then run out of what they’re waiting for. Common sense, right? Seems fair, right? Yet, time and time again we see breweries brush off consumer frustration with a reaction of, “Well, you should’ve been in line sooner.”

While you can’t hold everyone’s hands, you can lead them to water sooner. Communicate before so you don’t have to apologize after. Use your brand’s cache and the demand for your product to your advantage, not a flag to wave “Gotcha” in your fans’ faces. If you expect a keg of a hot ticket item to kick quick, keep us on our toes because getting caught flat footed is a major buzzkill.

While you can’t hold everyone’s hands, you can lead them to water sooner.

To do so, assign a designated person to manage crowd control, but not in the bouncer-kicking-people-out-of-a-nightclub-kind-of-way. Instead, their job is to invite, entice, and play host.



Blow it Up

If you can afford the extra body, cut their tether to your booth so they can be a mobile cheerleader. This is the person who adopts the event’s official hashtag. Wait. They don’t have one?! Create one. And make it trend. Have them lean into the social platform that works best for you and where the event admins and attendees seem to be the most active. But, also consider the following...

- Announce your booth number/location, and mention your neighbors if you’re packed in like sardines. Help me find you, not make me look for you. Do this at least once on every social platform you occupy—before start time. If I’m a fan of yours, I will check my favorite feed first

and look for your most recent post. If it’s dated, it could be fair for me to assume you’re sleeping and don’t mind whether or not I make my way to you.

- Take photos of your booth setup, the cool and unique, attendees drinking your stuff (ask nicely for permission first), and the seemingly mundane. In addition to using them to promote yourself the day of, you can bank those photos and repurpose them for future use, particularly in promoting your next event.

Pro tip: Take photos in portrait and landscape orientations. Delete the bad ones, dress up the keepers with a quick auto-filter if it helps, crop out dude’s drunk face, and upload them somewhere your team can access them later.

- If you don’t have to be tied behind the booth, hustle the crowd. If you coordinate a plan of attack with your other team members, who’s to say you couldn’t offer “cocktail service” to the people waiting in line? If you know the majority of people are stalling for Beer A to be tapped, start a second line for everyone who wants Beers B-Z. Then, take their orders, bring them their beers, and collect their token or ticket (if applicable). Now, they will tell everyone that you just literally went the extra step to serve them.

