

# Case Study: Foxen Vineyards

eCommerce Case Study



## OBJECTIVE

- ▶ Integrate eCommerce orders with VinNOW and also restrict access to exclusive wines to club members. Ensure online store is user-friendly and able to encourage social sharing

## BENEFITS

- ▶ Increase overall efficiency
- ▶ Faster, simpler order processing and proper data flow from Nexternal to VinNOW
- ▶ Automate enforcement of wine availability policies for limited supply wines

## BACKGROUND

Foxen is a well-known small production Santa Barbara company that's known as much for its personality as it is for its wineries and vineyards. The laid-back winery is home to two very popular tasting rooms, including the solar-powered Foxen tasting room opened in 2009 and the nearby beloved historic Foxen 7200 tasting room known as "The Shack," which was featured in the Academy Award-winning film, *Sideways*. Since the winery's beginning in 1985, it has consistently committed to a "minimalist" approach to producing sustainably-farmed wines.

## BEFORE THE INTEGRATION

A key foundation to Foxen's internal operating systems is its POS (point of sale) system, VinNOW. Winery staff uses the system heavily on a daily basis in its tasting rooms for on-site sales, to process wine club orders and as its master customer database. Ever since the winery started using VinNOW, Foxen wanted an eCommerce system that could communicate with VinNOW to save time and efficiency. Thus, beginning in the late 2000s, the winery found an eCommerce system that was able to do so, and set up their online store. Foxen did get some of the online integration experience they were seeking with the system, but there were still plenty of pain points.

Although they could transfer eCommerce orders to VinNOW, customer record synchronization options to VinNOW were limited, forcing the staff to manually manipulate customer records, which is exactly what they had been trying to avoid with integration. In addition, Foxen produces several coveted wines that are in high demand but very low supply. The winery wanted to make these wines available on the website for their loyal club members to purchase, but they were unable to restrict access to club members only and automate enforcement of those availability policies. This, the staff had to regularly review every web order and occasionally cancel orders, resulting in disappointed customers.

From a general usability standpoint, Foxen also felt their site was not very user-friendly. The system lacked features to help customers navigate through the products and easily find their desired wine selection(s). All products were lumped into a single category, and Foxen was unable to separate the red wines from the white wines, for example, and offer further category delineations, like so many other wineries offer their customers online. And while social media had long-proven its power, Foxen's store had no built-in features to encourage social sharing of their products on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media sites on which so many customers like to share their preferences with their friends. Finally, Foxen was unhappy that their store was not well optimized for search engines.

#### SETTING UP THE INTEGRATION

After careful consideration of all systems available to them, including consideration of enthusiastic reviews from Foxen members who had worked with Nexternal in the past, Foxen decided to switch to Nexternal, concluding that Nexternal met, and even exceeded, their expectations regarding all of their criteria.

Within ten days of signup, the Nexternal designers had setup Foxen's new online store, coding in the winery's existing colors, fonts and other branding features in to the online store for a completely continuous branding experience. Guided by their dedicated Nexternal Account Manager, Foxen staff plugged in settings, keys, and passwords into both Nexternal and VinNOW to ensure proper flow of data. Foxen took advantage of the controls that allowed them to exclude certain products from in the online store, but to keep a wider array of vintages available for sale in the tasting room. "Getting our information into the system was easy!" said Kelly Lewis, Shipping and Social Media Administrator for Foxen. "Once the products were in, all I had to do was make little adjustments to make it perfect."

"We are not only able to release wines exclusively to our club members, but we are also able to enforce limited allocations per customer, and its extremely easy,"

- Mrs. Lewis



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