



## Staying with an Industry Solution to Grow your Business Online

By Ian Griffith

Reports on Internet sales for the 2003 holiday season are confirming what successful online retailers have known since early in the New Year. According to comScore, \$17.4 billion in sales were generated online during the holiday quarter for 2003. This represents an increase of 31 percent over 2002. Compare this with a 5.4 percent increase in the National Retail Sales Estimate (ShopperTrak) and it becomes obvious where to look for a source of growth for your business.

The Internet is becoming a fixture for retailing and liquor stores across the country as they are seeing strong growth in their online business. With the hectic holidays now behind us, many stores are using the quieter winter months to start a new venture online or upgrade an existing site.

There are plenty of options to choose from when searching for help with your website. However, there is a strong argument for picking an industry-specific solution. The following is a short description of key elements of a wine website, with ways an industry-specific system can improve the shopping experience for your customers and ease your website maintenance tasks.

**Website design:** The design of your website is the look and feel that communicates what makes your store special. What is the first thing you want people to see when they arrive at your site? How will customers navigate to find your products? How often should your promotions change?

**Product Listings:** Ideally all your wines will be searchable by country, region, appellation and grape varietal, with spirits searchable by country and type (whisky, tequila, etc.) Even better, they should include labels and descriptions giving customers more information to help with their purchase. Joining a liquor-industry system that maintains your product information can save you a lot of time.

**POS integration:** Selling over 800 products that change as frequently as wine becomes time consuming to update by hand. Ideally your Point-of-Sale system can be used to update the website with new pricing and availability.

**Virtual inventory:** Imagine being able to list the products that are available from wholesalers in your market, as if they were part of your store's inventory. Expand your available listing from 1,000 products to 21,000 or more! This is the latest innovation in selling wine online and is only available from the Beverage Network.

The Beverage Network offers one of the most exciting liquor industry e-commerce systems. It combines the POS tool eStage with product information from wholesale partners. Each website is unique but benefits from access to the largest database of wines and spirits in the US, with over 20,000 SKUs per market.

*To learn more about how the Beverage Network can help with a website for your store or to help streamline your product ordering, contact Ian Griffith at [ian@bevmedia.com](mailto:ian@bevmedia.com), or call (212) 571-3232, or visit [www.bevnetwork.com](http://www.bevnetwork.com).*

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**Ian Griffith was a wine steward at New York's Quilted Giraffe restaurant. After moving to California he ran a wine marketing company, while "moonlighting" at several wineries. Ian consults to the wine industry specializing in e-commerce and change management. Send questions or comments to [ian@bevmedia.com](mailto:ian@bevmedia.com).**