



Building a Tech Stack: An Analysis of Breweries & Cideries

2022 Edition



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Introduction

When we published our first analysis of brewery and cidery tech stacks in August 2020, the global mood was still anxious and uncertain. Very little was known about what the future held, and businesses were scrambling to figure out how to operate under such chaotic conditions. While plenty of uncertainty remains, the beer and cider industries specifically have regained some control over their futures in the last year. With pandemic lockdowns and in-person gathering restrictions seemingly a thing of the past, taprooms are buzzing (if not as full as they once were).

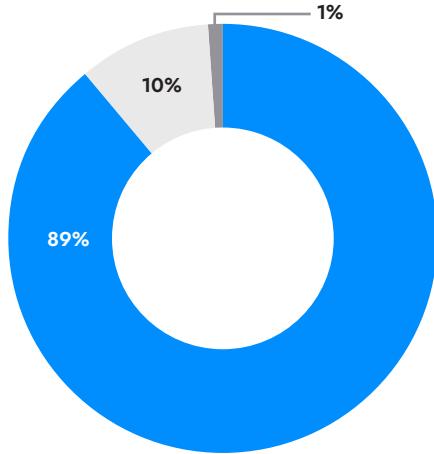
Despite these obvious improvements, new obstacles have appeared. Supply chain issues with key items like aluminum cans and glass bottles — just to name a couple — have caused major disruptions in packaging and production schedules for craft producers. Owners are buying more supplies than they need at any given moment, for fear they won't be able to get them if they wait. Even when they are able to buy, prices and shipping estimates have skyrocketed for nearly everything.

And then there are the long-standing issues that every small manufacturer faces. (As it turns out, not even a pandemic can erase them.) Managing communication with distribution partners is often hectic and inefficient, and many smaller producers struggle to find a real brand champion when there are much bigger competitors under the same firm. On top of it all, owners struggle to find and interpret key business data that could help them grow. It can be difficult to find time to analyze your sales performance numbers in a clunky homemade spreadsheet, for example, when you're already clocking 16-hour days.

Even with all that said, people are feeling optimistic about where things are headed. In our annual customer survey,

In the Next 12 Months, How Do You Expect Your Sales to Change?

- Increase
- Same
- Decrease



Ekos found that 89% of producers expect sales to increase over the next 12 months, 10% expect them to stay the same, and 1% predict a decrease. As craft producers look toward the future, it's time to consider how to be both efficient and effective when it comes to core business processes like inventory and production management, DTC sales, distribution, and accounting.

While technology isn't magic, nearly all of the industry's most pressing and persistent challenges can be aided by digital tools. In this report, we'll break down the ways breweries and cideries are already succeeding with technology and identify the biggest opportunities for improvement. We hope you walk away with a few ideas about how you can enhance your business's technology ecosystem and empower your team to make informed decisions.

Beer & Cider Tech Stats

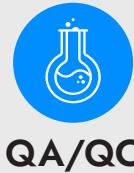
from grain to glass
to the bottom line

production & inventory



#1

business
management
software



66% Ekos
17% spreadsheets
14% no system

DTC & distribution sales

POS



38% Square
19% Arryved
16% Toast

ecommerce



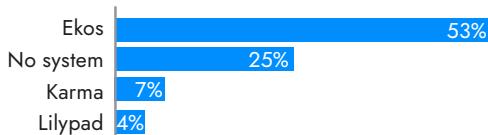
26% Square
19% Shopify
15% Toast

club

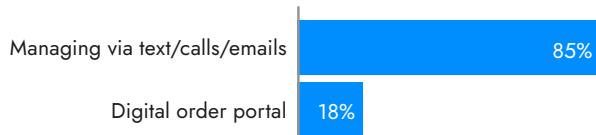


18% No system
13% Shopify
12% Squarespace

CRM

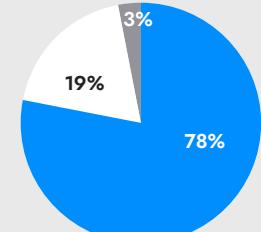


sales orders & invoices



accounting & analytics

89%
use QuickBooks



QuickBooks Online
QuickBooks Desktop
Both

analytics & business intelligence



62%
spreadsheets



27%
no system



12%
iDIG by VIP



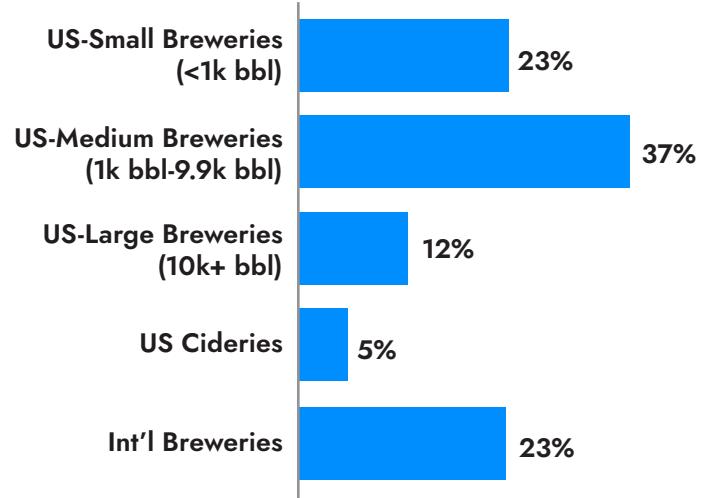
Methodology & Respondent Overview

Ekos sent an online survey to 12,284 breweries and cideries in November 2021. There were 450 total respondents, including 324 U.S. breweries, 22 U.S. cideries, and 104 international breweries. We broke down results by each of these categories, along with the additional factor of production volume for U.S. breweries to show any differences between differently sized businesses. Most respondents (44%) were owners or general managers, with additional roles spanning production (18%), operations (16%), finance/administrative (12%), and sales/marketing (10%).

In addition to the survey, Ekos conducted manual research on ecommerce and club/membership technology for 1,641 beer and cider producers. We also interviewed three breweries — one small, one medium, and one large — to gain additional context and understanding about their business operations and use of technology. You can find complete case studies on each of these businesses in the report.

Production Size & Business Type

n = 450



All statistics in this report come from our own research unless otherwise noted and cited.

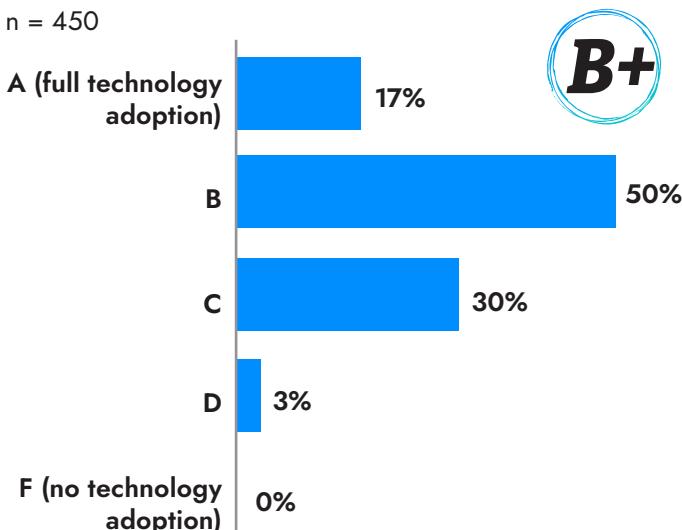


Technology Adoption Trends

Self-Reported Tech Adoption Grades

In this year's survey, we asked breweries and cideries to reflect on their overall technology use as a business and give themselves a grade from A to F. On average, respondents gave themselves a B+ grade, with cideries grading themselves lower than breweries at a C average. Overall, 67% of producers reported an A or B on their business's technology adoption.

Tech Adoption Grade



Large breweries in our sample (10,000+ barrels in production volume) graded themselves the lowest compared to small and medium breweries. Interestingly, we found a similar trend in our [2022 State of Technology in the Wine Industry](#) research. This points to the increased need for technology — and the complexity of a growing tech ecosystem — as alcohol producers scale. While larger businesses might use more technology overall than smaller producers, they need more data and want to find solutions that integrate to provide a seamless flow of information. As production volume, distribution, and overall sales grow, this need can feel more and more pronounced.