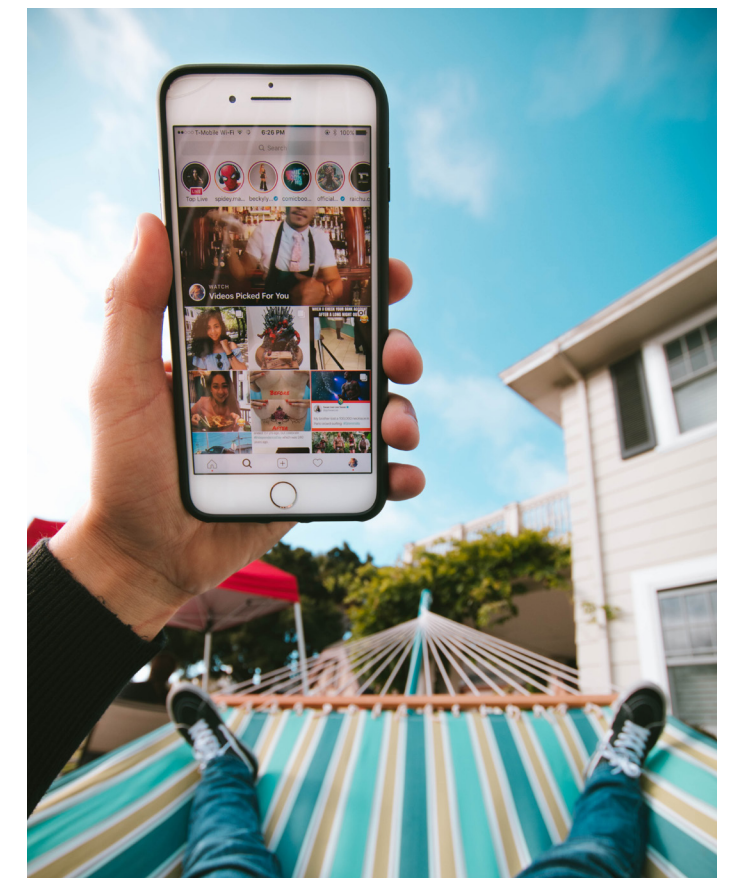


- Are you comfortable in front of the camera? Go live on your Instagram Story (it can simultaneously auto-publish to your Facebook Story as well). Keep your vids short and sweet. Film in 15-second increments to play nice with how they clip your content, and add captions so users can still follow along visually if the event is too loud (it probably is). Can you hear me now?

- If not already, establish a persona/voice for your brand on Twitter, and live-tweet the day’s event from that perspective.
- And, please please please give us a heads up before you tap Barrel-Aged Bucket List Beer. It’ll start the on-site, word-of-mouth buzz. Update us when it’s tapped, and let us down gently when it kicks.

Don’t Just Stand There

The moral: Be proactive, and get moving. Unless you really are *that* cool and don’t need the boost, be proud of your participation and let that enthusiasm rip.



FEST PRACTICES | PART 7

Play Nice in the Sandbox



“Study everything, and put only the best stuff into practice.”

It's easy to be selfish and inconsiderate. If you read *Part 6*, you might still be sore from us ripping off the Band-Aid stressing the importance of what it means to be self-aware. Beyond making sure your beer is accounted for and your staff is trained to be effective faces of your brand, making smart use of your time while pouring alongside other industry professionals is the perfect Petri dish from where to cultivate a network you can trust. Their “been there, done that” experience is priceless. So, how do you get them on your team—or, better yet—them to invite you onto theirs?

Get Your House in Order

There will be plenty of time to mingle, so before you leave your staff hanging (which you'll *never* do, correct?), ensure that *everything* about your own booth is primed, ready to activate first.

Think about your event space like your home... and it's on the market, and its open house is today. Would someone offer you above-asking price for what's on display?

In order for you to answer this fairly, wait until your staff is busy, then walk out and observe your booth in full swing from where the attendees (i.e., potential homebuyers) are congregated. Stay there, be a fly on the wall, and listen for attendee feedback. If they're whispering or muttering under their breath, it's time to hire a realtor to help you stage your house.



Simultaneously, recruit someone who can't lie to you, comp 'em a beer, and ask them to observe and give feedback on the following.

- Is your booth visually appealing?
- Can someone who's never heard of you tell it's your brewery without walking up and getting a beer?
- Can you read your tap list from 10 people back?
- Is there a logical flow to ordering and being served?
- Is your counter space clean, dry, organized, and free from trash and random empties?
- Is your “back bar” as well? It shouldn't look like a graveyard where empty kegs go to die.
- Do you have merch for sale? If so, how much is it? What sizes are available?
- Is your team working as a cohesive unit?
- Are they smiling, making eye contact, and being hospitable to guests?
- Is there anything that would inspire you to visit this brewery after the event, or, conversely, turn you off to ever giving them another chance?

Grownup Playdates



Remember going to that one friend's house with the funky bunk bed, who always had the coolest

toys, and their parents made you something for lunch that you'd never heard of before? You knew you were having a special experience because it felt like home should, you had fun, knew you were taken care of, and you still remember it all these years later. Seek out those kids today, and go visit their booths. But, if that friend was actually you and you grew up setting the example for others, keep inviting them over.



You've drank at dozens, hopefully hundreds, of breweries. You've gone out to eat over 1,000 times. In all those visits, what have you learned, and why might you still be missing the mark? In my personal experience, having visited the same vast volume of taprooms and dining rooms as you, it is rare—certainly far less than one would hope—that an establishment nails it and gets everything right from entry to exit. As a patron who chooses to support you with my money, one thing I will never apologize for as a guest in your establishment is expecting a stellar, personal, and memorable experience. As a business owner, you should want the same thing. So, what gives?

Ask every seemingly dumb question until you get to the smart answers. Study everything, and put

Be a zombie, and pick everyone's brain.



only the best stuff into practice. If you try it and it flops, recalibrate, and try again. If it fails miserably, scrap it, and improve. Failure to do so will result in you being average along with the rest of the majority. And, as we mentioned in *Part 1* of this series, being average isn't doing your brand any favors.



