

First ProWein Business Talk "Digitalisation of the Wine Industry"

The inaugural event in the new ProWein Business Talks series, held at the beginning of October, proved to be a resounding success. Over 220 interested participants from 25 countries eagerly followed the online discussion on the latest ProWein Special Report "Digitalisation of the Wine Sector". The session was moderated by Prof. Dr. Simone Loose from Geisenheim University. A recording of the first ProWein Business Talk is available online at https://www.prowein.com/video_2

Three international experts from diverse areas of the wine industry took part in the digital panel, discussing and providing insights into how digitalisation can benefit the sector. Paul Mabray, a renowned futurist in the American wine industry, shared his extensive experience with digital strategies. For him, digitalisation is not about individual tools, but about a fundamental change in corporate culture: "To succeed, companies must be prepared to continuously experiment and learn from failures," he remarked. Mabray highlighted that, in an industry traditionally averse to risk, the ability to accept failure is essential for digitalisation to thrive. He thereby regularly strives for early successes in digitalisation projects to maintain momentum and motivation – "A spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down." Regarding communication, he sees digitalisation as a powerful amplifier: companies must first identify their unique selling proposition to leverage digital channels effectively. "It often starts with brand," Mabray stated, emphasising that a clear brand message is crucial to harness the full potential of digital communication.



**16–18 March 2025
Düsseldorf, Germany**

**The World's №1
International Trade Fair
for Wines & Spirits**

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Daniel Freund, CEO of German wine importer and distributor Weinkontor Freund, stressed the pivotal role of people in digitalisation. For him, empowering employees and fostering close collaboration with suppliers and customers are critical. "Our dialogue with partners now extends beyond product availability – we are collaboratively optimising digital data exchange." Freund has consequently developed a comprehensive data model within his company, enabling the creation of innovative logistics services that cater to the wine sector.

António Graça, Head of the Research Department at Sogrape in Portugal, impressed the audience with his expertise and optimism. He explained how Sogrape has reduced the use of crop protection products through a network of weather stations and a bespoke IT infrastructure, simultaneously cutting costs and lessening the environmental impact. Graça stressed that digital and innovative advancements must benefit all stakeholders – customers, employees, owners, and society at large. He observed that digitalisation thrives when individuals and organisations embrace continuous adaptation and development. This shift in mindset has also influenced recruitment and qualifications at Sogrape. According to Simone Loose, training the next generation of industry professionals should incorporate this focus on change management, making it an essential skill for the future.



During a lively discussion on artificial intelligence (AI) for wine recommendations, the experts agreed on AI's potential, particularly in online storytelling. However, they expressed caution regarding its use for personalised wine recommendations.

Concluding on a positive note, Graça forecasted significant opportunities for the wine sector to collaborate with other industries that can offer fresh perspectives. "We are an attractive sector for experts who want to co-create and co-develop with us while enjoying our product," he said.



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ProWein Business Talk to be continued

The ProWein Business Talks are a new series with which the leading trade fair for wines and spirits intends to provide the international industry with the latest information and trends throughout the year. Further information and a recording of the first edition can be found on the ProWein homepage at https://www.prowein.com/video_2

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