

wine

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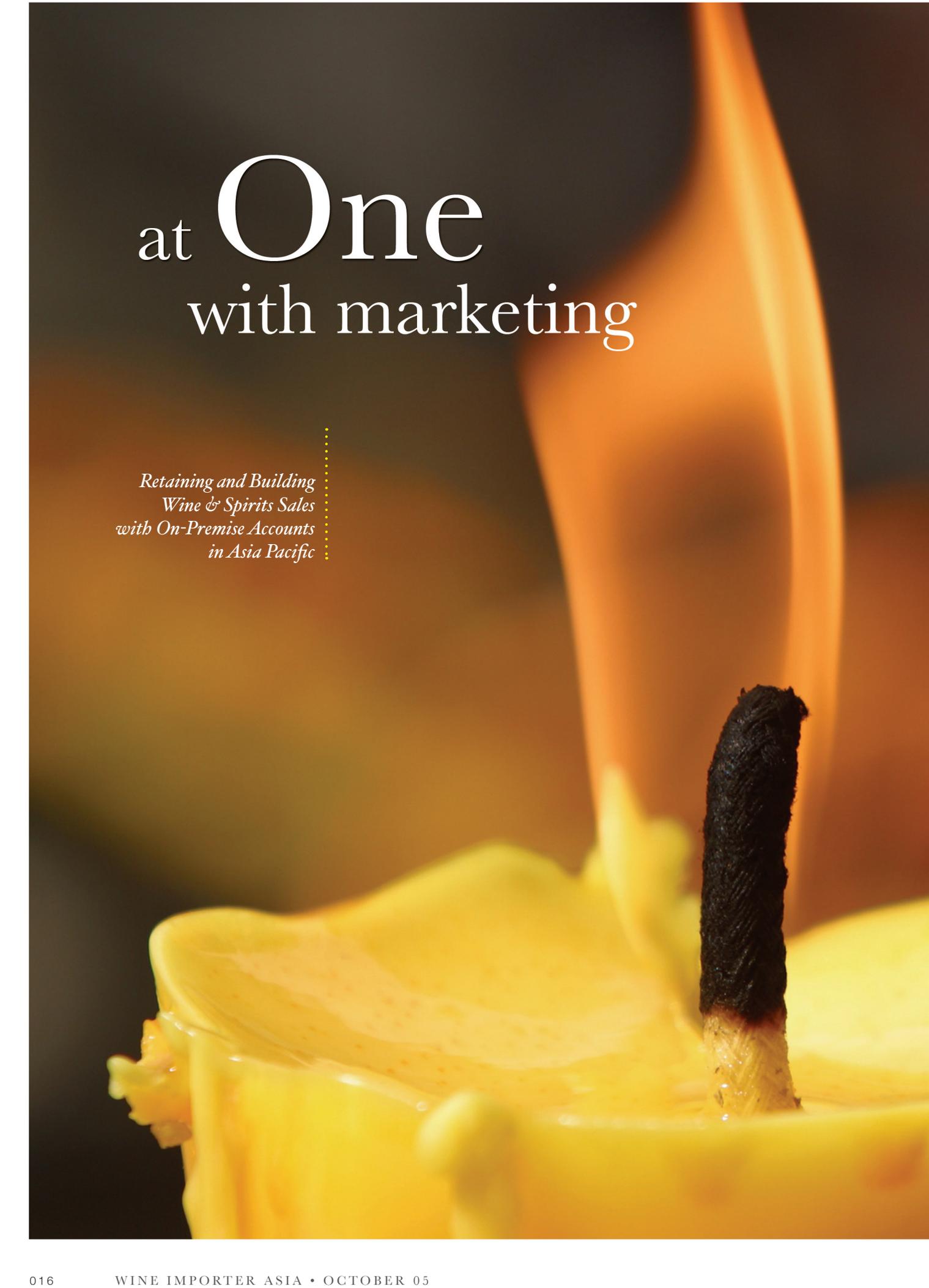
COST OF ENTRY

JAMES HALLIDAY *who is this man?*

CLUB WINE THAILAND

AUSTRALIA *Asia's local supplier*





at **One**
with marketing

*Retaining and Building
Wine & Spirits Sales
with On-Premise Accounts
in Asia Pacific*

The traditional approach to sales and marketing from widgets to wash cloths to wine has been to sell as much of what you have at the best mark-up until the market forces a paradigm shift (or moves the cheese, for those self-help book readers among us) at which time the game begins anew by whatever rules dominate the altered reality.