Share Your Toys

Don't be that stingy little brat who only cares about himself. We know this industry prides itself on embracing camaraderie. Help that tide continue to rise. If you're in a position to help, offer it—because there will come a time when you need someone to throw you a life jacket, but if all you've ever given others is the cold shoulder you better be good at treading water.

Here are a few simple ideas that attract good karma, new best friends, and help when you're drowning.

- Bring thank-you beers for the event host, organizing guild, etc. for their work and energy making the occasion happen.
- Check in with the event host when you arrive. Yes, even if you don't have to. Find them, look them in the eyes, thank them for having you, and then hand 'em the beer.
- Walk a tray full of samples of what you're pouring today to new or other breweries you haven't met yet as a way to introduce yourself.
- Patronize those same breweries. Throw 'em a token, a ticket, a dollar—whatever—and try what they're serving.

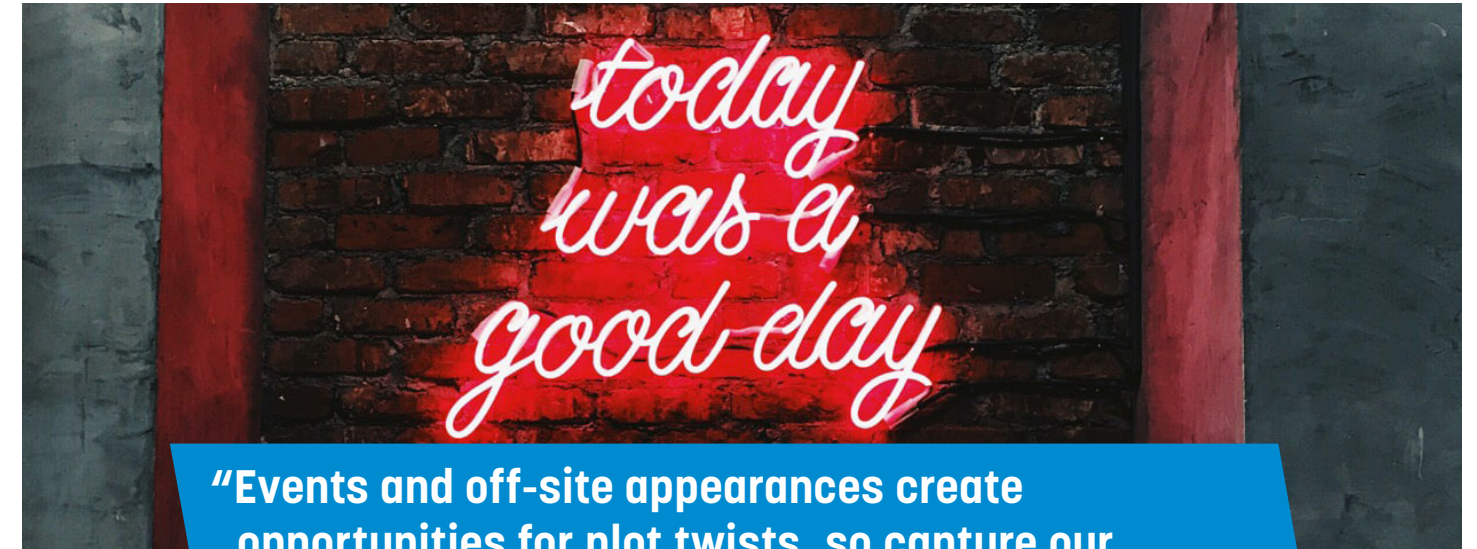
- Are any of your personal favorite breweries also present? Tell all of your fans to go check them out, too. That word travels extra fast. A public recommendation is the biggest compliment you could give someone.
- Pitch the idea of a collaboration (or a series collaboration, or a joint event) to your favorite breweries. Come to the table with an idea and let them feed off of it. And, at next year's fest, bring that beer and both of you promote it on behalf of the other.



