The incurable habit in wine communication

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 7 Dicembre 2021



Our **Italian Wine Tour 2021** has focused primarily on wine tourism, which, as we all know, is an **excellent corporate marketing tool**. While we're on the subject of communication, I'd like to share some insights that have emerged from the various business stories we've gathered in this editorial over the course of the month.

The first thing that stands out in most of the presentations we've seen during our visits is the **desire to explain everything, absolutely everything, about the company's manufacturing capability.** From the vineyard to the cellar, describing the wine has become a kind of obsession. The product is almost always the main focus in the business narrative.
Many winemakers will try to convince you that they are

exceptional at making wine, **as if there was always a bias against them.**

When you try to change the subject to their backstory, the reasons that prompted them to create wine, their perspectives on the region, the growth of the markets, their dreams and concerns, **many producers and managers get secretive, almost uncomfortable.** They get surprised, shocked by the fact that you are not just interested in their wines, and that a half-hour story in front of a steel fermentation tank may wear you out.

When a producer or winemaker proudly displays their fermentation technology, we jokingly refer to it as a "**momento fermentino**" ("fermentation tank moment"), since it feels like they are disclosing a completely unique industrial secret to us. And what about the refinements, the several types of barrique and tonneau that play the role of cellar heroes in their stories?

Attempts to pull them out of the narrative quicksand invariably end in failure. **No matter how humbly you try to explain that you know production processes** and have been active in the wine business for over thirty years, you can't stop the torrent of words that flows out as if the producer was in the middle of a therapy session.
So, what are your options? **Let them chat, maybe use your body language to convey your uneasiness,** but it'll all be for naught.

Some producers or hospitality managers may promise you, before the tour starts, that they won't spend too much time going over technical details, but they will go insane as soon as they see a fermentation tank or a barrique.
Everything revolves around the product, and must be explained in depth. However, as we all know, "everything" is the greatest opponent of communication.

My hypothesis is that **the fermentation tank subconsciously reminds them of the significant investments they made in the qualification of their products.** “Those wine-making containers cost me thousands of euros; those barrels just as much”, “I lost sleep over what I spent on that autoclave”: so they proceed with the grueling narrative to exorcise those awful thoughts.
It’s all understandable, and **the last thing I want is to appear arrogant**. I’d probably do the same if I’d taken out eighteen mortgages to pay firm investments (as a well-known manufacturer told us a few days ago).

The problem is that **human understanding is of little use when it comes to communicative effectiveness.** Communication is inextricably linked to synthesis, the capacity to rapidly get to the heart of the topic, to be understood, rather than to “say everything”.
It’s funny to be told, at the end of a presentation, “I hope I told you everything”. It’s an **unintentional admission of a communication error**: “I tried to tell you everything about my company without realizing that, in doing so, I was preventing people from discovering its true and most authentic personality.”

It is no coincidence, therefore, that **we were able to fully understand the real identity of many wineries only through a photograph**, a cellar detail, a landscape, a vineyard, or perhaps a phrase that came out almost by chance when, eventually, a glass of wine helped to alleviate the pressure of explaining everything.