



COUNCIL FOR  
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2023

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



## Danny Brager

**Owner**

**Brager Beverage Alcohol Consulting**

Danny Brager has a wealth of experience in the Beverage Alcohol industry, analyzing trends over many years. He formerly headed the Nielsen's Beverage Alcohol Practice Area in the U.S, where he led teams that supported relationships with Nielsen's clients as well as key industry groups and the media. In that role, Danny succinctly provided data driven analysis and insights, focused on the U.S. marketplace environment and consumer/shopper.

In 2020, Danny introduced Brager Beverage Alcohol Consulting, providing analysis services to companies seeking to translate market data into fact-based insights in support of their goals. Each year, he presents at a large number of notable industry and company events, and is a frequent thought leader contributor to the media/press. His informed opinions are highly respected by the beverage alcohol industry. Danny is also a regular SipSource analyst and produces the channel shifting index (CSI report) and other SipSource data driven reports for the beverage alcohol industry.

Danny was born in Calgary and moved to Toronto where he graduated from the Schulich School of Business at York University. He relocated to Mission Viejo, California in 1993 where he now resides.



## Jill Desmond

**Consultant**

**Cavendish Vernal**

Jill is an experienced leader with nearly 20 years of service in higher education and nonprofit organizations. Beginning her career in public service, serving in Americorps and the Peace Corps, Jill then transitioned to the nonprofit sector where she worked in both operations and fundraising leadership positions in the Milwaukee area.

Most recently, Jill served as the Vice President and Chief of Staff for a Milwaukee-area college, with responsibilities spanning strategic planning, fundraising, crisis planning and response, and Board of Trustees management.

Jill has earned a reputation as a steadfast leader with high integrity. She is known for her thoughtful, collaborative, and positive approach.

Jill serves as a consultant for Cavendish Vernal, whose mission is to design effective business and people strategies and develop extraordinary leaders for organizational success. She is excited to partner with clients to help them achieve goals and drive results.

In her free time, Jill enjoys spending time with her family, cheering on her daughters on the soccer field, and practicing Tae Kwon Do.



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## Lowell Goldman

**President & COO**  
**RSL Holdings**

As President & COO of RSL Holdings, Lowell is responsible for the successful execution of the respective mission statements of the operating entities under RSL Holdings: Lipman Brothers, R.S. Lipman Company, and R.S. Lipman Brewing Company. While working closely with Robert Lipman, the Lipman team managers, suppliers and customers, Lowell's focus is on the ongoing growth in the markets Lipman serves. Lowell joined Lipman in 2012 as the Director of Operations.

He served in the U.S. Army from 2000-2008, achieving the rank of Captain with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. A graduate of Vanderbilt University's Owen Graduate School of Management with a Master's Degree in Business Administration, Lowell also holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point.



## Luis Gonzalez

**Corporate VP & Regulatory Affairs and Commercial Counsel**  
**Republic National Distributing Company**

Luis Gonzalez serves as Republic National Distributing Company's (RNDC) Corporate Vice President and Regulatory Affairs and Commercial Counsel based in Florida. Luis has 20 years of experience in the beverage alcohol industry. Before attending law school, Luis was a law enforcement officer in Florida for ten years with five of those years as a special agent and special agent supervisor with the Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco in Key West, Miami, and Orlando.

Prior to joining RNDC's legal department, Luis was an Associate and Partner with the international law firm of Holland & Knight for 12 years. There he specialized in alcohol beverage law and commercial litigation and represented all three industry tiers.

Luis was the author of Holland & Knight's Florida Alcoholic Beverages Trade Practices Guide and has been a speaker on alcohol beverage law at the University of Central Florida, various legal continuing education events, the 2023 NABCA Legal Symposium, and 2023 NCSLA Annual Conference.





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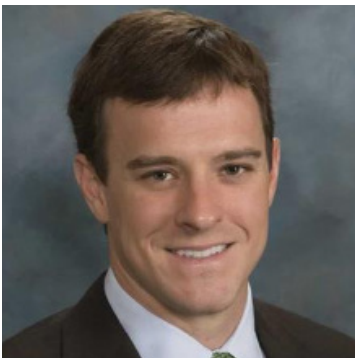


## Laura Louise Green

**Founder**

**Healthy Pour**

Laura Louise Green is a licensed psychotherapist and founder of Healthy Pour, a consultancy that helps organizations and professional communities address issues of well-being in the workplace through training, organizational development, and assessment. After working in hospitality and drinks for two decades, Laura utilizes her knowledge and skills as a mental health practitioner to facilitate training, growth, and healing within the hospitality industry and other creative sectors. Laura Louise is currently pursuing a second masters in Organizational Psychology with a research focus of socio-emotional stress and developmental trauma's impact on career decision-making processes.