Would the event host and your fellow industry colleagues have been proud to have you participate and slingin' beers next to them? Show up with the goal to make sure their answer is an easy, "Yes."

Why wouldn't you want to be that friend who's known for always showing up? Not just being there, but coming prepared, willing to help those in a pinch, and humble and gracious when someone extends a hand to pull you up when you need it, too.

Last Call



"Events and off-site appearances create opportunities for plot twists, so capture our attention, surprise us, and make it worth our while"

You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here. To recap: We've outlined recommendations for maximizing successful event presence, and organized them according to what breweries (or any alcohol brand) can do *internally* and *externally*—before and during each off-site occasion.

And, quite like you wouldn't just up and split without taking care of business when you kick your last keg, we conclude here with what keeps you in good graces *after* events have ended.

Beer First

The liquid is why you were there today in the first place so treat it the way it deserves by taking care of the equipment you used to dispense it. You paid good money for your jockey box and hired the best people to serve it, so properly cleaning it before you throw it in the back of your van (Wait—scratch that—please, don't throw it.) is one of the best things you can do today to set it and your team up for success tomorrow.

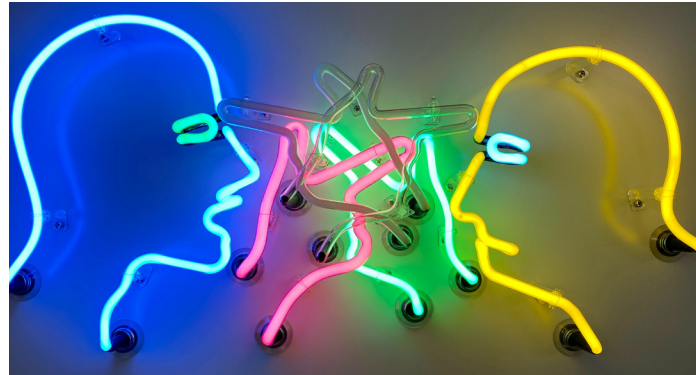
When you do get back to your brewery, there's hopefully a designated shelf or staging area where event supplies can live until their next use. You know how you freak out every time you misplace your car keys at home? Hang 'em on a keyring so you don't have to play 20 Questions with your roommate, and you'll never be late again.





AAR

Document, document, document. An after action report (or review) is an analysis that summarizes the details of a past event—what worked, what didn't, and why. We mentioned it in *Part 4*. If thorough enough, it allows us to virtually revisit our approach and execution of our participation and whether it warrants a repeat appearance. They're only as valuable as you allow them to be, so create and leave a clean paper trail for yourself and teammates, particularly those who are likely to work the same (or a similar) event again.



FOMO

Not everyone can make every awesome event you sign up for, particularly your diehard fans and loyal, local regulars. And they're usually happy to jump through whatever fun and engaging hoops you create if it means that they can have a swing at sampling what they missed out on at last weekend's Barrel-aged New England Pastry Hazy IPA Fest. So, let 'em know you missed them as much as they missed you.



- Recap the event. On social, share a dedicated photo gallery of its highlights, @mention any superfans who raved about your beer, and give credit where credit is due to anyone who helped you pull off a successful showing.
- Poll the audience. Ask your mailing list if they attended and what they thought. Ask them for suggestions about what they liked and ideas for what they'd love to see next.
- Tap it again. While a certain amount of, "Dammit, I KNEW I should've gone!" is healthy because it keeps people talking about you, there's also value in giving off good vibes when you randomly announce on social media (or privately to your mug club, first), that you saved a little extra for those who couldn't be there, and that it'll be available in your taproom tonight. Watch the fervor ensue!



Thank You and You and You and You

You're only as good as those by whom you surround yourself. And they deserve to know you appreciate them.

Create and leave a clean paper trail for yourself and teammates.

While you're still on site, check out with the event host before you leave. Even if you don't have to. Bonus points for asking them if they need any help (and double bonus points if you actually do chip in). Shake their hand, thank them again for having you (because you already thanked them when you arrived), and then send them a hand-written thank-you note tomorrow. You will stand out,

elevate your reputation, and be thought of fondly (because no one ever does this; change my mind).

