

Matanzas Creek Winery's beautiful lavender gardens attract visitors from near and far. [Photo by Bruce Shippee]



Marketing Your Strengths

Tapping into what makes your winery unique — and spreading that message year-round — will help keep you top-of-mind among consumers.

BY TOM JACKSON

The first rule of marketing is to use absolutely everything you have. Too many people approach marketing as a one-size-fits-all campaign, run year-round, year-in, year-out. This is a great way to get ignored. We know every winery has a story to tell, you just have to find it, keeping in mind that it will evolve and shift as you do. Appealing to visitors authentically and with personalized ideas in multiple media channels will bring the right ones to you. Keep an open mind as we explore ideas and angles that not only resonate with your brand but truly set you apart from the crowd.

THE STRATEGY OF MARKETING YOU

Being open to change is a key to success. Let's keep visitors — especially locals who return more often — marking their calendars for your next event and checking-in to see what's happening at your location.

Every winery can offer a very specific experience; think about yours. What do you celebrate? What excites you personally? What's happening in and around your location? Asking these questions will help direct the best way to share your story.

AT A GLANCE

- + Sharing your unique story across all marketing channels will expand your brand's appeal.
- + A personalized experience will always be remembered and shared.
- + Capitalizing on every season with events and promotions will keep you in consumers' thoughts.
- + Play off your strengths and show them off to your customers.

A brand can definitely become synonymous with an experience that's remembered and shared. Frog's Leap Winery in Rutherford, Calif., has an incredible open organic garden that visitors can walk through and sample from — they also can take home offerings the winery sets aside in a long row of wicker baskets along the garden wall. It's brilliant; guests call and check-in year-round to see what's happening and new in the gardens. This has created a reoccurring opportunity for tourists and locals alike to keep coming back to visit with each change of season.

Jordan Vineyard & Winery in Healdsburg, Calif., is a luxury wine estate boasting nearly 1,200 acres of lavish grounds, farms and a full culinary hospitality program. While the grounds are open, all tours and tastings are by appointment only, and the winery doesn't offer discounts. So how is it so



Director of Marketing and Communications Lisa Mattson holds a light for Erin Malone during Jordan Winery's 2014 "Get Fit" video shoot.

tremendously popular, with sales that continue to boom? "We rely on storytelling marketing to share all the little details that go into

crafting our wines and creating memorable experiences for our guests," says Lisa Mattson, director of marketing and communications at Jordan. "It's so important to us to maintain the connection to our fans, and it's paying off. Of course, we do all the traditional marketing acts, too — they're a must — but we feel that a powerful way to share who we are with our consumers is sharing our life on the estate with topical multi-video messages and high-quality imagery via social media. We've adopted this medium, embraced it, and public response has been tremendous."

Jordan's series of educational, funny and highly personalized videos let viewers in for an intimate look at its dedication to wine while revealing John Jordan and his team's quirky and exuberant personalities. The videos have received hundreds of thousands of views on YouTube and the Jordan website. Mattson says, "We like to demystify wine and have it be more accessible and approachable to everyone, and the audience really relates to that." Storytelling marketing is a big part of winery life; Jordan focuses on the story behind the people who make and love the wine. The story it tells with each video or image strengthens loyalty and commitment to the brand.

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WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER OR FALL

The seasons literally drive the winemaking process, so let's capitalize on that and use each to talk

folks (locals, especially) call in every February to see when the bulbs will bloom. There are hundreds, and the result attracts hundreds of visitors every year.



Rodney Strong Vineyards' summer concert series is a popular annual draw.

about your work. Many wineries don't talk about winter, but it's a more advantageous time to visit than the public realizes, and it's your job to let them know that. It's slower in most tasting rooms, meaning more time for guests to talk to winemakers and industry insiders. There are fewer crowds, it's a better time to offer discounts, and you can create holiday-related packages and experiences to inspire visits. Target those who prefer a more intimate visit and private experience. Guests can watch winemakers tending to the past harvest sitting in tanks and barrels, catch some bottling in action, or view the disgorgement process for sparkling wine.

When the clocks change, spring brightens everything around us, and everyone seems to want to get out, see nature and explore. Aside from the traditional, how can you take full advantage of what's happening in nature all around you? Ferrari-Carano Vineyards and Winery in Healdsburg, Calif., found a niche with its tulip gardens. It's established the "Tulip Hotline" and

Summer is a magic time in winery life. The weather draws both tourists and locals who want to get out. Big money makers include outdoor events and concerts. Wineries like Rodney Strong Vineyards, Wente Vineyards and Robert Mondavi are, of course, known for wine, but also have become well known for their reoccurring summer concert series and keep customers checking-in to see who'll play there next.

Matanzas Creek Winery in Sonoma County is known (aside from great wine) for its lush lavender gardens, and it capitalizes on this during its Days of Wine and Lavender each June (this year will be its 20th celebration). It's found an angle that not only means something to the winery personally, but appeals to a larger audience of travelers who may not want to drink or are looking for more entertainment than just wine tasting. The event includes live music, gourmet food and wine pairings, yard games, seminars and more.

In fall, so much is already going on in the vineyards, the trick is again finding events that showcase

your specific strengths and story — what sets you apart? Can visitors view the grapes being delivered and sorted? Some wineries offer “boot camps” for those who want to learn about harvest hands-on. How about harvest festivals and parties?

The reoccurring idea here is how you can personalize your marketing. Case in point, back at Jordan, it’s just wrapping up its latest video marketing piece. It’s documenting John Jordan, combining his passions for flying and rescue dogs as he pilots a plane for Wings of Rescue, transporting 18 dogs from California to the Idaho humane society so they can be partnered with owners. OK, so you may not be a pilot, but no matter your winery size or what you have to offer, you can market to your strengths and draw your audience in by illustrating who you are and



Wings of Rescue co-founder Cindy Smith, a volunteer and John Jordan take a break from loading homeless dogs into Jordan’s TMB900 for his first Wings of Rescue mission, transporting 18 dogs from Livermore, Calif., to Boise, Idaho. [Photo by Lisa Mattson]

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what you stand for. Play up your strengths and show them off to your customers.

KEEP THINKING AHEAD

Don’t wait for spring to plan for spring. Come up with a schedule that keeps you on track so you can make the most of each event. This means pre-promoting to your database and audience far enough in advance so you can be truly effective. The trick is finding your unique story, whether it’s remarkable grounds, family-run heritage, old vine Zinfandel or personal passions that drive your wine legacy. Then, tell it everywhere.

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Tom Jackson has been an ad man for more than 25 years and is general manager of Veale Outdoor Advertising. Originally from Indiana, he’s lived in Santa Rosa since 1988 and, when’s he not helping clients fulfill their marketing goals, Tom enjoys spending time with his girlfriend, family, friends and playing golf. Learn more about his creative work at www.vealeoutdooradvertising.com or call (707) 575-3752.

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