

Pozzan, human resources: “Outdated companies will face serious challenges in developing their business”

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Andrea Pozzan (WinePeople) outlines the critical challenges and trends in human resource management in the wine sector. He explores recruitment strategies, essential skills, stereotypes, and training gaps, highlighting the growing need for structured governance and professional HR processes to attract and retain talent in a sector still shaped by nature's rhythm and complexity.

As part of the “[Amorim Wine Vision](#)” project, we had the pleasure of speaking with Andrea Pozzan, co-founder of WinePeople and Head of the “[Competenze in Rete](#)” team. He revealed the unique challenges and dynamics in recruiting

within the wine sector, a world where experience, skills, and interpersonal abilities play a crucial role.

Pozzan shared his insights on how to attract and retain talent in the wine sector, the essential skills and training for aspiring professionals, and valuable tips for companies seeking high-level personnel. People will increasingly be the beating heart of this fascinating and ever-evolving industry.

What are the main HR challenges for a winery?

Wineries face intense competition for specialized professionals at every level, from pruners to managers. At the same time, people are less willing to fully commit to company projects, protecting their personal-life balance. There's also a strong preference for candidates with prior experience in the wine sector, which limits the talent pool. Monetary incentives alone are no longer enough to offset the sacrifices required by certain jobs. This isn't specific to wine; it reflects the broader social and historical context. Wine industry salaries are increasingly aligned with those in other sectors, even though the primary sector still tends to lag behind.

What skills and qualities are most important in a wine industry candidate?

Previous experience in wine is still a strong asset, even in hospitality or horeca.

Hard skills include technical product knowledge and professional English, even for roles outside vineyard or cellar. Marketing and sales also require technical fluency. Soft skills are vital, wine is a world of relationships. Communication and interpersonal skills are key. Resilience and consistency are essential traits, as this is a business where

success grows day by day, meter by meter. **German language skills are a “killer skill” for commercial roles**, especially for DACH countries. Aspiring wine managers should learn German.

What stereotypes are most common in matching companies and candidates?

Some wineries are skeptical about hiring managers from outside the wine industry, despite the added value they can bring. There is no widespread gender bias, though it becomes more complex at leadership levels, and over-50 candidates are often undervalued. A big-brand background doesn't guarantee suitability for small to mid-sized wineries. Candidates often have an overly romantic view of the wine world, unaware of its internal management challenges.

How does recruitment in wine differ from other industries?

WinePeople's mission is to bring professionalism and structured processes to a sector still reliant on word-of-mouth and personal networks.

What strategies attract and retain talent in the wine sector?

Candidates want structured companies with clear governance and defined roles. A clear, motivating business project with strategic direction (like wine tourism or distribution choices) is key to attracting and keeping talent.

Flexibility and competitive compensation packages matter more than ever.

What skills and training are essential for a wine career?

Candidates with formal wine education or exposure to international wine markets have a clear advantage. A fashion manager who understands the U.S. three-tier system or has completed WSET levels is more attractive. Strong business development and structured management skills are in growing demand. Many young oenologists are shifting from cellar work to sales and trade—a technical background pays off across career paths.

How is ongoing training managed in wineries?

Wineries should allocate annual training budgets to nurture employee development. People leave when they don't see growth opportunities. Training needs must be tailored per role and individual, requiring HR functions still rare in the wine sector.

How does social responsibility impact HR in wine?

Sustainability is too often limited to environmental actions. But without valuing people, no company can be truly sustainable. A business that protects the planet but neglects people will lose in the HR competition.

How does seasonality affect HR planning?

For specialists and managers, seasonality has little impact. But in vineyards and cellars, seasonal peaks require temporary workers. Wine tourism and hospitality are more affected by seasonality. Hiring last-minute, undertrained staff lowers quality. Wineries are increasingly aiming for stable, year-round teams to ensure consistency and excellence.

What advice would you give to a winery hiring external recruiters?

Think of recruitment as an investment—quality results require financial commitment. Choose recruiters with deep wine industry experience, who understand winery profiles and positioning. Spend time clarifying needs and writing the job description. The right candidate rarely matches your initial assumptions.

What's your forecast for HR in the wine industry?

Human resources will become central to winery strategies. Ten years ago, this was prophetic. Today, it's becoming reality. Even the best wine won't sell if the company lacks good people.

This interview was conducted in partnership with [Amorim Cork Italia](#) as part of the "[Amorim Wine Vision](#)" project – a network of thought leadership on technical and topical wine-related issues, spotlighting the original visions of industry entrepreneurs and managers.

Key points

- Wine companies must offer structure, governance, and flexibility to attract talent.
- Previous experience in the wine world remains a major advantage.
- Communication, perseverance, and resilience are key personal traits.
- German fluency is a standout skill for commercial wine roles.

- **HR and training strategies must become more systematic and long-term.**