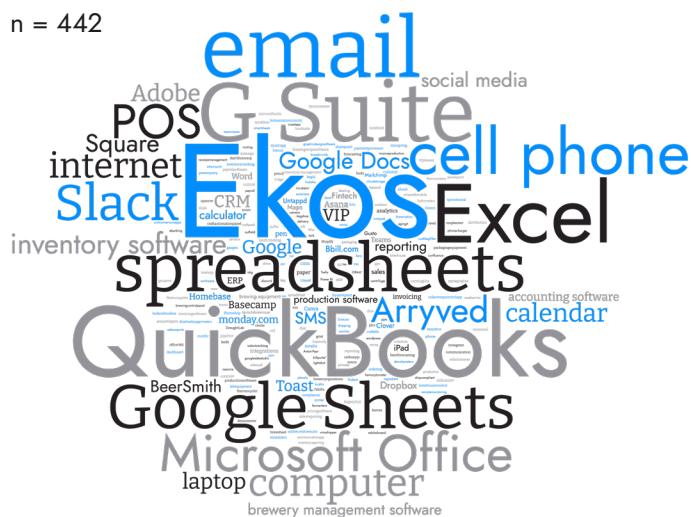
Technology That Breweries & Cideries Can't Live Without

We asked producers to tell us what technology they can't live without when it comes to managing their businesses, and the answers we got reveal something many industry insiders already know: Software is vital for key processes like inventory and production management (the core functions of Ekos, which was a top response) and accounting, but more manual solutions like spreadsheets and email are still prevalent.

When we asked about business management software specifically, Ekos was the top vendor mentioned. But what's a lot more interesting about Ekos being so pervasive in this

Technology Can't Live Without

n = 442

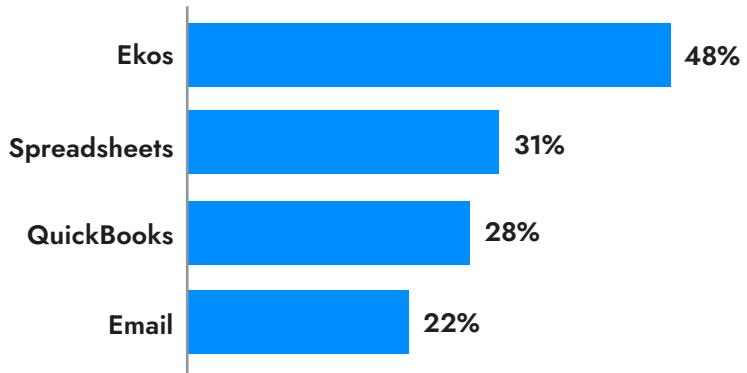


survey is the fact that business management software was a top response in the first place. When you contrast this data with our winery research, it's easy to see that not all segments of the alcohol industry use technology the same way. Wineries are much more likely to use spreadsheets and manual methods to manage their production and inventory processes, with more than 50% of those in our survey saying as much.

Business management software is also the main place that brewers and cider makers store quality assurance data during the production process. In our view, this is a best practice. Keeping your fermentation logs and other lab data in the same place you track inventory and production data helps ensure you can find that information should you need it in the future. For example, looking back on the historical numbers for your flagship IPA might illuminate why the latest batch is getting mixed reviews in the taproom. If those notes are scribbled on a clipboard, good luck finding them later on.

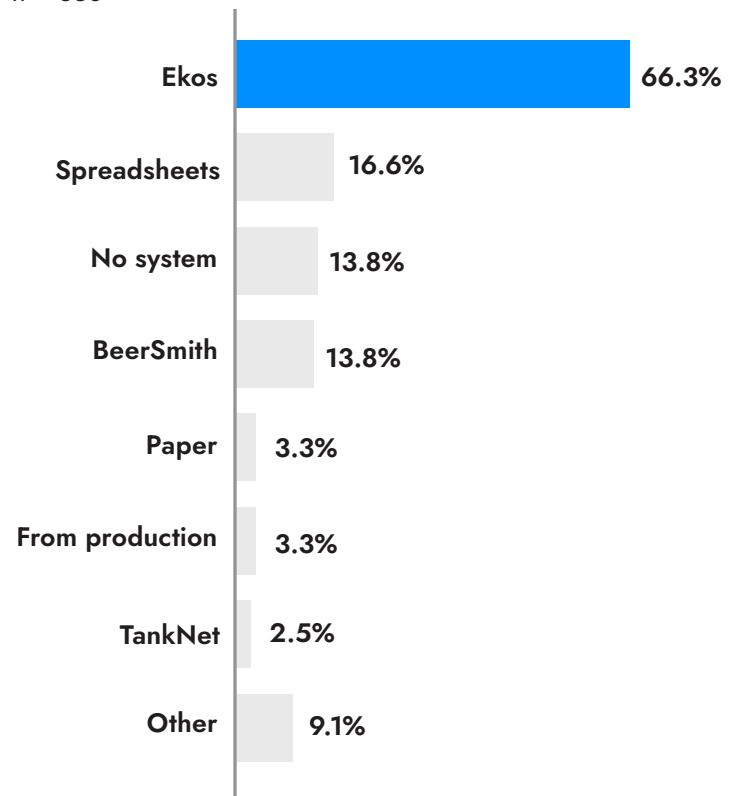
Overall, it's clear that the craft beer industry in particular is ahead of others (wine and even cider to some extent) when it comes to technology adoption. While wineries graded themselves only slightly lower at a B-, our interviews and additional research indicated that some things that are simply standard for breweries are still uncommon in the world of winemaking. At the same time, there are lessons breweries could learn from wineries, and we'll talk about those later in this report.

Top Answers



QA/QC Systems

n = 358



Are You Too Small for Business Management Software?

Many owners of small breweries wonder if using a system like Ekos is worth it at their size. There's no perfect formula for when you should transition from spreadsheets to software, and it all depends on your vision for the future. A small neighborhood brewpub with no plans for distribution might not need dedicated software now or ever. But any business owner with their mind set on growth is better off getting the right processes in place sooner rather than later.

Don't just take it from us. Beer industry CPAs Maria Pearman and Chris Farmand say you can see benefits from software at any production volume as long as you're committed to using the system.

"For small producers, the primary value is having a point of truth for your data and a way to make your financial reports more bulletproof with numbers you can actually rely on," said Pearman. "And also it becomes a catalyst for developing good habits

like monthly inventory counts. The system will force those good habits, which will pay off in the future."

Farmand suggests identifying one dedicated user on the production side and another who manages logistics or back office operations. Those key users can help hold each other accountable and work out any disparities in data that arise.

"One key point is that those two people can never be the owner. The owner of the brewery is so busy – we have found that when this whole process gets dropped in their lap, the process gets dropped, period."

- Chris Farmand, CPA

[Learn more about why brewery CPAs recommend business management software »](#)





Technology Helps a Small Brewery Grow

Quick Facts

- 1,200 bbl production in 2021
- Two locations in Bend, Oregon
- Distribution in three states

Monkless Belgian Ales, a small brewery that opened in 2016, utilizes a lot of technology to run the business — something co-owners Robin and Todd Clement understand the importance of as former software company employees. Since their opening, they have been leveraging Ekos to manage their business and have added additional technology as they've grown. From recipe and production tracking to POS and distribution software solutions, the Monkless team has a thorough tech stack that connects all facets of the business. This is something that Robin says gives the brewery a competitive advantage compared to others their size.

"We're definitely more agile on the road with mobile apps and creating and adjusting invoices on the fly," Robin said. These mobile capabilities mean that Robin's sales team can adjust inventory and invoices with ease.



Plus, using a varied tech stack means that Robin can get all of the insights her sales and marketing teams need to make decisions, from predicting when they'll need to restock inventory to monitoring the frequency of sales orders. Although they are a small team, Monkless is thinking strategically about how to leverage technology and extract insights at every touch point from grain to glass to make decisions that will lead to future growth.

The Monkless team also benefits from integrating many of these systems, like QuickBooks Online and Ekos. "Without Ekos, there would be a heck of a lot of data entry and a lot of disconnect," Robin said. Plus, the ease of the QuickBooks Online integration means Monkless's bookkeeper only needs to work part time — saving the business money. As the company begins its sixth year of operation, the team is seeing the value in a sophisticated tech stack that will help the company as it continues to grow.

"Other breweries our size are likely not quite as far along in that technology realm as we are and not leveraging the tools completely the way that we do which has been really eye-opening. I just don't see any other way to do it."

