

# CBC 2024 Areas of Focus and Seminar Topic Suggestions

The Areas of Focus (underlined) and related seminar topic suggestions below have been outlined by the [Seminar Subcommittee](#) for the 2024 Craft Brewers Conference<sup>®</sup> (CBC<sup>®</sup>). The topics suggested are not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather a guide to potential speakers to some of the topics that the subcommittee would like prioritize for presentation at next year's event. Proposal submitters are welcome to submit proposals for topics beyond the scope of these suggestions but are encouraged to keep them in mind when planning their proposal content.

## Brewpubs, Taprooms & Hospitality

### Staff Management

- Taproom employee retention, engagement, and motivation
- Encouraging your staff to provide exceptional customer service
- Structuring your employee incentive and compensation program, particularly when working with diverse age groups
- How leadership can contribute to preventing and managing employee burnout
- Cross-training and connecting your front-of-house (FOH) and back-of-house (BOH) staff as one cohesive team
- Designing beer and food education programs for your FOH staff
- Planning and leading effective pre-shift meetings
- Defining your company culture and maintaining it as your business grows
- The impact of connecting company leadership with frontline managers and hourly staff

### Brewpubs & Taprooms Operations

- Using technology and reporting data to increase efficiency and customer engagement
- Integration considerations when selecting your tech stack
- How to use the reporting data from your point-of-sale (POS) to inform business decisions
- Sustainability in the taproom, including identifying local resources, options for recycling and composting, gaining guest buy-in, and more
- FOH contributions to your overall cost of goods sold (COGS) and how to incentivize staff to reduce and offset them
- Recognizing when it's time to raise prices
- Diversifying revenue streams to maintain existing customers and engage new customers in a changing industry landscape
- Designing a functional and versatile taproom and effectively using your space for events and engagement
- Removing barriers in your taproom and creating physically inclusive space

### Hospitality

- Developing a best-in-class hospitality program
- Identifying and staying authentic to your niche without alienating potential customers
- Creating a welcoming space for both customers and staff, including using your taproom to engage with diverse communities in a safe and meaningful way
- Bridging the gap and converting customers from the digital to physical space
- Accommodating all patrons by providing various food and beverage options
- Important considerations for dietary restrictions and allergens in the taproom

### Community Engagement, Charitable Giving & Philanthropy

- Collaborating with other local businesses (including breweries) for mutual benefit
- Community engagement and acting as a community hub
- Making a difference at any size
- The business case for giving back

### Events

- Creative and easy event ideas to bring more customers to your brewery
- Logistical considerations for planning successful events
- When NOT to host or attend an event
- Understanding the cost of events to your business and how to price and budget appropriately

## Beer & Food

- Creating creative food pairings to sell more beer
- Partnering with outside food vendors, including navigating the dynamic of having two distinct businesses operating in the same space
- Various options to provide food in your taproom and considerations for each

## Business

### Finance & Accounting

- How to find and secure funding for a new project or brewery
- How to continue to drive profitability and returns in an era of compressed margins
- Understanding your income statement and identifying potential pitfalls
- Basic considerations when taking on debt; Financial tools to make decisions about debt
- Managing margins; Understanding changing material costs and the relation to pricing dynamics
- Simple, efficient, and easy-to-implement processes to stay financially sound
- Encouraging financial literacy and leadership across your entire team
- Stock Keeping Unit (SKU) rationalization and lifecycle

### Management, Leadership & Strategy

- ESOPs 101, including options for structuring your ESOP, pros and cons, and more
- Potential business exit strategies and considerations for each
- Downsizing and things to consider when winding down operations
- Location selection considerations, whether for opening a brewery or opening a new location
- Understanding both sides of a contract brewing agreement; Navigating the contract brewing space
- Alternating proprietorships and other cooperative operating models
- Taking your business to the next level; Opportunities for growth
- Change management; Effective strategies for leading teams through periods of change
- The potential opportunities and pitfalls of allowing remote work
- Evolving your organizational structure
- Developing operational leadership skills, such as effective delegation, avoiding micromanagement, team problem solving, and more
- Crisis management and practical considerations for disaster recovery
- Determining partnership compatibility; How to hire the right professional partners for your business model and the brewing industry overall
- Learnings from other mature industries

### Statistics, Data & Trends

- How to tell the difference between fads vs. trends, and making business decision related to both
- Measuring the success of your business, from Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to financial benchmarks, and more
- Identifying trends in your own data and the greater market

## Export Development, Government Affairs & Legal

### Export Development

- Developing a plan to consistently market and sell your beer abroad
- Evaluating potential import partners
- Importer/distributor relationships and expectations when exporting
- Navigating export compliance and regulations
- Evaluating the return on investment (ROI) of overseas marketing opportunities like festivals, trade shows, and competitions
- Understanding the logistics of exporting beer
- Overview of opportunities for American craft beer in specific markets

