

Case study: Chateau Chantal

Incorporated in 1991, Chateau Chantal is a winery and inn located on Michigan's Old Mission Peninsula, north of Traverse City. About 40 percent of Chateau Chantal's wine sales come from its tasting room with 60 percent from distribution to restaurants and grocery stores. The company wanted to strengthen its marketing muscle as annual sales increases for wine distribution were lagging behind the national average of 11 percent. In June 2017 Chateau Chantal entered Michigan's Economic Gardening program, which gave it access to researchers who are experts in sophisticated databases, digital marketing and geographic information systems.

To help Chateau Chantal take a more strategic approach to sales, the Economic Gardening researchers evaluated the company's current customers according to Tapestry segmentation, which is a system that integrates consumer traits with residential characteristics to identify markets and classify U.S.

neighborhoods. "This was a really interesting set of data — one that was new to us," says CEO Marie-Chantal Dalese. "We've always known that the majority of our customers come from Michigan, with about 50 percent of them located in the southeast corner of the state. Yet the Economic Gardening data went much further to define what their social and psychological demographics looked like."

Next, the researchers took a deeper dive and ran a spatial analysis to determine hotspots for Chateau Chantal fans. These geographic maps were overlaid onto areas where Meijer grocery stores were located in Michigan. "Being able to show this data to our Meijer's buyers was really beneficial," Dalese says. "It was data they weren't seeing from other wineries."

In response, Meijer expanded two of Chateau Chantal's wines that were previously sold only in four stores: "Celebrate" is now found in 12 locations and "Late Harvest Riesling" is now in 46 stores. What's more, Chateau Chantal has developed a new Cran Apple wine especially for Meijer, which has been added to all the grocer's Michigan stores.

By September 2018 sales for wine distribution were up 18 percent (compared to 2 percent increases in the previous year), and Dalese hopes to maintain this growth through the rest of the year.

In other deliverables, the Economic Gardening team provided Dalese with:



Marie-Chantal Dalese, CEO of Chateau Chantal in Traverse City

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- Benchmarking salaries.
- Website analysis to strengthen online marketing efforts.
- Information about grape contracts other wineries have with fruit vendors.

Albeit Chateau Chantal grows its own grapes, they also purchase fruit from other farms. “We’re trying to find a new way to establish pricing, and the researchers found some existing contracts to see what others were doing,” explains Dalese. “Although the data didn’t provide a silver bullet, it was good to know we weren’t missing anything.”

“I was very impressed with the Economic Gardening engagement,” Dalese adds. “The process was extremely organized and efficient. The researchers gave us some specific deliverables that could be used on-the-spot to improve business with Meijer — and that we can use to increase sales with other retail outlets and our distributor.”



The National Center for Economic Gardening is a partnership between the Edward Lowe Foundation and Chris Gibbons. NCEG helps state and regional organizations establish Economic Gardening networks, delivers Economic Gardening services and maintains national standards in training and certification. To learn more, visit www.edwardlowe.org.