## Lee Hastings

**Vice President**

**Moon and Central Distributors**

Lee Hastings is Vice President of Moon and Central Distributors located in Little Rock, Arkansas. Moon and Central Distributors is a 4th generation, family owned business founded by Hastings's great grandfather in 1935. Hastings is a past Chairman of the Council for Leadership Development (CLD) for the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA). Hastings was appointed by Mayor Frank Scott to serve on the Opportunity Zone Board.

While at Moon and Central Distributors, Lee has helped to oversee projects such as the purchase and implementation of a new warehouse management system, sales data order entry system, and various other technology roll outs and upgrades. He has also helped with the integration of several sales and management education programs. Being tasked with working on both the sales side and operations side has given Hastings the unique opportunity to help increase efficiencies and improve business processes throughout the company.

Hastings began his career path with Moon and Central Distributors working in the warehouse as a teenager. It was at this time Lee's passion for his family's chosen industry began to grow, and he was encouraged by his father and uncle to consider joining the business following college. From there, Hastings has worked his way up in roles of increasing responsibility over the years.

Lee holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Arkansas, Walton College of Business. Hastings now resides in Little Rock, Arkansas, with his wife Nikki and two children Mary Hardin and Harry. In his personal time, Hastings enjoys various outdoor activities, especially duck hunting and snow skiing.



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## Wesley Hein

**President**

**Cannabis Distributors Association**

Wesley Hein is the President of the Cannabis Distributors Association (CDA) and an executive with Mammoth Distribution / Heavy Hitters, which operates Space Station – one of the largest cannabis beverage manufacturers in the country. He also serves on the board of the Cannabis Manufacturers Association (CCMA) and chairs the Steering Committee of Legal Cannabis for Consumer Safety (LCCS). Prior to joining Mammoth, Wesley was an executive vice president at the Walt Disney Company and founded and operated several high-growth, venture-backed media and technology companies including Enigma Records (acquired by Capitol Records) and Enigma Digital (acquired by Clear Channel Communications). Wesley has an MBA from Pepperdine University and BS Economics from the University of California, Irvine.



## Michael Klauer

**President & CEO**

**Momemtum Beverage Team**

Michael Klauer has 27 years of experience operating, leading and developing successful entrepreneurial and large-scale distribution businesses in the United States, including companies in the wine, spirits and energy drink sectors. Michael attended the University of Notre Dame as an undergraduate and remains a huge supporter of Notre Dame today. After his undergraduate, he went on to receive an Executive Education focused in Finance for Executives at Northwestern University.

Michael's passion for entrepreneurship began in childhood, watching his grandfather, Buddy Romano, build Romano Brothers into what became the largest distributor in Illinois at the time. Romano Brothers has since sold to Southern-Glazer's Wine & Spirits.

Michael's career began with Romano Brothers in 1996, managing the nightshift at the warehouse. He then migrated to Power Distributing & Red Bull North America to lead on & off-premise initiatives driving Red Bull growth through 2010 to 3.5M cases of Red Bull before transitioning to Heritage Wine Cellars where he initiated their craft spirits division. Michael built over 100,000 cases in over 3,000 accounts and developed the Legacy Spirits Division, eventually expanding the business throughout Illinois and Colorado.

Today Michael is President and CEO of Momentum Beverage Team, which currently distributes wine & spirits across Illinois, Wisconsin & Colorado. Momentum Beverage Team was founded by Michael Klauer in 2018 and has seen tremendous growth and success across its markets.