Remember those guys from Brewery A who covered your booth for a half-hour so you could go eat, or the badass woman from Brewery B who loaned you a wrench because you didn't check your SOP checklist? Give your staff who worked the event a paid day "off" (plus per diem) for R&D. Send them to those breweries, with a case of your beer in tow, and thank them personally for coming to your rescue. You don't think they'll talk highly of you after that?



Unless you are literally a one-person show and your beer tastes like canned rainbows, your staff is the reason you're still in business. Those who just worked a 12-hour day in the cold rain or blistering sun deserve your SINCERE acknowledgement. You don't have to go overboard or always dangle a carrot to elicit a response, but small tokens of your recognition when deserved will earn the

Events and off-site appearances create opportunities for plot twists, so capture our attention, surprise us, and make it worth our while.

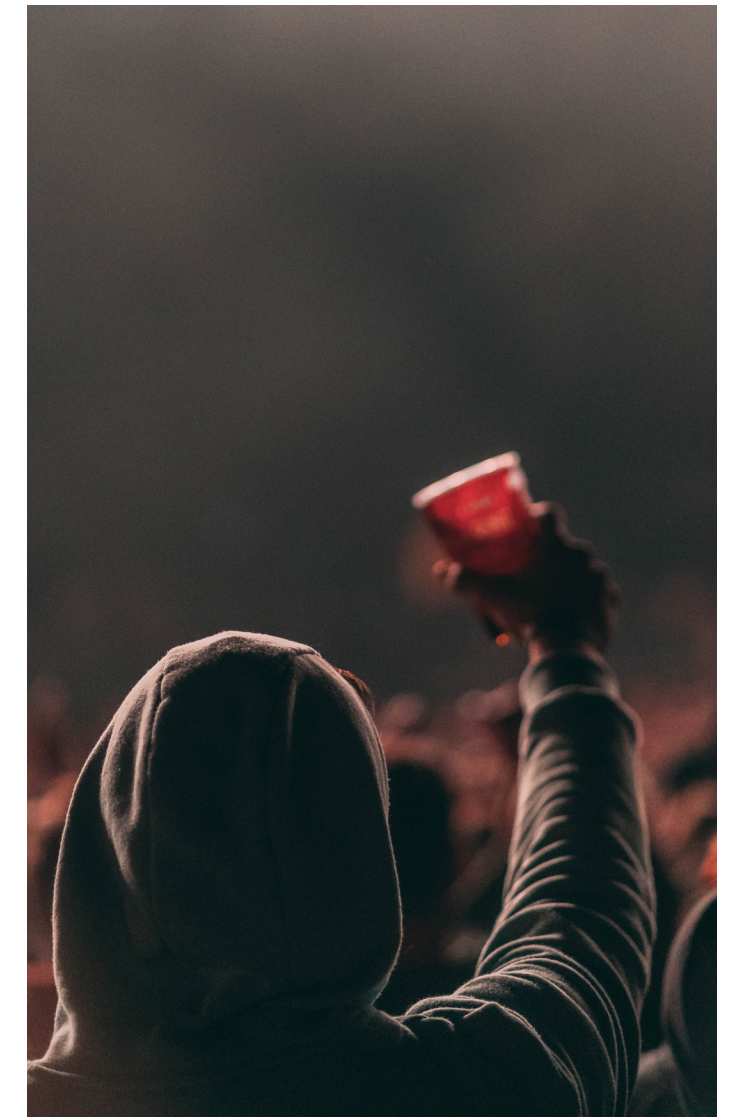


same from them—in terms of higher productivity, lower turnover, and invaluable ambassadorship. Your staff's contribution to the solid foundation of support and leadership your brand needs to stand on will propel all of you toward success.

All's Well That Ends Well

People underestimate the longevity of their most recent move. We asked you in *Part 1*, "How do you want to be known, and remembered?" If you're not satisfied with the current story people are telling about your brewery—because the last thing you did was uninspiring—it's on you to be the author of its next chapter.

Events and off-site appearances create opportunities for plot twists, so capture our attention, surprise us, and make it worth our while to give our time and money to you—in and outside of your taproom. We want to love you—we just want to see that you give a damn, too.





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