— Robin Clement, owner, Monkless Belgian Ales



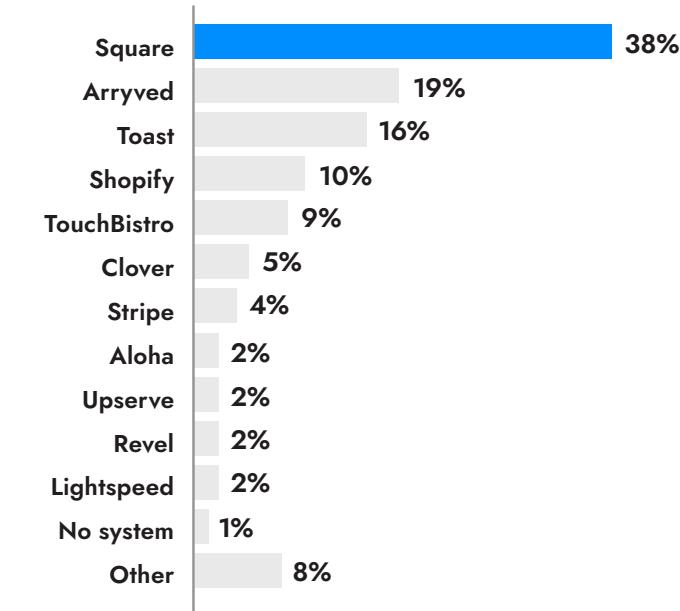
Direct-to-Consumer Technology

Point-of-Sale

If your business is like most craft breweries and cideries, you sell most of your product through your taproom. As a result, a POS system is a non-negotiable piece of technology. In our survey, breweries and cideries reported using Square, Arryved, and Toast most frequently for POS.

Point-of-Sale Software

n = 447



How do you choose which one is right for your business or evaluate whether it's time for a change? Here's a hot take: the biggest benefits of your POS system come from

the inventory management features. The way the system handles inventory — and how that data flows into other systems — is what might save you the most time on a day-to-day basis. Plus, with all that data syncing together, you can glean major business insights that would otherwise require hours of manual data entry and analysis.

Throughout the day, your bartenders ring up purchases, and online orders come in through your ecommerce site (ideally, your POS and ecommerce platform are one in the same). You have all that information in your POS system, but then... what do you do with it? How do you know how much beer or cider is left to sell in the taproom when finished goods are sold?

Ideally, you'd be able to tell by looking at your inventory management system, which would subsequently help you plan future production and know when to move products out of storage and into your taproom. But in order for that to work, you have to get the information about depleted inventory out of one system and into another.

To be sure the information in your POS, inventory, and accounting systems syncs up accurately, look for a POS platform that offers a seamless integration with your inventory management system. Automating this flow of data from your POS and ecommerce transactions will help you maintain error-free inventory counts and COGS numbers, which are vital to making production, sales, and financial decisions for your business.



A Point-of-Sale Success Story

When Iowa Brewing Company first opened, they did so without a business management system and relied solely on QuickBooks and spreadsheets to handle customer orders, inventory, and other important information. Quickly, Brian Stephan realized that they needed a better way to control inventory, so the team implemented Ekos in 2017. Although inventory management was under control and Ekos's QuickBooks integration was making financial reporting easier, the team was still spending several hours a month reconciling sales from their POS system, often 35-40 days after sales were made. This created many challenges, including inaccurate reporting, out-of-date inventory, and issues with reordering due to long lead times.

In early 2020, Iowa Brewing Company began to sync Arryved with Ekos and QuickBooks, creating full connectivity across the business. Now, the systems are synced, allowing the Iowa Brewing Company team to see actual sales numbers the next day and ensure



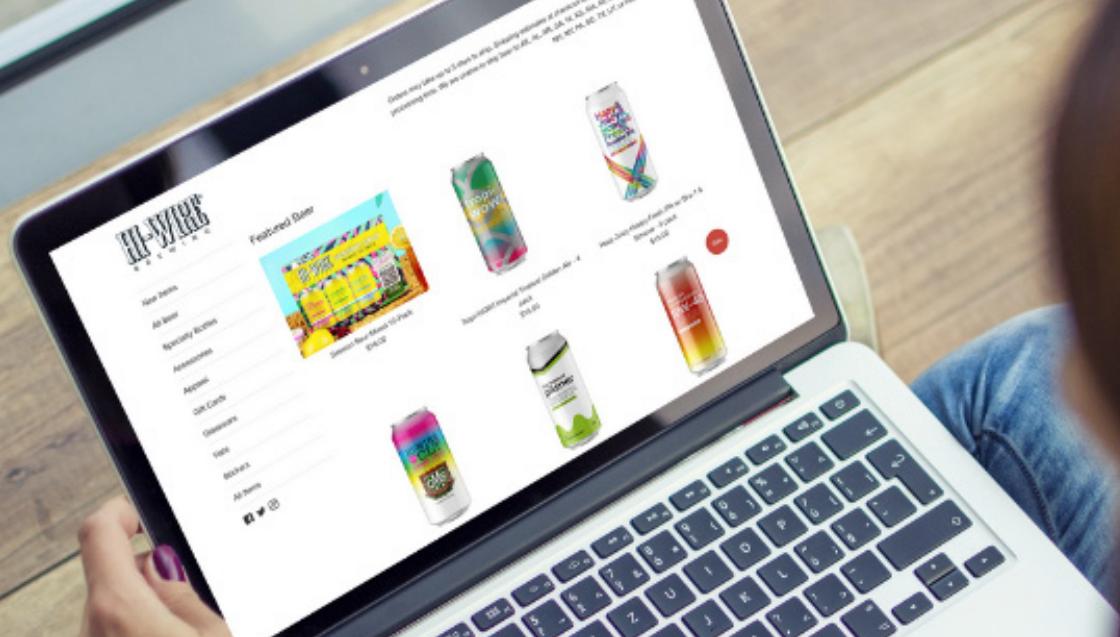
inventory is up to date. "It is a great timesaver, is way more efficient, and reduces inaccuracies in data," said Brian. "We are very, very happy with the Ekos and Arryved and QuickBooks integrations." The team finds that reconciliation now takes about an hour a month and sales are automatically integrated in financial statements.

[Learn more about Iowa Brewing Co.'s story »](#)

"Previously, I spent so much time trying to make three things – inventory, POS, and accounting – talk to each other, and it was a nightmare."

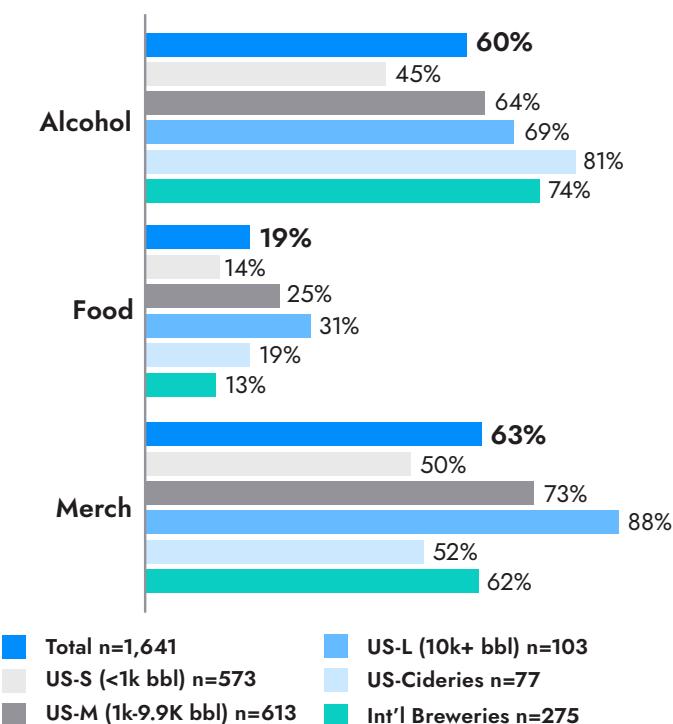
— Brian Stephan, Iowa Brewing Co.





Ecommerce

Products Offered via Ecommerce



In our last report for breweries and cideries, we found that a significant portion were offering their alcoholic products via ecommerce sites — a necessity in the pandemic, when many taprooms and tasting rooms experienced forced closures. We predicted this trend would remain, with the craft alcohol industry permanently changed.