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## **Andrew McGuire** **Chief Commercial Solutions Officer** **Molson Coors**

Andrew joined Molson USA in 2002 and has built a resume that is both diverse in its customer base and geographies in his nearly 21 years with the organization. Andrew began his career in the On-Premise, then moved into various distributor and retailer facing roles, including stints as a Chain Account Executive for Convenience in the Northeast, as well as a Convenience Team Lead for the Speedway chain, later serving as National Accounts Vice President – On-Premise. He has held various operator roles as well, with General Management experience in the Midwest and Southeast portions of the US. In 2018, he assumed the role of Regional Vice President in the Great Lakes Region. As RVP, Andrew and his team managed distributor and retail customer relationships in 9 Upper-Midwest states, where he leaned on his past experiences to build a strong, family-like culture and a team that is strategic in its execution within the marketplace, enabling Molson Coors' largest sales region to return to sustained growth during his tenure. In January, Andrew was tapped to lead the Commercial Center of Excellence (CCOE) for Molson Coors, enabling The Americas unit. The CCOE is the central function that connects Sales, Marketing, Supply and IT, and it is comprised of Category Management, Commercial Operations, eCom, Field Marketing and Shopper Marketing.



## **Jane Melvin** **Founder & Principal** **Strategic Innovations Group**

Jane Melvin founded Strategic Innovations Group in 2002, to help clients better understand who they are, what they do and how to do it better. She serves clients through strategic planning, culture articulation and organizational leadership development. The company provides strategic planning, custom workshops, offsite planning sessions and strategic partnership. Jane is the master practitioner of The Five Faces of Genius creativity model and is certified in the DiSC Work Styles Model. Her clients include marketers, not-for-profit organizations, agencies, individual executives, professional associations and societies, educational institutions and restaurant companies. Before starting her own venture, Jane spent 20 years building some of the most respected brands in the world. She served as SVP for innovation at Darden Restaurants, led marketing at Starbucks Coffee International and was a regional vice president for the Asia Pacific region on the McDonald's business at Leo Burnett. A writer, speaker and coach, she's guest lectured at Texas A&M and Northwestern.

Her client list is long and varied and includes Shake Shack, JDRF, The Big Ten Conference, Start Early, Tradepoint Atlantic, The American Society for Surgery of the Hand, Effie Worldwide, TMRW, The Interpublic Group, Dishoom, LEON Restaurants, Olive Garden, Union Square Hospitality Group, Mediabrand, IPG, JDRF, the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity, and numerous other organizations and leaders across sectors and geographies.

Jane graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy and Trinity College, holds an MBA from Yale University and is currently pursuing an MS in Communication at Purdue University. She currently serves on the board of the CORR Journal, has served as a board member and advisor to several private-equity-backed companies and not-for-profit organizations and co-founded an all-volunteer charity that raised and donated \$3.5 million to breast cancer research and access to care. She is a competitive amateur ballroom dancer, infrequent but enthusiastic limerick writer, chocolate dessert creator, committed Citizen and mom.



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## Lucas Morris

**Senior Manager  
Security Risk Advisors**

Lucas is a Senior Manager at Security Risk Advisors. Throughout his almost twenty year career has worked as a Chief Information Security Officer, professional hacker, and security consultant. These days he works to bring security beyond the technology, helping organizations to improve their overall information security by identifying the real business impact of issues by taking a wholistic approach to the people, processes, and technology.

In addition to his work at SRA, Lucas is an Adjunct Professor of Cybersecurity at the Rochester Institute of Technology.



## Laura Piotrowski

**President & CEO  
Cavendish Vernal**

Laura is an accomplished executive with over 25 years of financial and human resource expertise. Laura's background gives her the ability to provide exceptional service to her clients, understanding their business issues and suggesting potential solutions while assessing financial implications and risks.

Laura is setting new standards for bringing people and business insights together to achieve strategic goals. She is known for supporting, educating, and helping clients with passion, accountability, and compassion that focuses on the importance of relationship building and solid business practices.

Laura is the Founder, President and CEO of Cavendish Vernal, which provides executive level advice grounded in proven financial and human resource strategies designed to drive results and achieve their company's goals. In 2019, Laura expanded the team by partnering with Karen Vernal, adding executive coaching and leadership development to the services offered. She is motivated to grow the Cavendish Vernal team with aspirations to help our clients achieve the vision of being exceptional leaders, thriving in successful organizations, and making a difference. In her free time, she enjoys traveling and spending time with family and friends. A person smiling at the camera Description automatically generated. Laura is an accomplished executive with over 25 years of financial and human resource expertise. Laura's background gives her the ability to provide exceptional service to her clients, understanding their business issues and suggesting potential solutions while assessing financial implications and risks.





