

Dave Hochrein

The new Mid-Atlantic Region Manager for Sovereign Brands has made the jump from a long tenure in spirits to a heavily focused wine supplier with a newly focused attention on spirits.

By Teddy Durgin

Dave Hochrein is the new Mid-Atlantic Region Manager for Sovereign Brands, a family company of fine wines and spirits owned and operated by the Berish brothers. Hochrein previously served as Proximo Spirits' Regional Director for Maryland and Washington, D.C., from September 2014 to March of this year.

"It was great to be recognized by this family-owned company that has taken an interest in what I have been able to do in the mid-Atlantic," he stated, during a recent interview with the *Beverage Journal*. "I am able to expand into a bigger region now, covering Delaware to Virginia as well as West Virginia. The Maryland and D.C. markets are integral to Luc Belaire's footprint. But this also gives me a chance to expand into a control state market of Virginia with wine and call on chain stores. Being the only employee in the mid-Atlantic, I'll be using my experience to hit the trade and distributors as much as I can as we grow."

Having big brand experience with Bacardi and Proximo over a 22-year career, Hochrein stated that it has been an immediate excitement that every sales call he has made in the early going has had an impact on his new company. "With red hot growth in sparkling and rose wine, our brands Luc Belaire and Cloud Chaser Rose are really good items within what is happening," he remarked. "The company has a knack for developing good tasting products within the segment they want to attack. Take Bumbu Rum, for example. This product is like nothing I have ever tasted, and we can't keep it in stock!"

Even though it's only been a couple of months, Hochrein is already putting his personal stamp on the job. He prefers the personal approach. "I have really valued some of my relationships through the years from distributor managers, sales reps and really good on- and off-premise retailers," he stated. "These folks help you make brands move. At this level, you need partners to foster growth. I always work to find more true partners, whether it's a retail partner helping you with sell-through or a sales partner helping you drive your message and plan."

Asked to describe his work and leadership style, two words came immediately to mind: inclusivity and positivity. In Hochrein's view, information in this business is power. "Half of the

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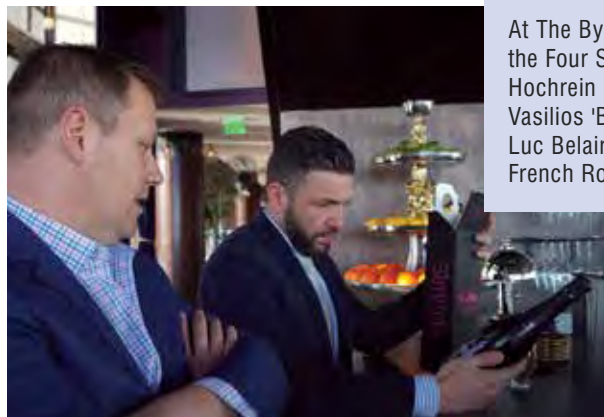
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At The Bygone signature bar at the top of the Four Seasons Hotel in Baltimore, Dave Hochrein of Sovereign Brands talks with Vasilios 'Bill' Tserkis of The Bygone, about Luc Belaire ... one of the the best-selling French Rosés in the U.S.

problems with execution is not being informed and prepared to act," he explained. "If you can keep your teams informed and make them part of the plan, they tend to 'own' the process more. I like input before, during, and after things are done. And it's not just negative input that can make a program better. Momentum can also lead to more momentum with brands. We catch lightning in a bottle all the time with brands and consumers. I love trying to catch lightning, but sometimes it stings you and that's OK, too. Leading is a lost art but one I take seriously."

Hochrein has never left the beverage business since starting as a merchandiser for Churchill Distributors, now Breakthru Beverage Group. Along the way it's been the people and the variety of work that has kept him going. "If you invest yourself in it, the rewards are everywhere," he said. "From being able to see the world with educational trips and incentives to finding lifelong friends who are also business associates and competitors. In the beverage business, you can 'Live to Work and Work to Live.' I've been doing both for a while! A former boss used to call me the 'happiest man on the planet' as I tend to have a sarcastic quip or a smile during tough meetings, I think it's because I've always loved the business and its rewards."

So, does this veteran of both sides of the biz have any advice for newbies entering our industry today? For sure, he was ready with a couple of quips that he delivered with a smile. "My advice revolves around eating!" he exclaimed. "When faced with a massive task, ask yourself, 'How do you eat an elephant?' One bite at a time!"

He added, "Also, you aren't entering the beverage industry. You are becoming a lawyer and a firefighter! Every day will find its way to putting out a fire or defending your case. Honestly, don't fall into the laziness of hiding behind other people to do your work. Own your business, show up and follow up, and the rewards are everywhere." ■

LUC
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FRANCE

BUMBU
THE CRAFT RUM

Cloud Chaser
CÔTES DE PROVENCE ROSÉ

SKELETON
WINES WITH BACKBONE

"Sovereign Brands is a true family wine and spirits company, with four generations of history in the industry. Since 1999, Sovereign Brands has pursued its goal of becoming the wine and spirits industry's most innovative creator of unique, forward-thinking new brands. Through partnerships with high-quality, family-owned wineries and distilleries worldwide, we build each of our brands from the ground up to meet our standards of product quality and innovation."