

LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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LONGEVITY & ADAPTABILITY



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STANDARD BEVERAGE CORPORATION

What is your company's most important commodity or service?

Standard Beverage (SBC) distributes spirits, beer, wine and nonalcoholic items to licensed retailers throughout the state of Kansas.

Other than monetary, what is your company's most important priority?

Our top priorities are delivering world-class customer service to our retailers, activating on and accomplishing our supplier goals, while being a preferred employer for our team members. We truly believe as we grow our people and we grow our reputation in the marketplace, our business will also continue to grow.

What have been some of the most important aspects of your success?

Success at Standard Beverage is predicated on a couple of key points: Never settle, always continuously improve; prioritize the customer, the employees and our supplier partners; have a vision beyond today, do not make decisions that will have positive short-term results and negative long-term impacts.

Ribbon cutting for the Standard Beverage Corporation's expansion in Lawrence. From left David Toland, Ryan Thurlow, Paul Davis and Bonnie Lowe



How many people does your business employ?

SBC has taken our employee count from 300 in 2018 to 420 in 2022. This increase has been driven by the need to service all of the grocery and convenience stores in Kansas. In April 2019, grocery and convenience stores began to sell strong beer (up to 6% alcohol by volume). In order to sell and deliver to these accounts in an effective manner, we needed to add a significant amount of employees and new trucks.

How do you and your business make a positive impact on the Lawrence community?

One of our core values is community. We believe it is our responsibility to be a good corporate citizen in all Kansas communities. In total over the last several years, Standard has participated in an average of 150 philanthropic events statewide. Having said that, in Lawrence specifically, we support Cottonwood through our Salute Winefest sponsorship, SBC partners with the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce on a number of events, and we also support KU Athletics as a preferred vendor of wine and spirits. In addition, we strongly encourage our employees to be active in the Lawrence community through support of local businesses. Each week, we select a winner of a \$100 gift card to a local restaurant from a group of employees who have turned in receipts supporting local bars and restaurants personally.

With new technologies and changing expectations, how have you managed to remain relevant and profitable? Or how has your business changed over the years to remain relevant?

We believe agility is extremely important. The Rudd family, who still operates SBC today, has been in business in Kansas for 72 years. Through that time, we have seen many changes. As our business evolves, we believe that it is not only important to adjust with it but to be proactive in our approach. We need to see the change coming and evolve in advance. Again, this may mean in how we take care of our employees, how we support a customer or in how we physically load or deliver cases. A recent example, as mentioned above, is our recent overhaul of our warehouse, which included drastically upgrading our technology and our equipment. We expect that this will help us meet the needs of the market for years to come.

How do you manage your day-to-day stress of business?

We attempt to not take ourselves too seriously. We believe that we should work hard, accomplish our goals and celebrate our success. If we do those things, our company culture will be positive, and we will continue to be an attractive employer in Kansas and in Lawrence specifically.

How do you reward excellent work performance?

We celebrate success at Standard Beverage. We work to fairly compensate all of our employees but specifically our top performers. Additionally, on an annual basis, we host a company banquet called the Superior Performance Awards. We celebrate our overall company success as well as those that stand out from their peer group. All employees and significant others are invited to celebrate.

What would you change about doing business in Lawrence?

We would not change anything about doing business in Lawrence. We have had our primary warehouse in Lawrence since 1991. We feel very supported by the community. In fact, as we completed a major expansion in the Lawrence community over the last 24 months, we had great experiences with the Chamber and the City.

What is the biggest challenge you feel your company faces?

The biggest challenge we face is remaining agile in a changing marketplace and continuing to avoid complacency. Change will always occur, adjusting successfully will breed success. Similarly, people who have success will consistently need to find ways to improve. We know, as an organization, that what got us here will not get us to where we need to be in the future. As such, we will seek constant improvement. ▲



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