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## Jessica Pomerantz

**Doctoral Candidate**  
**University of South Carolina**  
**Healthy Pour**

Jessica Pomerantz is a mental health professional and bartender. She obtained her master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City, with a focus on trauma and psychological coercion. Clinically, she currently works with victims and survivors of complex trauma, with specific expertise in interpersonal violence. Concurrently, Jessica has about 10 years of bartending experience within a wide range of different restaurants and bars. Within the craft cocktail industry, she is a Bar-5 Day graduate, Speed Rack Nationals Winner and published mixologist. Currently, Jessica is located in Columbia, South Carolina where she is in her 5th year of a PhD program in Clinical-Community Psychology, with both clinical and research focuses on trauma and coercion with the goal to work with food and beverage folk as a psychology and mental health advocate.



## Joseph Rodriguez

**Assistant Director of IT**  
**Allied Beverage Group**

Joseph Rodriguez, Allied Beverage Group's Assistant Director of IT has over three decades of experience in the IT field with a specialized focus in the Beverage Alcohol Wholesale industry. Joseph started his career in 1986, with Reitman Industries, experiencing first-hand the evolution of the company through mergers and acquisitions to become RR Marketing, Breakthru Beverage, and finally, Allied Beverage Group.

Starting in the warehouse, his transition from business warehouse operations to IT roles laid the foundation for his expertise in technology infrastructure (e.g., networking, end-user systems, and communications). Over the years, Joseph has had instrumental roles in upgrading infrastructure, merging corporate technologies and establishing advanced cyber security policies tools and processes.

In addition to directing the recovery from a challenging ransomware attack, Joseph orchestrated the merging of IT systems during the merger between Breakthru Beverage and Allied Beverage Group, as he contributed to the overall network infrastructure design of a new state-of-the-art facility that was recognized and showcased by the vendor (Cisco).

Joseph holds a degree in Network Engineering and Data Communications and is an active participant in the industry community through his charter membership in the Beverage Alcohol Distribution Software Users Group (BADSUG) and WSWA forums.

Following a family tradition, Joseph's journey into the Beverage Alcohol Wholesale industry was influenced by his father, a long-time employee of Reitman Industries. As he looks to the future, Joseph aims to leverage his deep industry knowledge to help his organization stay ahead of its competitors through innovative technology solutions. A shift in his role has seen him focusing strongly on cybersecurity, an area that will continue to be a primary focus given the ever-evolving digital landscape.



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## Alan Rosenberg

**General Counsel & Executive Vice President  
Republic National Distributing Company**

Alan Rosenberg is the General Counsel & Corporate Executive Vice President for Republic National Distributing Company. Alan is responsible for leading, coordinating, and managing the RNDC Legal Department. He is responsible for supporting all RNDC regions, facilities, operations, sales, and support functions.

Alan has primary responsibility for directing, overseeing, and executing all RNDC legal matters, initiatives and strategies, including but not limited to industry-related legal matters, labor and employment, industry trade practice compliance, insurance, commercial and corporate negotiations, transactions, litigation, and corporate M&A initiatives.

Alan joined RNDC in July 2016 as its General Counsel & Vice-President, Legal. With over 28 years of legal experience, Alan successfully led and directed the creation and development of numerous corporate legal departments at both large multinational and national corporations within a multitude of highly regulated industries. Throughout his career, Alan served in roles of increasing responsibility, oversight, and management.

Prior to Alan joining RNDC, he served as the Vice President, Legal & General Counsel, Americas and Global Chief Privacy Officer for the Recall Corporation, a global leader in the information management industry. He also previously served as the Vice President, Investigations & Incident Response for LexisNexis, and, before its acquisition by LexisNexis, as ChoicePoint's Vice President, Privacy, Ethics & Compliance & Assistant General Counsel. In these roles, he led policy, compliance, privacy, corporate security, and audit teams for both companies. Alan also served as the General Counsel, Business Units and Vice President, Legal & Risk Management for NDCHealth Corporation, and subsequent to its acquisition by Wolters Kluwer Health, as its General Counsel, Healthcare Analytics & Vice President, Legal & Risk Management. Alan also served as Acting General Counsel for The Grady Health System in Atlanta, GA. Prior to transitioning to in-house counsel, Alan practiced in the area of litigation and liability defense work at the law firm of Swift, Currie, McGhee & Hiers, LLP.