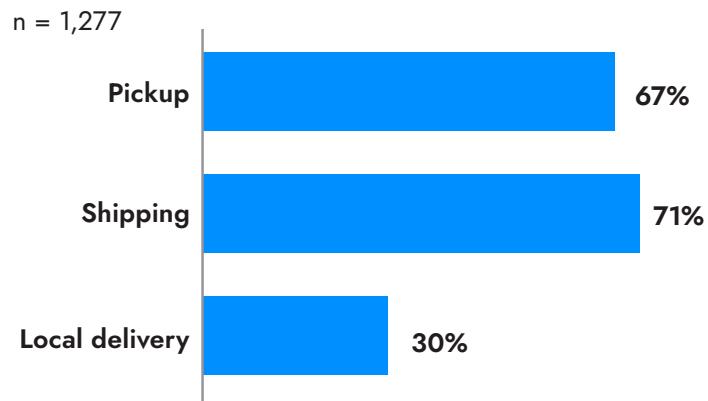
This year's research shows that, compared to 2020, a slightly higher percentage (60%) of breweries and cideries

are using an ecommerce site to sell alcohol, as well as merch (63%) and food (19%). Clearly, businesses that began selling online during the pandemic have continued to do so, which demonstrates both the perceived value in diversifying sales channels and the sustained demand from consumers for ecommerce buying options.

Small breweries are significantly less likely to offer alcohol for sale online compared to medium and large breweries. There could be many reasons for this, but most likely is a perceived lack of resources — insufficient time, money, and staff to put toward setting up and maintaining an ecommerce site. With that said, we believe it's worth it to invest in this channel if you hope to see success with DTC sales outside of the taproom over the long term.

When it comes to how ecommerce customers are able to get their purchased items, pickup (at the taproom) is more than twice as common as local delivery, but the prevalence of delivery has only slightly decreased since our first report

Delivery Methods for Ecommerce Orders

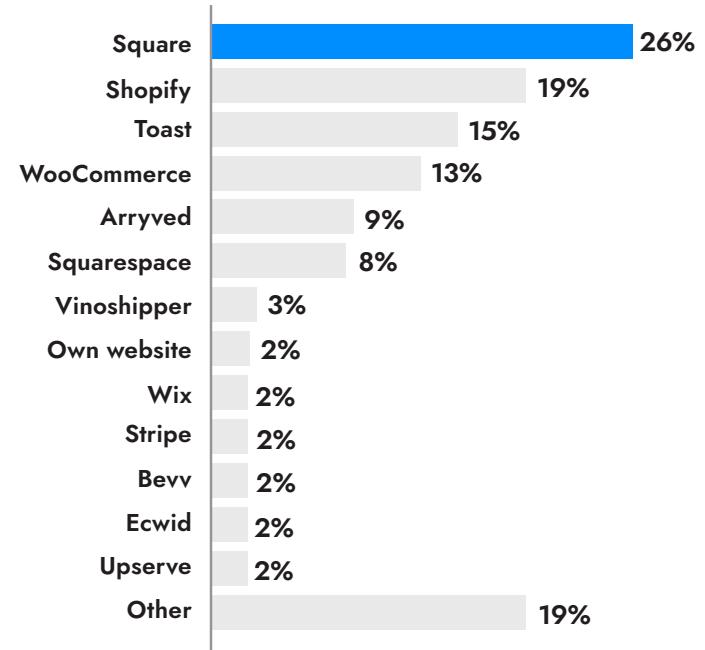


(30% in 2021 versus 32% in 2020). The “order online, pickup in person” option is likely to stick around for the long haul, appealing to consumers who want to support their local producers directly but would rather drink at home. During the pandemic, customers ordered online out of necessity — now they do it because it’s a convenient habit. DTC shipping, while only possible in some states, is a common offering among the businesses in our research as well.

When it comes to actual vendors, the top three ecommerce providers in our research of breweries and cideries were Square, Shopify, and Toast with Vinoshipper also coming in as a top choice for cideries. Considering the significant overlap with the POS providers chart, it’s clear that many businesses are using the same company for both POS and ecommerce. In our view, it’s always a win when you can use one tech solution for multiple purposes rather than separate systems.

Ecommerce Systems

n = 1,402



Run Your Brewery Like a Tech Company

Great Notion is a brewery, sure, but it does things a little differently than your average craft producer. The most obvious difference between Great Notion and many of its competitors lies squarely with its sales. Great Notion does 90% of its sales direct to consumers. CEO Paul Reiter calls them “almost more of an e-commerce company than a brewery.” Most notably, Great Notion developed its own ecommerce app and associated video game. While you might not have the resources to make an app, you can take some of the principles of Great Notion’s approach and apply it to your own ecommerce strategy.

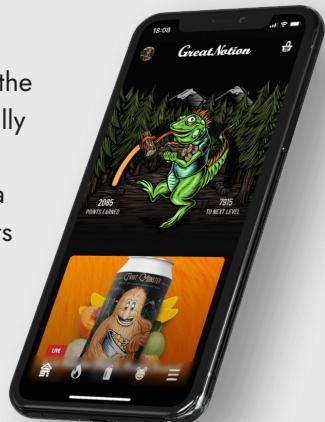
1. Building Excitement

Why build an app in the first place? “It focuses on keeping our customers excited about our beer,” Paul told us. Rather than develop an app, your team could think of other ways to keep customers engaged and excited about your products — whether that’s investing in fun social media campaigns, giveaways, or a rewards program.

2. Gamification

While the app’s main revenue generation comes from e-commerce and fulfillment, the games keep them on

the app. Each beer, viewable in the app’s archive, has its own specially created character and backstory in the video game. There’s also a competitive element — customers can rise through the ranks by posting pictures of their beer on Instagram or shopping through the app.



3. Engagement

Despite the significant costs associated with designing and developing their app, Paul said that it was certainly worth it for Great Notion. “We’re definitely seeing the ROI on it,” he told us. “We’ve got lots of engagement on the app.” And engagement is, of course, one of the most valuable drivers of sales — not to mention one of the most difficult to facilitate.

[Learn more about Great Notion and their ecommerce strategy »](#)

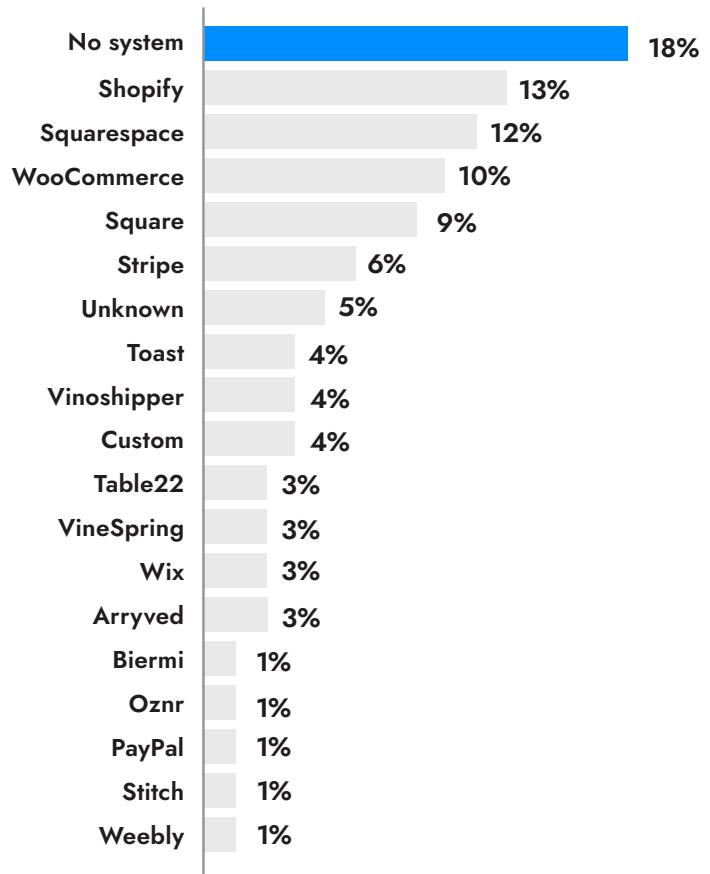
Club & Membership

Club or membership programs are not as popular in the craft beer industry as they are among family-owned wineries, but they have become more popular in recent years as breweries look for ways to turn one-time purchases into repeat business. Clubs can instill a sense of brand loyalty, as many subscription or membership programs include exclusive rewards and perks for members. This is one area that breweries could learn a bit from wineries, though the beer industry has the advantage of diving in technology-first if they're just getting their club program set up.

