

Beer Business Daily

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"Here Are Nine Craft Brewers Who Care What Distributors Think

By: Beer Business Daily

There are a few truths in the world: Brewers love SKUs; wholesales and retailers hate them. And finding a craft brewer who respects their distributors' opinions is like finding a money-making venture for my family's ranch, which can be summed up in a simple Haiku: No soil above the oil, and no oil below the soil, suitable only for goats.

Much has been made of Tamarron Consulting's fifth annual survey of craft brewers from the point of view of distributors from nine cooperating craft brewers, and while the results are interesting from a perspective of what has changed in the last five years, to me what is most fascinating is that Tamarron could find nine craft brewers who care enough what distributors think to take part in and commission the survey in the first place.

These are those brewers: Allagash, Bell's, CANarchy, Dogfish Head, Great Lakes, Odell (which "won" the highest marks again), Rogue, Stone and Troegs. Whatever their grades, at least they participated and aren't afraid to put it out there.

Relationships among this group with their distributors, not surprisingly, remain pretty good. Of the 228 different distributor contacts (some overlap) polled in 2019, nearly half (49%) indicated that their current relationship with craft brewers is "good". Over a quarter (27%) said it was "very good", and 3% called their relationship "excellent".

But Tamarron pointed out that more and more distributors over the past six years have picked the word "fair" to characterize the current relationship. In 2014, only 11% of respondents labeled things as "fair", but now that number has nearly doubled, with 21% describing the relationship as "fair".

The place where these craft brewers have really picked up their game: National accounts in supermarkets and c-stores and on-premise, although the scores remain low. A place where there is room for improvement: Too many SKUs, naturally.

For overall performance: Odell's, Allagash, and Bell's top the survey results, which isn't surprising given those companies beers and management.