

PARTNERS

Dennis Black, MBA, is the past President of the Sonoma Grape Growers Association. He has 22 years in the consumer package industry, having worked for Hershey's Chocolate, Campbell's Soup, Specialty Brands (Spice Islands, Durkee Spices, Fleischmann Yeast) as a National and Canadian Senior Executive in Sales and Marketing. His experience includes marketing, contract negotiations, budgets, and selling "top to top." Dennis is founder of Octagon Group, a strategic business planning, marketing and image building company. He and his artist wife Mary (www.maryblack.net) own Black Emerald Vineyard (RRV-Sonoma County) and sell their chardonnay fruit to Sonoma Cutrer and Freeman Winery.

Elizabeth Slater is owner of InShort Direct Marketing (www.inshortmarketing.com) and is a marketing savant, internationally recognized in the wine industry as a seminar and workshop leader, speaker and trainer. She teaches wine marketing at Santa Rosa Junior College, and Walla Walla Community College's Institute of Enology and Viticulture in Washington State. Elizabeth writes a regular marketing column for Vineyard & Winery Management magazine, she is responsible for the "Tasting Room Profitability Conference and Trade Show" held in Marin annually, and serves as Public Relations Chair for the Sonoma County Tourism Council. She was the marketing guru behind Russian River Wine Road-Sonoma County and for 13 years produced Passport to Dry Creek Valley. Elizabeth consults on all facets of creating and implementing marketing and public relations programs and strategies and her focus is on marketing wines directly to the consumer.

Kent Humphrey is owner and winemaker for Eric Kent Wine Cellars (www.erickentwines.com). Decanter magazine says "One to Watch" recently, awarding 4-stars to Kalen's Big Boy Blend Syrah. Formerly Co-founder, Executive Creative Director and Chief Operating Office for a McCann-Erickson satellite agency serving their high level of clients. Kent's extensive background in direct marketing, strategy and business operations gives him a unique perspective in working with clients to build their business. Kent is also co-owner of CK2 Strategic & Creative Services, specializing in strategic planning and brand development

Steve Burns is well known in the United States and the international market for his contributions as the Washington State Wine Commissions Executive Director, during a six-year period, when Washington became America's second largest wine producing state. He was the International Marketing Manager for the Wine Institute of California prior to going to Washington. Steve owns O'Donnell Lane LLC, based in Sonoma County, marketing, public relations and strategic planning firm with prestigious and who's-who clients in Western Australia, Italy, Washington State, Oregon and California.

Christine Martin opened the marketing design studio, Firefly Creative Company (www.fireflycompany.com), in 2003 after four years at the direct-marketing firm of Hamilton Partners in Healdsburg, where she designing national print and Internet marketing campaigns for Hewlett-Packard, Radio Shack and other Fortune 100 companies. Before that, she spent six years as a designer, then art director for the communications department at Willamette University in Oregon. Since Firefly opened, the seven-person company has developed print and online marketing materials for J Vineyards & Winery, St. Francis Winery, Skipstone Ranch, Sausal Winery, Longboard Vineyards and Joseph Phelps' new winery, Freestone Vineyards. Firefly also works closely with the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission, Sonoma County Vintners, Russian River Valley Winegrowers and Alexander Valley Winegrowers. Clients outside the wine industry include Parkpoint Health Clubs, Toby's Family Foods and Making it Big.

Barbara Stiling is a founding partner and Senior Vice President of what is now a McCann-Erickson satellite agency. During her years at this large and successful San Francisco advertising agency, Barbara worked with clients including Microsoft, Charles Schwab, Wells Fargo Bank, Starbucks, and Warner Brothers. Barbara offers over 25 years in all aspects of business-to-business and consumer marketing, strategic planning and creation of integrated marketing programs across all channels and media. Barbara and her husband Don Stiling own Stiling Vineyard (RRV-Sonoma County) and sell their pinot and chardonnay fruit to Gary Farrell Winery, Simi Winery, Eric Kent Wine Cellars and Darioush Winery. Barbara was recently elected to be a board member of the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission and chairs the marketing committee.

George Christie is the owner of Christie Consulting, (www.ChristieWineConsulting.com) a company that specializes in addressing the Operations, Sales and Marketing needs of the small to mid-size wine producer. He also sits on the Board of Directors for the Sonoma County Vintners and is the past President of Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley and the Russian River Wine Road. George has worked with many different size producers from small brands like Alderbrook Vineyards & Winery as General Manager to large family owned wine companies like Korbel Champagne Cellars and The Terlato Wine Group. He has also held key marketing positions, Brand Manager and Trade Marketing Manager for the Western half of the United States at publicly held companies Peak Wines International and Beam Wine Estates. His well-rounded background, wide industry relationships and ability to overcome difficult challenges have been the key reasons for the early success of the Christie Consulting Company.

William Traverso is a third-generation owner of Traverso's Gourmet Food, Wines and Liquors, Inc., established in 1922. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Santa Rosa Junior College, where he teaches a course entitled "Wines and Wine Marketing." In addition to his faculty work at S.R. J.C., Mr. Traverso is a member of the college's Viticulture Advisory Committee, whose function is to oversee curriculum in the areas of viticulture and wine marketing. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Harvest Fair, during which time he served as Chairman of the professional wine judging and as president. Mr. Traverso has also served as a director of the Santa Rosa Downtown Association. He is member of the Board of Visitors and Fellows, Viticulture and Enology Department, University of California at Davis. Mr. Traverso serves as a professional wine judge. Mr. Traverso travels to Italy annually in association with food and wine tours.



Strategic Planning. Marketing. Image Building.

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Jon Wells has successfully conducted brand-building initiatives for a wide range of clients and products—from developing positioning and tag lines for Barkley’s Global Investors, to creating powerful retail packaging for Canandaigua Wine and Spirits, to envisioning the future of the photographic image for the Kodak Company. With over thirty years of professional experience, Jon has merged his strong skills—design, writing, strategic thinking—into an effective branding force. His approach is simply stated: define the key strategic points and objectives, and then let them be the guiding forces behind effective, innovative communications. From ideation to hands-on execution, Jon’s capabilities and experience make him the Swiss Army Knife of brand building. Jon is the Creative Director of Young|Wells Marketing Communications in San Francisco.

Gary Finnan has over 20 years of experience in Destination Retail, Architectural Design & the Project Management industry. As the Founder & Principal of Gary Finnan Creative, Gary utilizes his experiences gained in Africa, Europe and Asia, to bring a fresh perspective to the unique destination environments his clients’ desire. Gary Finnan Creative provides “Creative Facilitation,” acting as a catalyst in creating the optimal project team that will give clients the tools to navigate the strategic planning, development and implementation process for a host of project types within the Destination Retail industry. Born in Scotland, Gary was raised in Rhodesia and South Africa. Gary relocated from South Africa to Healdsburg, California, in 1999 with his wife and two daughters.

Eugene Muscat Ed.D is currently a Professor of Management at the University of San Francisco School of Business and Management. He is a frequent contributor to San Francisco media outlets and appears regularly on television and radio programs covering the bay area business scene. Eugene has served as a “Consigliore” for countless of family-held firms over a twenty-five year period. He has maintained an international client base of family business owners with a specialization on Pacific Rim and United States enterprises. In recent years, he has gained a reputation for providing triage services to family business owners responding to or hoping to avoid the tragic effects of sudden death, disability, divorce, debt or disaster. Based in San Francisco, Eugene is available for speaking as well as consulting engagements worldwide.