For beer and cider producers with clubs, 18% are managing them manually. Managing a membership program manually is not only a headache for your team, who has to try and keep information like order history and contact information organized in a spreadsheet or shared doc, but it's also a bad experience for your customers. If you offer regular shipments of your products, it's much easier for both you and your members if they can make their selections online rather than sending you an email or calling in to the taproom. You may also find more opportunities for upsells and personalization when you have the help of a dedicated software program. With technology, you'll have more customer data. And with more customer data, you can make more sales. When it comes to club software, the top three technology solutions are Shopify, Squarespace, and WooCommerce, with many others in the mix.

Club Management Systems

n = 77



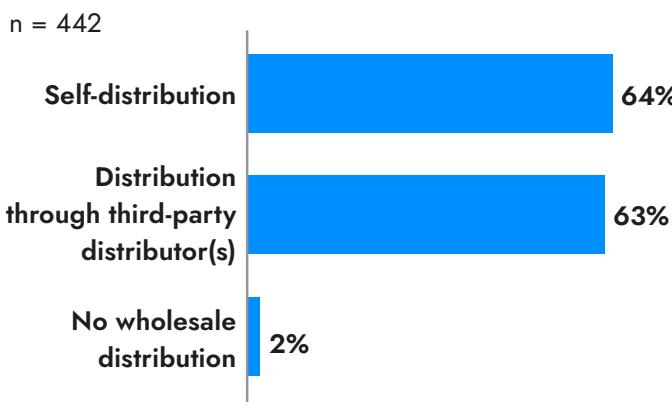
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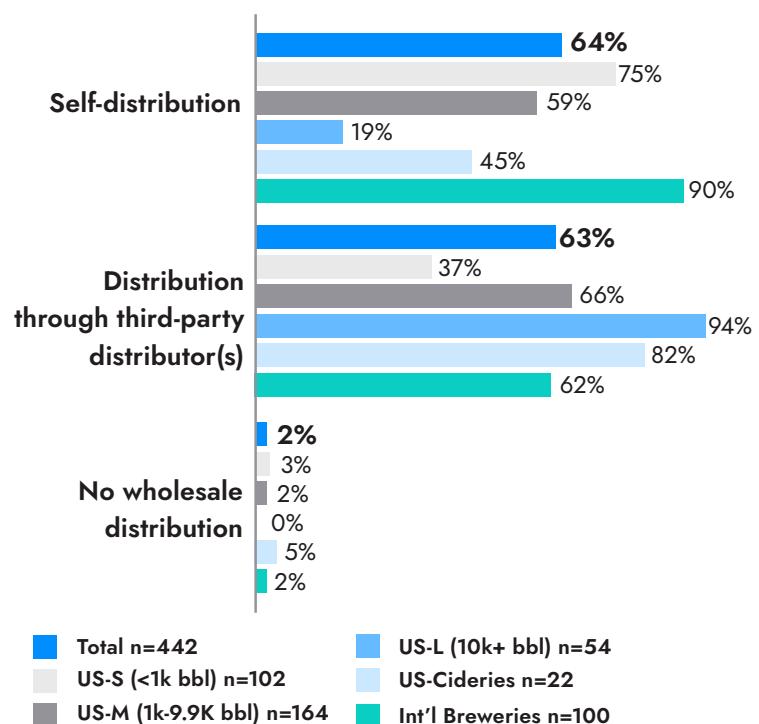
Wholesale Distribution Technology

Distributing alcohol is a tricky business. Whether you self-distribute directly to retailers and restaurants or you work with third-party distributors, challenges abound. Particularly as breweries and cideries increase their production volume, juggling the (hopefully) growing number of wholesale customers can be overwhelming.

Brewery & Cidery Wholesale Distribution Models



Brewery & Cidery Wholesale Distribution Models by Segment





We asked producers in our survey to tell us about their distribution models. We found that self-distribution was much more common among international breweries and small U.S. breweries (versus larger ones) and, conversely, that large breweries were the most common segment to report distributing through a third party. However, since 64% of all respondents reported self-distribution and 63% reported third-party distribution, there is clearly some overlap between these groups. It's possible that some producers are using self-distribution for local accounts and leveraging distributors for markets that are more competitive or farther from home.

Our survey also found that the average number of distributors increases as brewery production size increases. 72% of respondents said they use more than one distributor. So, regardless of whether they're self-distributing, the vast majority of producers in our survey are dealing with more than one "customer" at any given time.

On the other hand, most breweries and cideries do not distribute to a large number of states (or provinces, for those outside the U.S.). 36% distribute to only one state/

Number of Distributors by Business Type

n = 241	# of Distributors	
	Average	Max
U.S. - Small Breweries (<1k bbl)	4	48
U.S. - Med Breweries (1k-9.9k bbl)	5	20
U.S. - Large Breweries (10k+ bbl)	13	47
U.S. - Cideries	5	19
International Breweries	2	23
Total - All Breweries & Cideries	6	48

Number of Distribution States/Provinces, by Business Type

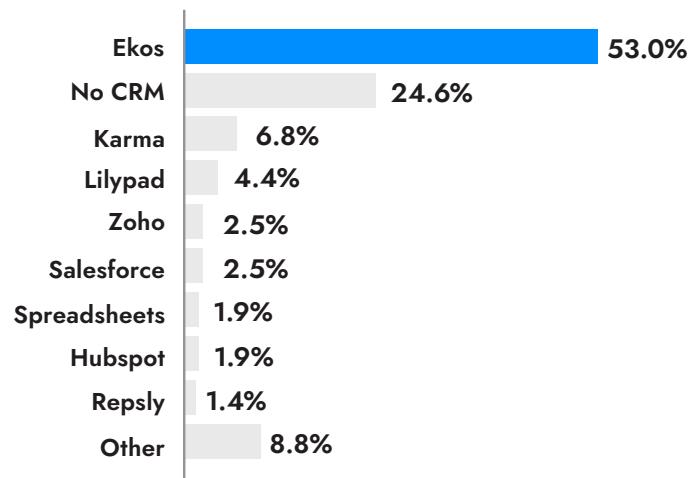
n = 242	# of States/Provinces	
	Average	Max
U.S. - Small Breweries (<1k bbl)	2	12
U.S. - Med Breweries (1k-9.9k bbl)	3	24
U.S. - Large Breweries (10k+ bbl)	6	22
U.S. - Cideries	6	40
International Breweries	3	12
Total - All Breweries & Cideries	3	40

province, and 71% distribute to less than three. This stands in stark contrast to our research on wineries, which distribute to 14 states on average. While, of course, not every craft producer wants to have national or even regional recognition, it's worth exploring the idea of expanding outside of your own backyard. Are there other markets that would be perfect for your brand? Have you dreamed of opening a taproom in a different city and pairing that with a distribution strategy for the surrounding area? If so, consider how you'll manage the increasing number of wholesale customers and, consequently, sales orders your business will have.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

CRM Software

n = 366



This year's analysis of CRM software adoption showed that few craft breweries and cideries are investing in a dedicated system for managing customer information. 53% of producers in our survey are using their business

management software (Ekos) for this purpose, and about a quarter of them are using nothing at all. Considering only 2% of producers reported no wholesale distribution, it's worrisome that nearly 25% said they have no system for customer information whatsoever.

It will come as no surprise that Ekos recommends producers use something to keep track of customers and sales activities, but there's no right or wrong answer when it comes to what you choose. There are benefits to using your business management software — namely, that your inventory and sales information is all in one place, making it easy for your sales team to see available inventory and check up on sales orders and invoices (more on that below). Significantly, we've found that producers tracking all inventory and sales activities through a system like Ekos can [identify 5-10% more product to sell](#) that would otherwise be forgotten in a dark corner of the warehouse, slowly spoiling.

However, dedicated CRMs like Karma and Lilypad appeal to some larger breweries in particular because of their robust features. What works best depends on your business model and your level of interest in adding on to your software suite.





Sophisticated Tech Stack Bolsters Production for a Medium-Sized Brewery

Quick Facts

- 5,500 bbl in 2021
- Two locations in Connecticut
- Distribution in six states

In the 10 years since **Beer'd Brewing** opened its doors, CEO Aaren Simoncini has developed a sophisticated tech stack to keep the brewery growing year after year. Beer'd opened its second location in 2020 and the tech stack Aaren and his wife, COO Precious Putnam, helped the brewery navigate the challenges of the last two years. From trying out nearly a dozen platforms, Aaren and Precious have learned what works for their 32-person team and what doesn't. "Excel sheets get burdensome and trying to make sure that your tax reporting is done appropriately becomes challenging, especially as you get more hands in the pot," Aaren said.