Alan received his undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Journalism with a concentration in Public Relations, from The University of Texas at Austin in 1989, and his Juris Doctorate from Georgia State University College of Law in 1993.





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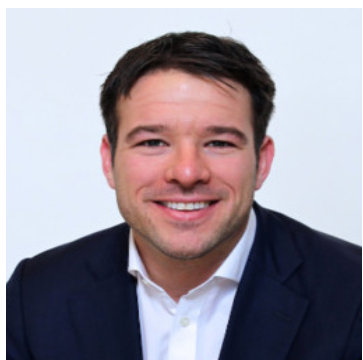
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## Aaron Schreiber-Stainthorp

**Director of Sustainability**  
**Jackson Family Wines**

Aaron Schreiber-Stainthorp is Director of Sustainability at Jackson Family Wines. He focuses on implementing systems that drive transformational change with an emphasis on decarbonization, regenerative farming, renewable energy, water conservation, zero waste and employee engagement. Using a data driven approach to identifying opportunities and guide decision making, Aaron has worked to make sustainability synonymous with innovation and continuous improvement. He has spent 9 years working in the wine industry, and previously led sustainability efforts at Francis Ford Coppola winery resulting in their 2017 Sustainable Winemaking Leadership Award from the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance. He has an MS in Sustainability Management from the Kogod School of Business at American University, a BS from Northland College and is a former EDF Climate Corps Fellow.



## Matthew Shifrin

**CEO & Owner**  
**Pioneer Interests Inc.**

Matthew Shifrin is an accomplished corporate and entrepreneurial executive with extensive experience in business development, M&A, budgeting, and operational management. With a strong background in highly regulated healthcare and alcohol industries, he is well-suited for the rigorous regulations of the cannabis industry. Matthew holds dual BS/BA degrees in Finance and Economics from the University of Denver and has received the Cherrington Global Scholar award for excellence during his time at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics.

Matthew began his career at Dreman Value Management, conducting financial analysis and identifying investment opportunities for the firm's high-yield growth fund. He later served as General Manager of the North American healthcare division at Jarden Corporation, successfully launching multiple medical device brands and establishing their dominance within two years.

Matthew then led the development of Utivity, an online marketplace connecting users with providers for various activities. Through strategic content development, grassroots initiatives, PR, and direct-to-consumer marketing, he acquired over 50,000 users within the first year and helped secure a \$12 million valuation for the company.

Recognizing an opportunity in the craft spirits industry, Matthew secured \$15 million in funding from renowned investors to acquire majority positions in multiple craft brands, including Breckenridge Distillery. As Chief Operating Officer of the group, he oversaw various aspects of the business, resulting in building one of the largest privately owned ultra-premium whiskey brands and leading the business to a successful exit.

Currently, Matthew is the CEO & Owner of a prominent cannabis group, leading one of Colorado's top vertically integrated operations Pioneer Interests. His expertise has propelled the group to become the leading wholesale brand for flower by dollar sales, the second-largest Live Resin cartridge brand, and the most profitable retailer in Colorado, he is now in the middle of his expansion opening several retail doors in Illinois. Additionally, Matthew serves as a visiting lecturer at Stanford University Graduate School of Business and sits on the boards of several spirit and manufacturing businesses.



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## Dia Simms

**Co-Founder, Pronghorn**

**CEO, Lobos 1707 Tequila & Mezcal**

Dia Simms is co-founder of PRONGHORN, a 10-year initiative to drive diversity, equity, and inclusion in the spirits industry. Pronghorn is a template on how to effectively diversify any industry by cultivating the next generation of Black entrepreneurs, employees and executive leaders within the spirits industry through sustainable investment, incubation and recruitment. The goal is to generate \$2 billion in economic value in the U.S.

Inspired by its namesake, the pronghorn is the fastest North American land mammal that can endure speeds for miles. Pronghorn believes creating real change is a marathon, not a sprint.