Asia Pacific is in many ways a brilliant case study in support of the advantages of relationship marketing from dawn to dusk. But it is more than about business. It is about the heart and soul of the region's entrepreneurs; their religious and cultural heritage, folkways, mores and spirituality. It speaks volumes about their souls.

“The degree to which we fully understand and satisfy each customer is the degree to which our hard-fought business will be protected.”

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It is said that we are all connected; that the only thing that separates us would be an artificial barrier that any one of us might construct. If this is so, then the people of Asia Pacific understand and practice this principal better than most of the populations of the seven continents. It is the basis for relationship marketing that stands the test of time and results in above average results for those who define it, no less for the on-premise wine and spirits trade.

The world has become one market place. It is global without the option of turning back the hands of time. It is said that the effect of a butterfly flapping its

wings in the Amazon jungle is felt for a heart beat in a soft breeze as it caresses the coast of Japan. You can see it if you close your eyes. Not all of life's most important lessons are learned while we are in the awakened state. Some of our most important survival skills are taught us by our Guardian Angels (Judeo-Christian vehicle) and Arhats (Sanskrit-Pali-Buddhist vehicle) as we sleep, when our defenses are down and we are again receptive to absorbing what our great, silent sages need to teach us for civilization to continue.

As importers and distributors of the wines and spirits that are consumed in Asia Pacific, like our counterparts around the globe, we want to build our businesses by retaining our existing customer base and adding new business as quickly as possible. It is the methods we employ to prosper that significantly dictate the quality and meaning of our results compared to the rest of the world. It is the core, intrinsic values of the people of Asia Pacific that explain why relationships and marketing are practiced better here than anywhere else in the world. Let us explore how and why.

The history of the wine and spirits trade in China, for example, is as old as time itself in that part of the world, not having arrived as many uninformed westerners might suspect as a result of the turn of the 20th century “Spheres of Influence” period in China's history, when the imperialist, mercantilist governments of Europe and America sought to monopolise trade with China on terms that favoured the west. It is true such trade resulted in an increase in the awareness of imported wines and spirits of superior quality, but the Chinese had been producing wine and distilling spirits over the ages to satisfy the population's demand for inexpensive intoxicants.

All of Asia Pacific has a rich heritage of wine and spirits production with the imports always arriving centuries later, gradually creating today's two tier markets – the inexpensive domestic offerings and the comparatively expensive imported selections.

The challenge to retain and build wine and spirits business with on-premise accounts in Asia Pacific is to respect the preferences of those who continue to appreciate the traditional choices, while featuring the new alternatives for those who find they better relate to them.

Our role is to serve our communities, however we define them, the best variety of wines and spirits that satisfy our customers and for which they are willing and able to pay. The process of building the kind of long term relationships that resist our every competitor's reach starts with understanding the business as well as the personal desires, needs and aspirations of every customer. The degree to which we fully understand and satisfy each customer is the degree to which our hard-fought business will be protected.

If we are careful to sell every customer the wines and spirits they can best afford and that bring them the most pleasure and satisfaction, we will have done our job and our customers will know it. They will reward us with their loyalty, which is the only guarantee of tomorrow's business.

The universe is, indeed, a perfect place. If we practice our trade with the utmost benefit to our customers as our goal, more than not, we will create our own security and they will be our best defense against all competitors as they will feel connected to us in a way that reminds them of “family”, rather than simply the transactional “buyer-seller” routine.

There will always be newcomers who excel at sales and marketing, but those of us who excel at relationship building because it is the right thing to do will never have to fear that anything of value will be taken from us. Teach, train, inspire and become one with your customer and the force will always be with you. Win their hearts as wine and spirits professionals and prosper. Let those who would profit without knowing their customer's business and personal wins wonder why you succeed where they fall short. That is all.

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By Fred Tibbitts