With two taprooms and two production facilities, it became even more important for the brewery's technological pieces to work together. On the accounting side, Beer'd utilizes QuickBooks Online



integrated with Ekos. The team syncs this data with Bill.com to invoice and ensure their reporting is in check. For production, Aaren's team uses Ekos, Draught Lab, and good ol' fashioned pen and paper sheets to monitor batches and ensure consistently high quality in their beers. With beer distributed in six states, it's essential that Aaren's two sales reps use the most effective communication possible, which includes Ekos and an internal sales platform.

The data the Beer'd team absorbs from their tech stack isn't something they take for granted. "I don't think that I could ever live without this level of granular reporting," Aaren said. "The fact that Ekos interfaces directly with our accounting system — it's the only way to do it." This year, the Beer'd team is focused on growth and making the most of their technology to work efficiently and streamline communications.

"As we've grown into self-distribution and produced more, our technological needs have gotten more complex. Being sure that our inventory and tax record-keeping is accurate is paramount, which is why we've grown our tech use over the years."

—Aaren Simoncini, CEO, Beer'd Brewing

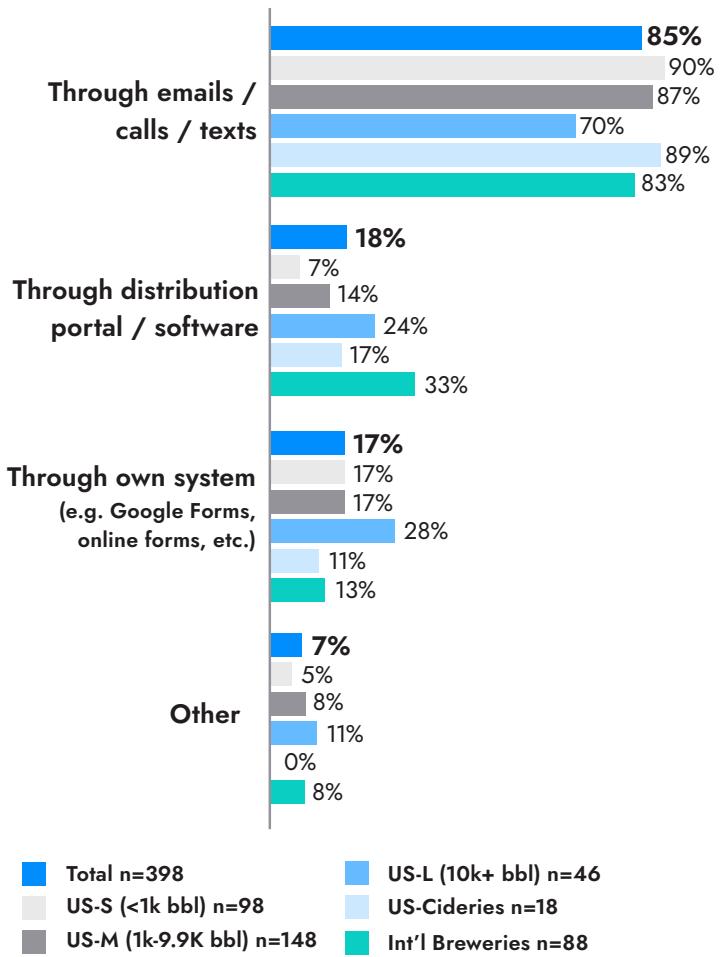
Sales Order Management

A growing business is exciting, but in the world of craft beer and cider, that means a growing pile of sales orders and invoices, too. Considering the vast majority (85%) of producers are managing orders through back-and-forth emails, calls, and texts, it's amazing that sales teams get anything done.

It is encouraging to see 18% of respondents using a distributor portal or other dedicated software to manage orders and invoices. In our survey, large breweries were most likely to be using some type of system for this purpose, indicating how complicated the process can be as production and distribution volume grow. A dedicated portal can be a game-changer because it helps you facilitate the ordering process for wholesale customers and avoid digging through your emails and texts to find the latest customer request. Like any other business process, consolidating related information into a single system will save you time and frustration.

When it comes to actually collecting payments from wholesale customers, producers reported a mix of old-school and modern methods. The most popular responses were check and Fintech at 30% each, with QuickBooks being mentioned 21% of the time. This demonstrates that, while some breweries and cideries are trying to collect payments digitally, many are still collecting paper checks. Whether they're doing so

Sales Order Management Methods by Business Type



Wholesale/Distribution Payment Software

n = 289

iControl
QuickBooks
Fintech
Bill.com
check
ACH
cash

Top Answers



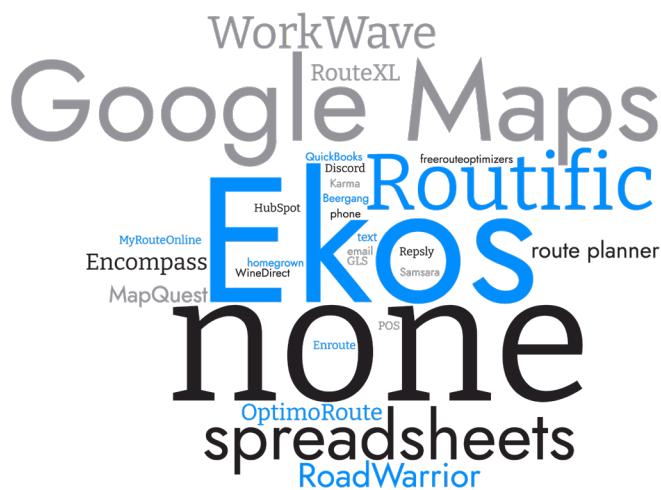


because of personal preference or customer preference is unclear, but it's likely a mix of both. To state the obvious, collecting payment via check has numerous disadvantages — the process can be slow if a check is mailed, a check can be easily lost, and it requires a lot of manual work on the producer's part to make sure the payment is received and processed correctly.

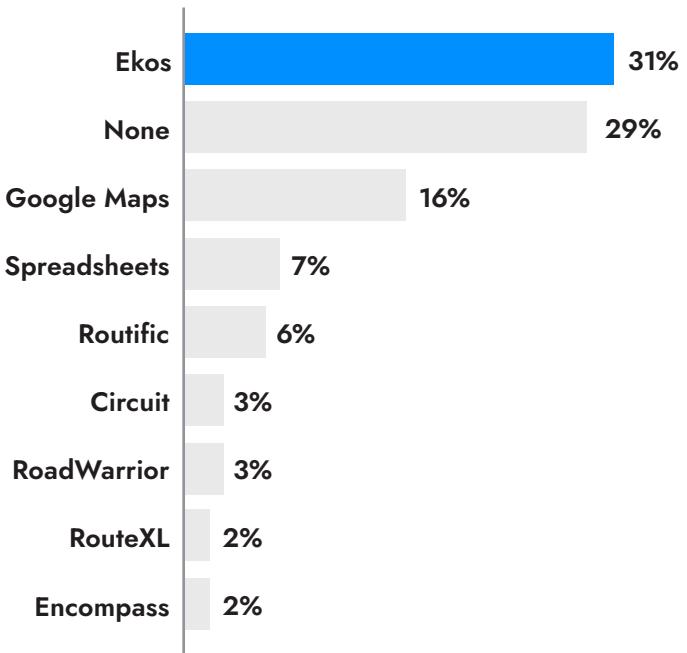
We also asked what tools breweries and cideries use to plan routes for their sales and delivery teams. Nearly a third of respondents use Ekos for route planning, and another 29% said they don't use any tool. There were a handful of specific software solutions or online tools mentioned (Routific, Circuit, RoadWarrior, RouteXL), but the most commonly mentioned systems besides Ekos were Google Maps and spreadsheets, both of which really indicate that sales teams are doing this process manually. Obviously, using software can save you some time. In particular, using your business management software has major benefits. Mapping out delivery routes in the same system where you already have inventory, sales orders, and customer information can give sales teams better visibility into everything that happens (or needs to happen) with a specific customer account — from order to delivery to invoice.

Delivery Routing Software

n = 238



Top Answers



How to Optimize Sales Order Management

Whether you use third-party distributors or self-distribute, these tips can help your team become more efficient so they have time to focus on the parts of their jobs that help move your business forward.

