

Communicating wine: saying the right things is not enough

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 10 Aprile 2026



The debate on wine communication highlights a crucial distinction between being truthful and being effective. While many producers focus on technical accuracy, Joe Fattorini argues that quality often fails to reach the consumer due to self-referential language. To protect its value, the wine industry must move beyond jargon and transform abstract concepts into clear, concrete differences.

The increasingly complex debate regarding wine communication has recently been enriched by an interesting reflection from Joe Fattorini titled "Birth, penicillin, and corporate death." As one of the most sharp-witted observers of the wine market and consumer trends, Fattorini starts from a point that is

only simple in appearance. **He argues that a fundamental gap exists between “right” communication and “effective” communication.** In theory, what is correct should also be impactful, yet in the wine world, this connection often fails to materialize.

“Right” communication is essentially accurate communication. It conveys the truth by respecting the product, the producer’s hard work, and the specific identity of the territory. It avoids deception, excessive simplification, or betrayal of the facts. It is, quite simply, correct. **However, effective communication is the type that actually reaches the audience and makes itself understood.** It clarifies the message, making a difference perceivable and an identity recognizable to the person receiving the information.

The core of the issue lies in the fact that the wine industry frequently shares truthful information without delivering it in an effective manner. Fattorini suggests that when mediocre wines win the narrative battle, the problem stems from the self-referential nature of quality wine rather than just marketing. While the primacy of quality remains indisputable, this provocation is intelligent. **Quality must be explained and made legible rather than just being declared as a fact.**

One of the most difficult tasks in modern wine communication involves explaining what quality actually means in concrete terms. People need to understand what defines “fine wine” and what truly distinguishes an artisanal product from an industrial one. **If we cannot communicate what makes a wine unique beyond being “good,” the truth remains weak.** A message that is technically correct but misunderstood fails to establish a strong presence in the market.

The difference between these two models is visible in the direction of the message. Truthful communication often flows from the producer toward the outside world, focusing on internal standards. **Effective communication begins with a**

simpler question: is the listener truly understanding the message? While the “right” model uses accurate terms like territory and authenticity, the effective model questions if these words still carry precise meaning for those outside the professional circle.

Truthful communication tends to name specific values, whereas effective communication transforms those values into visible and understandable differences. The industry should realize that quality does not tell its own story. **Stating that a wine is artisanal is insufficient without explaining the specific sense of that craftsmanship.** Concepts like “fine wine” remain vague and ineffective if the listener cannot grasp where the actual quality resides during the conversation.

The ultimate knot to untie is that having the facts on your side is not enough; you must also achieve clarity. Fattorini’s reflection remains useful because it serves as a reminder that the industry often speaks correctly but remains incomprehensible. **Agencies and producers must ensure differences are clear, or those differences effectively cease to exist for the consumer.** Quality wine remains central but requires a sharper, less self-important narrative to defend its value.

Key points

1. **Effective communication focuses on audience understanding** rather than just stating technical truths about the production process.
2. **Quality wine requires concrete explanations** because the product does not naturally tell its own story to consumers.
3. **Producers must move away from self-referential jargon** like “identity” and “tradition” to explain actual

value differences.

4. **The industry needs clearer storytelling** to justify high price points and distinguish artisanal products from industrial ones.