

Fundamentals

I was very lucky the other night to be asked to attend an informal discussion amongst a number of small business owners.

Out of the discussion came two consistent threads that all small businesses need to flourish. The first is to get the fundamentals or the foundation of the business right. The second is that trust is one of the most valuable commodities and one that we often overlook. More on trust in our next mailer.

Fundamentals

It's around vintage that we start to think of our new vineyard projects, so I'd like to remind you of some of the fundamental considerations for successful vineyard establishment. It is so important, I make no apology if you have heard this stuff from me before.

If you get this stuff right, everything else falls into place.

I am often asked to advise on various issues. Often, the vineyard is underperforming and the grower is planning to implement a number of changes, hoping that these will fix everything. But window dressing is just that. Put crudely, putting lipstick on a pig just gives you a pig with lipstick. So, what are the fundamentals you need to consider:

1. Choice of variety for the site.

Choose the variety and marry it to the site with a particular focus on the style of wine you intend it to make. Even if

you are a contract grower you need a focus and goal.

Ensure the site allows the variety to establish a good canopy prior to flowering and that the post veraison climatic conditions match the very particular needs of the variety and your goals.

Don't just think about post veraison rots. Think also of post veraison heat and sunlight hours. This is what really sorts out the champions from the also rans.

2. Are the soil attributes of the site ideal for the variety requirements?

Soil nutrition, organic matter content, waterholding capacity and potential root depth, all contribute to varietal expression, either positively or negatively. You must look at these carefully before settling on a chosen variety.

The soil must support true varietal expression

3. The site (climate) and soil (nutrition) determine the choice of rootstock.

Choice of rootstock can be terribly confusing. Many of the text books contain conflicting information. As a rule of thumb, the deeper and more fertile the soil, the less impact the rootstock has. It's where we have shallow, bony and nutritionally awkward soils and a very high quality focus that great care and attention needs to be taken to support the wine goal with the right rootstock.

Soil determines the correct rootstock, not fashion.

4. Vineyard architecture is the final seal on the fate of the vineyard.

Put simply, Vineyard Architecture is the combination of the vine spacing and vine training system. It might sound so obvious that it should not be said, but once the vines are in the ground, any mistake in the vineyard architecture is set in stone, and changes to training systems rarely correct the mistakes. In my experience the most important consideration is the spacing **in-the-row** as this determines the two most critical management factors:

the yield per vine; and the economics of the vineyard.

There's no point in having good balance if in order to get it, you must have short canes and excessive gaps between the vines. So think hard about the **in-the-row** spacing for the sake of maximisation of yield and quality.

Please call me if you wish to discuss any of the site fundamentals.

The Take Home Message.

Ensure your variety choice and weather patterns match, particularly post-veraison.

Ensure that your soils support the style of wine you intend to produce.

The correct rootstock can be determined only after we've considered climate and soil environment.

Get the vine spacing right for good balance, and to maximise yield and quality.

Rex.



MISTY
VALLEY
NURSERY

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