1. Keep accurate inventory records.

Among alcohol producers, it's a best practice to use an inventory management system to track inventory all the way from raw ingredients through production and onto finished goods. This will help your sales team know how much of each beer, cider, or seltzer is available to sell and in what packaging types (bottles, cans, kegs, etc.).

2. Track customer information and sales activities.

If you want to be able to quickly create sales orders and invoices as needed, customer information must be easily accessible. Housing customer data — like contact information, typical order size, transaction history, and relevant sales activities — helps maintain consistency even if you have turnover on your sales team. With a

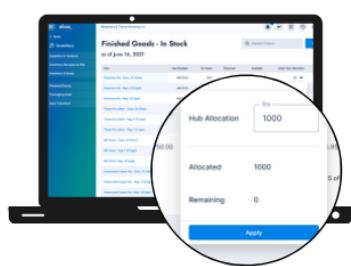
CRM or sales module, any team member can quickly see when a customer was last contacted and follow up if needed.

3. Streamline sales order processing.

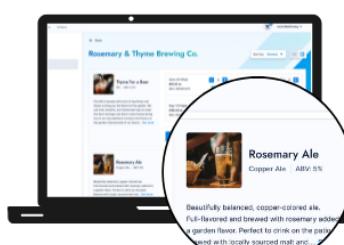
Our survey found that nearly 20% of breweries and cideries are using a [digital ordering portal](#) that customers can log into and directly request orders. This can help cut down on back-and-forth with customers, reduce manual data entry, and most importantly, save your time so your sales team can focus on new opportunities. Set yourself up for success by specifically allocating inventory to the order portal so salespeople and customers know what inventory is available. Plus, if you only sell a product in a certain region or to select accounts, you can set up groups of customers and pre-select what can be sold to which groups.

Pro tip: With the right [brewery management software](#), you can get all these features in one place.

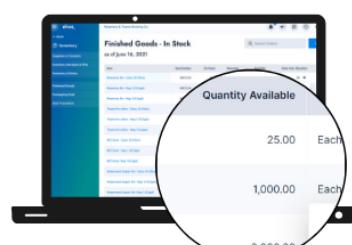
How Does a Digital Order Portal Work?



Allocate inventory to different sales channels (including the portal) from your inventory management software.



Customize product listings and order quantities, and invite distributors/retailers to use the portal for ordering.



Once sold, inventory automatically depletes in your inventory software and is no longer available to other customers in the portal.



How Heist Brewery's Sales & Distribution Team Keeps It Together

Charlotte's brewery market was just getting started in 2012, and **Heist Brewery** became a catalyst as the area's only craft brewpub. Now, Heist Brewery is a brewing operation boasting two locations, 3,000 bbl production, and distribution in and out of North Carolina.

Heist has taken to its growth in the last few years, increasing its capacity for distribution by an impressive 25% in 2021. However, this excitement came with growing pains. Lisa Antonacci, the brewery's sales and distribution manager, was fielding texts and emails nonstop to keep orders from slipping through the cracks, not to mention when Heist released new beers — phone ringing off the hook. The brewery dreamt of a sales portal to simplify this process and heal these growing pains but knew they couldn't build something like that solo.

After years of overselling inventory and having to answer all of the same questions for every customer, Lisa now has one place — Ekos Order Hub — to send customers for the most accurate inventory, pricing, and more. She says one of the most impactful features for Heist is the ability to treat each customer individually just like you would over the phone or email. Grouping customers has allowed her to personalize each customer's online storefront, as some customers are only buying cans, others kegs. Plus, with customers across North Carolina



and distributors beyond state lines, Heist needs the ability to personalize delivery dates with each customer, something they've adopted in Ekos Order Hub.

The customers who order through Ekos Order Hub also get early access to the brewery's growing portfolio. Lisa said she posts upcoming releases in the portal before they're announced to the full customer base, enticing customers to use the portal for early, exclusive access to beers.

The sales and distribution team is looking forward to growing with Ekos Order Hub and utilizing it to personalize their interactions with each customer and simplify their distribution process (and cut back Lisa's phone time).

[Learn more about Heist Brewery's experience using a digital ordering portal »](#)

"Ekos Order Hub gives our brewery a centralized, flexible spot for communicating with customers and providing the best ordering process possible. We can't wait to expand with this system."

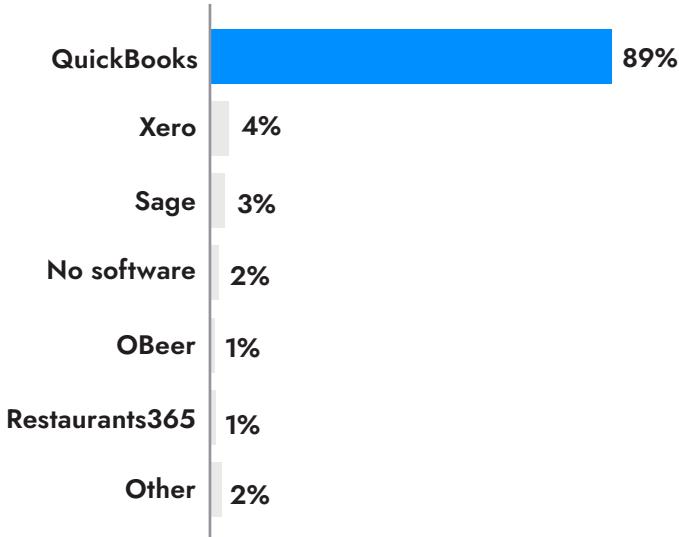
—Lisa Antonacci, Sales & Distribution Manager



Accounting & Analytics Software

Accounting Systems

n = 379

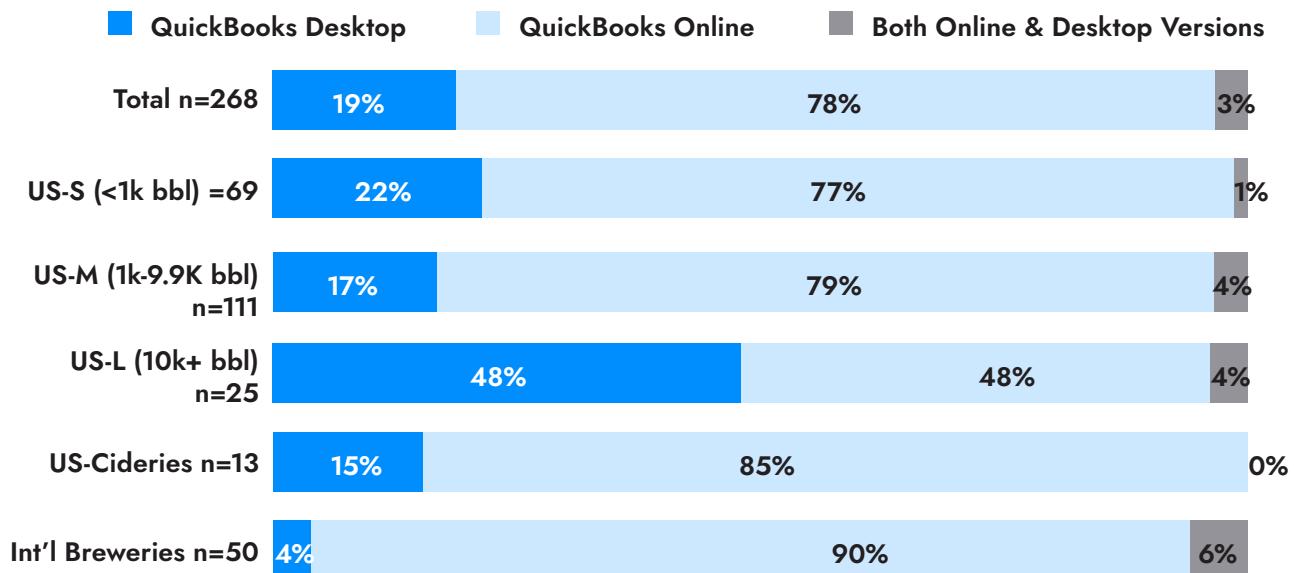


QuickBooks has been the industry leader for accounting software for years, so it's no surprise that this year's survey confirms that. While a portion of international breweries reported using Xero (15%) or Sage (10%), more than three-quarters of producers outside the U.S. said they use QuickBooks, too.