Dia Simms also serves as the CEO of Lobos 1707 Tequila & Mezcal, an award-winning, independent spirits brand that launched in November 2020. Simms leads Lobos 1707 alongside Founder and Chief Creative Officer Diego Osorio, with early backing by sports and cultural icon, LeBron James. Lobos 1707 Tequila & Mezcal is named after the Spanish word lobos, meaning “wolves”, and dedicated to celebrating the strength of the pack. Simms brings an impressive track record of building successful brands, combined with her entrepreneurial spirit and deep expertise in the spirits industry to Lobos 1707. Simms spent almost fifteen years working alongside Sean “Diddy” Combs at Combs Enterprises, starting in 2005 as his executive assistant. She grew within the company while building multiple brands and businesses under the Combs Enterprises umbrella. In 2017, Simms was named President of Combs Enterprises, making her the first president in the company’s thirty-year history other than Sean Combs himself. In her role as President, she oversaw multibillion-dollar brands under the Combs empire, including CÎROC Ultra-Premium Vodka, Blue Flame Agency, AQUAhydrate, Bad Boy Entertainment, Sean John and Revolt TV. Of note, Simms led the transformation of CÎROC Ultra-Premium Vodka from infancy to a multibillion-dollar value brand.

Along with a lengthy list of accolades, Simms is also Board Chair of Pronghorn, Board Vice Chair of Saint Liberty Whiskey and Advisor to Touch Capital. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Morgan State University and obtained a master’s degree in management from the Florida Institute of Technology. Simms now resides in Georgia where she lives with her husband, daughter and dog.





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## Marc Strachan

**Head Coach, Coach Marc Consulting, LLC.**  
**Chairman Emeritus, Adcolor, INC.**

A Marketing & Advertising Industry leader, with thirty-five+ years of agency and client management experience. This includes marketing, advertising, music, and film. Marc recently served as the CMO, of ADGILE Media Group. He is the Head Coach of Coach Marc Consulting. Previous roles include EVP, Chief Client Officer Publicis-Sapient. VP, Corporate Relations; VP, On-Premises Strategy/ Multicultural Marketing; Director Brand Marketing Tanqueray/ US Gins; and Director Brand

Marketing Cîroc Vodka, Diageo North America. Marc was one of the founders of Vigilante, an Urban based, Marketing/Agency consultancy, launched in partnership with Leo Burnett, where he served as President, and CEO. And he launched the S/R Communications Alliance, one of the first Multicultural Holding Companies, where he partnered with BBDO. Marc has written and published numerous articles for the industry and is a sought-after speaker. He is the Chair Emeritus of the Board of ADCOLOR (served as Chair for 10 years) and he is the current the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Adelphi University. Former Boards include the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre.

Coach Marc's practice uses the Arsenal Approach, a curriculum based on seven (7) principles of personal and professional development.



## Dale Stratton

**Owner**  
**Five Points Consulting LLC**

Dale Stratton brings over 40 years of experience in the Beverage Alcohol Industry to his role as an independent consultant. Dale retired from Constellation Brands in 2019 where he was the Vice President, Commercial Insights working across their Beer, Wine, and Spirits divisions. While at Constellation Brands he oversaw consumer and shopper insights, consumer affairs, business analytics, market research, category management initiatives and the wine sensory program. Dale's

extensive work linking consumer/shopper insights and market analysis with business objectives and strategies enable him to translate insights into profitable action.

Dale is currently involved in projects with Azur Associates, Emetry, The Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America's SipSource Report, and is President of the Wine Market Council.

Prior to joining Constellation Brands in 2006, Dale spent 22 years working at E&J Gallo where he began his career. During his tenure, he covered a wide range of responsibilities that included distributor management, account management, insights and Lean Six Sigma.

Dale has a bachelor's degree in journalism with a concentration in Public Relations from Colorado State University and an Executive MBA from Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College.



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## Mike Wittenwyler

**Attorney**

**Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.**

Mike Wittenwyler is an administrative and regulatory attorney at Godfrey & Kahn, S.C. Splitting his time between Madison, Wisconsin and Washington D.C., he advises businesses, trade associations and other organizations on their interactions with government - local, state and federal. As part of his practice, Mike has a comprehensive understanding of the regulation of alcohol beverages under Wisconsin and federal law.

In 1995, Mike graduated with distinction from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a bachelor's degree in political science and earned his law degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1998.

Mike is licensed to practice law in Wisconsin and the District of Columbia.