

Cellar Door Social Selling Wine Online

By Rebecca Dolan

Originally published on The Lead with permission from the author, Rebecca Dolan.

A wine lover might like their white wine dry - but when it comes to marketing that wine, social media engagement should be anything but.

A study by marketing researcher Rebecca Dolan from the University of Adelaide's business school shows the best way to succeed at social is to treat customers like old friends. "With wine brands it's easy to be a bit more light-hearted. It's quite a social product so it's easy to put that across on social media," Dolan says.

The key to engaging effectively across Facebook, Instagram and the litany of other social services is to mirror real-life situations.

"You want to talk as if you're with someone one-on-one in a casual environment. Picture someone coming in to your cellar door and asking you which wine they should try.

"You'd have that casual, conversational, friendly tone. You want to be able to replicate that in your social media as well, so you come across as a bit more human and not just another marketing robot.

Day by day, social mediums like Facebook are becoming more visual. More room is given to images by the algorithms that determine what shows up on user's feeds, and people share and like images and videos more often than any other form of content.

"It's very visual and very dynamic which is good for customers because they don't have to use too much

cognitive effort to think 'that winery looks cool, let's check it out.' Less text is good in that way, because consumers can process information quickly in their news feed and get the message instantly without having to read too much or think too much," Dolan explains.

Humorous and entertaining posts are the most likely to be shared by users viewing a winery's social page, expanding brand reach even more.

"Entertaining pictures, photos, memes and videos are what encourage Facebook users to 'share' a post with their friends. If a brand isn't posting interesting, cute, funny or emotion-invoking images regularly, then they would have already lost fans."

There are plenty of opportunities to show the down-to-earth side of a winery's workings.

"One of my favourite brands that do it really well is Whistler Wines in the Barossa Valley. Most of their posts are done by the winemaker Josh. He's got that human approach, where you know it's him, he's in the vineyard, you know what he's doing."

Putting a face to a brand is extremely effective, Dolan says. People like to know they're talking to someone at the cellar door or a winemaker, rather than just a marketing manager sitting in an office in another city.

For that reason, signing off by name and position when replying to customers can make them feel special that they've received that kind of contact - even when the winery's brand is front and centre.

"One of the most effective things is Whistler's use of relational, emotional posts, stuff that's a bit

funny, but they also post information about their products really well. Without trying to seem like they're pushing a sale, they still get the message across about their product and tasting notes."

When getting images to share, it's best to make them natural and carry on that human side of the conversation - something which social media excels at.

"Consumers want to see what's natural, what's really there, winemakers getting dirty in the vineyard, picking grapes. They don't want to see something that looks really edited and photoshopped like you'd see in a magazine or TV advertisement."

Dolan's final point is an important one: balance the content. There aren't hard and fast limits on over-sharing and posting to social media; just make sure that there is variety.

"I see a lot of brands who think, just because Facebook is popular, they have to use it all the time. It's not about posting too much content - but not posting too much of the same content.

"It might be cute to post a picture of a dog in your cellar door, a puppy in the vineyard. But if you keep posting pictures of that same puppy every day of the week, people will initially think it's cute and then think it's annoying."

Keep track of what your content is - whether it's a funny piece or an informational piece - and then make sure you're not doing it over and over again. Keep the message clear and varied and people will stay tuned in, says Dolan.

Rebecca Dolan is a PhD candidate and her research was funded by the Australian Grape and Wine Authority.