While the vast majority are using QuickBooks Online (QBO), nearly 20% use QuickBooks Desktop, and 3% use a combination of both. In particular, about half of large breweries are using QuickBooks Desktop, a huge portion compared to other segments. There's a good chance that this has something to do with how long they've been in business — alcohol industry financial experts we've spoken to say that, many years ago, QBO had limited capabilities and was tough to use. It's understandable that some producers who gave it a shot when it first came out may have reservations about its usefulness.

However, these days [QBO has clear advantages](#) over QuickBooks Desktop and our CPA partners recommend alcohol producers use QBO because it's user-friendly, internet-based, and easy to integrate with other key systems like your inventory management software. We can't advise you on which version is best for your business, but in general, cloud-based software is the way to go these days. You'll get automatic software updates, data-encrypted backups, a comprehensive mobile app, and more.

Which Version of QuickBooks Are Breweries & Cideries Using?



The Financial Importance of Choosing the Right Technology

Building your software ecosystem — your “tech stack” — isn’t just a matter of personal preference. It comes down to dollars and cents. If the systems you choose can’t give you key business information in an efficient way, you might as well not have them.

[Small Batch Standard](#), a consulting and financial services firm built for breweries, recommends Ekos to all their clients. Why? “Because Ekos is so easy and user friendly, we’re able to get the back end financial information that we need — the insight into their business, the batch costing, the cost of goods, all of that — whereas if the system was more difficult, they’d just skip over it,” he said.

Those insights are made even more valuable by Ekos’s seamless integration between sales and inventory.

“What’s great about Ekos is when our customers go into Ekos and make a sale and produce an invoice, it affects the income, inventory levels, and the COGS, so having that all streamlined is just amazing,” Derek said. “There are no extra steps for us to reduce inventory, everything just flows through and we’re able to get accurate reporting.”

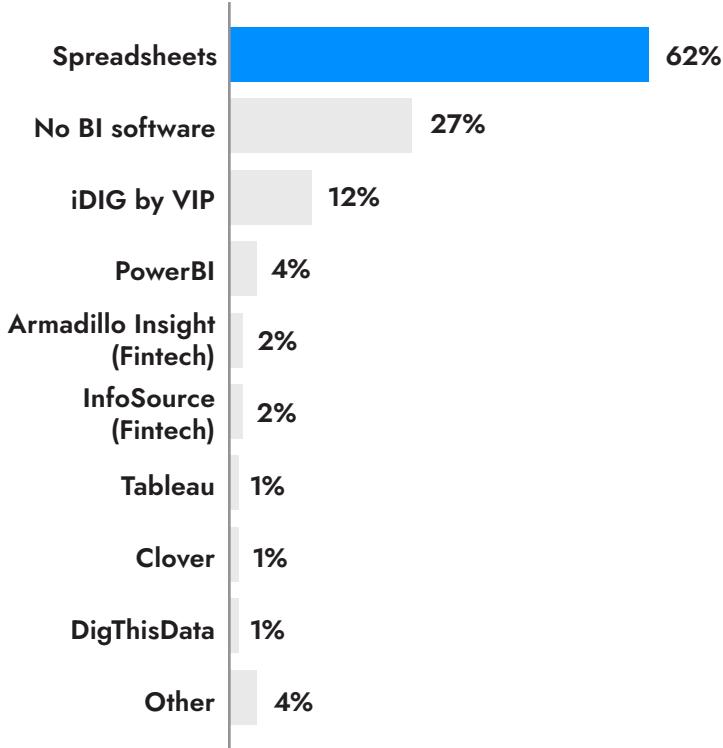
[Learn more about why Small Batch Standard recommends Ekos »](#)

Business Intelligence & Analytics

Business intelligence (BI) software is typically defined as digital tools that help turn your business data into information — in other words, taking the raw data that you may get from your inventory, production, POS, ecommerce, and accounting systems and making that information understandable so you can actually act on it. This type of analytics capability may not be within reach for all breweries and cideries, but as you grow your business, it's worth considering the impact BI tools can have.

BI Software & Analytics Tools

n = 347



Of those using any tool to analyze their business data, spreadsheets were the most popular solution. 27% aren't using any software for business intelligence, and a small percentage are using dedicated tools like iDIG by VIP (12%) and Microsoft Power BI (4%). Large U.S. breweries were the most likely to say they use some kind of solution, whether it's spreadsheets or BI software, and a large portion of this segment use iDIG.

While the concept of "business intelligence" hasn't yet become ingrained in the craft beverage industry, that

doesn't mean it isn't important. Knowing your business inside and out and being able to put that information to good use is key in such a competitive environment. Competition from other breweries has been fierce for years, but the appeal of big seltzer brands and new options like ready-to-drink cocktails has bitten into beer's market share recently.

Obviously, keeping impeccable internal records is a must — if you don't already have ironclad processes in place to track inventory, production, sales, and accounting, start there. With business management software, you'll have access to key metrics that help you evaluate costs and performance.

But to take it to the next level, consider what analytics or BI tools you might find value in. More data is a good thing, but you have to know what to do with it. It's important to keep in mind that BI isn't about making dramatic changes to your business. Instead, it's about uncovering information that helps you fine-tune your processes and plans. Your business has a lot of moving parts — BI just helps you understand them better.





Large Brewery Uses Data to Gain Traction in Crowded Craft Beer Space

Quick Facts

- Large production brewery
- Four locations across the Southeastern U.S.
- Distributed in three states

A decorated and high-producing brewery, **Monday Night Brewing** stacks its tech solutions to spur growth as it significantly increased production over the past few years. Sales Analyst Jaclyn Turner has her hands in most parts of the business: sales, marketing, and production. She says using data to measure how your product and business are doing is great, but being ahead of that reporting is even more important for Monday Night Brewing. The team takes in data from grocery stores and other retailers to “have their finger on the pulse,” Jaclyn said, but what they really get into is the “quality of their liquid.”

Monday Night’s brewing team is dedicated and diligent in their testing and production, which is why Jaclyn says the brewery has found growth in the craft beer sector, even as competition becomes stiffer.



From Ekos to VIP to LilyPad, Jaclyn’s team understands the value of good data and uses that to ensure their customer accounts are getting the correct amount of high-quality beer every time. Jaclyn uses iDIG insights in VIP to predict what her distributors will need 30, 60, or 90 days from now at all times. These insights from VIP help the brew team predict how much they need to make of a certain beer, especially their more popular offerings, and they are able to leverage that data in Ekos to appropriately manage their inventory.

Every piece of Monday Night’s business is connected to technology, something that has helped the brewery succeed over the years. Jaclyn says Ekos is like the brewery’s hub in a big wheel — keeping sales, inventory, accounting, and production connected.

“I don’t know that I could do my job without Ekos. I’m in it every day. Having purchase orders, inventory, sales, and accounting flowing through one system makes Ekos like the middle hub in a big wheel — keeping everything together — as our business grows.”

—Jaclyn Turner, Sales Analyst, Monday Night Brewing



Summary & Key Takeaways

Every year in the alcohol industry it feels like some problems fade out and others step in to take their place. While the issues producers faced at the height of the pandemic have mostly receded, the world is a different place now than it was before 2020. As ever, though, the best way to ensure your business can weather any storm that may come is to operate as efficiently as possible. That's where technology can help.

Based on the results of our research, here are some key takeaways:



Most beer and cider producers already know business management software is key — which is great! But those still waiting to take the plunge should consider the advantages of creating strong inventory and production management processes through software sooner rather than later.



Data from POS systems is most useful when it is synced with inventory and accounting data. Businesses that do not have integrated systems should explore their options. Advantages include significant time savings and major improvements in the accuracy of inventory and sales data.



Ecommerce stuck around as a popular way to buy beer and cider even after pandemic lockdowns ceased. To amp up your ecommerce strategy, consider how to market your offerings to customers in a way that is engaging and exciting.



Club or membership programs aren't as popular of a sales channel for breweries and cideries compared to wineries, and there is significant opportunity for creating clubs that give producers recurring revenue and provide a great experience for beer and cider enthusiasts.



Managing communication and sales orders with wholesale customers is a major headache for producers, who should seek out digital solutions wherever possible. Using the sales module in your business management software is a good start, but a digital ordering portal is another great way to save yourself time and frustration.



No one has to tell breweries and cideries that accounting software is important, but consider additional tools that can provide insight into business performance. Business intelligence software might be the answer if you're looking to level up your data analytics capabilities.

The team at Ekos is dedicated to empowering craft breweries and cideries to make more product, make more revenue, and make more of your data. To learn about how our software helps you do just that, visit goekos.com today.

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