## Government Affairs & Legal

- Comparative trade practices and compliance considerations for non-beer beverages
- Deep dive into the legal considerations for specific beyond beer products (example: hard cider and/or other wine products)
- Trademark law, specifically focused on cross-commodity and cross-functional issues
- How to introduce and pass legislation, including a look into the various resources available
- Legal and compliance on a shoestring budget
- All the ways to get sued in 2024

## Quality & Ingredients

### Quality Labs & Microbiology

- Establishing, growing, and making the most of your quality lab
- Interpreting and responding to microbiological issues
- Managing quality and safety in packaged beer

### Sensory

- Making sense of your sensory data
- How to train brewery staff to detect off-flavors in finished beer
- Understanding, preventing, and working with diacetyl

### Food Safety

- Food safety and quality considerations when using juice and other flavorings
- Use of pasteurization
- Stabilization and preservatives
- Allergen food safety best practices
- Ensuring food safety and quality of non-alcohol and low alcohol beer
- Can liner performance for beyond beer products

### Draught Beer Quality

- Proper pouring techniques, serving pressures, temperature, and choice of glassware for different styles
- Draught line cleaning, including best practices for methods and frequency
- Proper sanitation and kegging techniques

### Raw Materials & Supply Chain

- The most important developments in the supply chain over the past year
- How to plan your raw material purchasing to maximize value and storage efficiency
- Navigating shortages in raw materials through contracting
- Understanding the certifications, labeling allowances, and requirements involved in brewing with natural and organic ingredients
- Avoiding common handling mistakes with raw ingredients

### Hops

- State of the current hop crop, including quality and yield changes due to recent weather conditions
- Understanding the importance of the Hop Storage Index (HSI)
- Exploring advanced hop products and their use in the brewing process
- The next great hop
- Dry-hopping techniques and equipment
- Understanding and analyzing survivables
- Identifying hop smoke taint

### Malt

- Advances in domestic barley and malt production to emulate imported malts and improve sustainability
- Understanding and taking advantage of your malt certificate of analysis (COA)
- Overview of advances in bioengineering in North American barley breeding

### Yeast

- An update on thiolized yeasts
- Best practices for yeast harvesting, handling, and storage at various sized and equipped breweries

## Adjuncts

- Why and how to use different types of fruit products to maximize fruit flavor
- The various sources of flavor and how to maximize the impact of adjuncts

## Sales & Marketing

### Social Media & Digital Marketing

- Deep dive into social media and digital platforms
- Developing your digital marketing strategy beyond social media, including content marketing, email campaigns, and influencer partnerships
- The “how-tos” of marketing management software, including what options exist, the pros and cons of each, and how to choose the right platforms for your business
- How to manage social media and avoid burnout
- Handling social media comments and direct messages, dealing with trolls, and setting realistic expectations for your team and guests
- The value of a good website
- Web analytics and Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

### Marketing, Branding & Advertising

- Graphic design for various sizes of breweries
- Label and packaging design, including legal and regulatory considerations
- The power of visual content, including photography, videography, and package art
- Establishing your brand identity, from design elements, to causes, partnerships, event participation, and more
- Developing an authentic message, effectively telling your story, and preserving your identity while your company grows
- Marketing in a crisis and how to use your platform in a thoughtful and constructive way
- Artificial Intelligence (AI), including how and when to use it, the risks and opportunities, legal considerations, and the question of what you “own”
- Understanding marketing data and where you are in your data journey
- Using data to drive innovation
- Setting up your merchandising strategy; Could include extending merchandising from in-house to retail and distribution, philanthropy-specific merchandising; etc.
- Overview of in-house marketing and its value
- Marketing through events such as beer tastings and tap takeovers
- Brand families, brand extensions, and when to leverage an existing brand vs. starting a new one
- The value of traditional (offline) advertising, including strategies for print and outdoor campaigns
- Identifying your niche and understanding your target customer, as well as what your target customer will look like in the future

### Sales & Distribution

- Data-driven storytelling for national accounts and navigating retailer submissions
- Push vs. pull; How to spot the difference and take advantage
- Setting and managing expectations with your retailers and distributors
- Tips for self-distribution, including how to stay profitable while effectively managing your self-distribution network
- Communicating with retailers, including virtual and print sales collateral
- How the distribution landscape has changed and how to choose the right distribution strategy and partner/s for your brewery
- How to communicate effectively and be a good distribution partner, from both sides of the relationship
- Using data to create a pricing strategy that works for your brewery
- Distribution 101: A crash course in the logistics of distribution
- Distribution 201: Developing and executing an annual sales plan

# Technical Brewing & Production

## Beer Styles

- Production techniques for growing and emerging beer styles
- Lager fermentation and equipment
- Proper procedures for working with and making gluten free and gluten reduced products, the differences between them, and how to properly lab test and avoid cross contamination
- How to submit a beer to the correct style when entering beers into competitions
- Non-alcohol and low alcohol beer production, including food safety concerns

## Beyond Beer Production

- Brewing and packaging tips for ready-to-drink and other non-beer products, including non-alcohol products
- How to maximize the capacity of your brewery while offering the most diverse products you can
- Food safety certifications you may need as you expand into new products

## Brewing Operations & Engineering

- Principles of carbonation and carbonation techniques, including spunding valve best practices and safety considerations
- Where and how to find and track efficiencies in your brewery
- Pasteurization principles, important considerations, and auditing your pasteurization process
- The importance of oxygen in the brewing process
- Low oxygen in packaging and its effects on stability and flavor
- How to use Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in your brewery
- Approaching brewing conditions outside the norm, such as brewing with septic tanks and well water, solar or electric-powered brewing, brewing in a foreign country, etc.
- Reducing loss and waste, including with the use of new age products
- Re-evaluating traditional brewing timelines
- Liquid chillers and refrigeration 101 for brewers
- Preventive maintenance, including how to determine critical spares and which ones you need to keep in stock
- Thiol yeast, thiol products, and thiolized beers
- Bioengineered products and the science behind them
- Managing water chemistry and profiles for flavor and mouthfeel
- A review of BA technical resources, including where to find them, how to use them, and what you can gain from them

## Safety

- Important safety considerations and legal requirements for operating a brewery, including equipment safety, employee training, and regulatory compliance
- Occupational noise exposure, including what it is, the common areas of concern for production and front-of-house employees, potential engineering solutions, and audiometric testing

## Sustainability

- Sustainability: Why it's important, how to get started, and avoiding greenwashing
- CO<sub>2</sub> capture, limitations, and how to know when carbon capture makes sense for your business
- Recycling, upcycling, downcycling, and wish-cycling; Understanding what they all are and the opportunities available
- Sustainability partnerships and how working with third parties or nonprofit organizations can aid you in your sustainability goals
- Assessing production sustainability and preparing resilience plans
- Alternative, greener, and safer cleaning chemicals for use in and around the brewery

# Thrive

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

- Creating safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for both your staff and customers
- How to foster DEI from the top down and what can leaders learn from the bottom up
- What does DEI really mean? Understanding and supporting the broad spectrum of DEI
- How to communicate with and support your staff with different needs and abilities
- Outward facing DEI: How to remain true to your brand while thoughtfully and authentically recognizing various cultures and events
- How to build, promote, and attract diversity in your team

## Human Resources (HR)

- Navigating the creation and implementation of your code of conduct
- Understanding the various types of harassment, including passive and overt forms, their legal definitions, and your obligations as an employer
- Creating, documenting, and publishing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for harassment, including how to receive complaints when you don't have a formal HR department
- Training your staff on how to properly document incidents for a successful investigation
- Defining what HR is and is not, and the elements that need to fall under this role
- Key procedures and resources you need to have in place, even before you have an internal HR team
- Understanding and leveraging the HR resources available to you
- The evolution of HR in your brewery; When and how to expand your HR resources
- How to retain, support, and develop your HR staff, especially in times of adversity and change
- Getting past the paperwork and administrative tasks; Why HR is more than just a "cost center"
- Using technology for HR efficiency
- Finding ways to provide more work/life balance for your employees, and setting healthy employee expectations and boundaries
- The specific challenges the brewing industry faces in providing certain employee benefits, and what we can learn from other industries
- Making careers—not just jobs—in craft beer, and the benefits of hiring professionals from outside the brewing world
- Structuring competitive benefits for different parts of your team, especially when working with a tight budget
- BA resources and how to tap into them, including how to give your team access and get them involved
- Developing internal staff training for both technical skills and soft skills
- Maturing your people strategy as the industry matures
- Personal financial planning and management in the craft beer industry
- Achieving livable wages for all employees at your brewery
- Setting your HR team up as a proactive resource and trusted champion for your employees
- Staff recognition and appreciation; Establishing a positive, supportive, transparent, and inclusive work environment
- Employee handbook 101 and what should be included in your employee handbook

## Mental & Physical Wellness

- Helping brewery leadership identify and support mental health in the beer industry
- Recognizing and addressing employee burnout, including how leadership contributes to the problem and what managers can do to prevent burnout
- Sobriety in the brewing industry, including how to effectively talk about it with your staff
- Promoting responsible alcohol consumption and healthy drinking habits for your staff and customers
- How equity and wellness go hand-in-hand and its impact on business
- Ways to promote physical wellness for your staff and customers
- Supporting employees through shift work