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Stromsoe Insurance Agency

Brewing Up Coverage for the Beer Industry

With the Brew Master, Making Sure We Know How to Best Protect You



When other kids were obsessed with the latest teen idol or sports star, Mike Stromsoe was lining his childhood bedroom with empty beer cans. He was too young to drink them, of course, but when his dad finished sampling a new brew that had just come on the market, the can went straight to his son's collection. As an adult, Stromsoe has harnessed this interest in providing complete insurance protection to companies involved in the beer insurance industry.

A Childhood Dream Comes True

Growing up in Fremont, about an hour outside of San Francisco, Stromsoe learned about more than beer from his dad; he also learned that there are no shortcuts in life. At age 12, he asked for a job in his father's restaurant. His dad agreed under one condition: the younger Stromsoe had to work harder than anyone else. "It was my first lesson in 'hard work equals income'," he recalls. "My dad instilled an unrelenting work ethic that's still present today."

After high school, Stromsoe decided to rely on that work ethic rather than additional formal education. He ended up back in the restaurant business, but after his kids were born, the long hours of the restaurant industry became less appealing to the enthusiastic new father. By that time his own father had changed careers—this time to the insurance industry. Stromsoe once again joined his dad at work, beginning a three-decade (and counting!) love affair with insurance on December 1, 1986. "Almost every



Always Ready to Enjoy the Newest Brew

day I feel like I'm just getting started because this industry continues to challenge me with its many moving parts," he says. "In addition to that, it's extremely competitive, and we have to continue to educate ourselves to remain at the top of our game."

Today, Stromsoe is Team Leader at Murrieta, Calif.-based Stromsoe Insurance Agency. It may not be far geographically from where he started, but it's a lifetime in terms of business evolution. In 1986, for example, there were no computers; he learned with paper, pencil, and a calculator and figured every quote



Mike Stromsoe and SIA Team Celebrating Mike's First 30 Years

by hand. It was difficult, he admits, but Stromsoe wouldn't have had it any other way. "I learned the intricate details of how coverage works in an insurance policy," he explains. "This knowledge will never leave me and is becoming rare in today's insurance world."

In a happy union of two favorite pursuits, Stromsoe has been able to combine his passion for insurance with his lifelong love of beer by specializing in niche coverage for every sector of the beer industry—through microbreweries to distilleries—through BeerLoversInsurance.com, his dedicated insurance domain. It's a labor of love, sure, but providing comprehensive insurance for this specific market is no different than covering any other niche: the details make the difference.

The Beer Industry Experts

Entrepreneurs in the beer industry have precise needs, and agents who fail to recognize that fact may leave their clients open to business-destroying gaps. The solution is an independent agent like Stromsoe, who has a thorough understanding of the industry and can design a customized program for each member of the beer trade. "Customers benefit because the agency is dealing with the same industry the majority of the day, day in and day out," he says. "So the agents are much more knowledgeable about the unique needs of the industry. We speak their language."

That goes for everyone on Stromsoe's team. Their focus is on understanding their customers' industries and then focusing exclusively on their goals and what's important to them. The agency philosophy, and an important key to its success, is the "The Three P's": People, Processes, and

Promotion. Have excellent people serving people. Install world-class processes and systems to serve people. Promote the people you serve in every way possible.

Serving people starts by helping them understand safety, risk management and their insurance coverage, all designed to provide the best value for their hard-earned money. It's about protecting your brew and your bottom line. That's actually another reason having a niched insurance agency can be beneficial. "When an agent truly grasps your business, he or she is able to better negotiate with the industry on your behalf," Stromsoe says. "You receive better protection at the lowest cost."

The biggest mistake he sees people make when searching out and buying commercial insurance is placing their livelihood in the hands of somebody who doesn't get their industry. It's like going to a dermatologist for heart surgery; maybe the doctor can do it, but they probably shouldn't.

The path to sub-par insurance for beer businesses starts with seeking coverage from the same agency that insures their house or car. "I understand the temptation to do so, especially if that's the only insurance you've ever needed," Stromsoe says. "Most agents aren't intentionally providing risky coverage; they're just trying to help. But in many cases, generalist agents end up placing insurance without fully understanding of the needs of a particular industry, leaving gaps in the insurance protection. In the event of a loss, this can mean large, uncovered claims."

And large, uncovered claims can mean your beer business goes down the drain.

Putting Customers First

Stromsoe believes that communication is an invaluable tool in his fight to protect his customers from every possible angle. He's not a "sign 'em and leave 'em" kind of agency. Rather, he views a customer's decision to partner with his agency as the beginning of the business relationship—not the end. "Not only is it important that agents are experienced and knowledgeable about a customer's niche, but that they maintain open lines of communication and are consistently available," he says. "That's why our agency's customers receive communications at least 27 times per year in addition to truckloads of value-added services."



Jenn Sevilla & Mike Stromsoe Are Beer Lovers!



Stromsoe Team At An Onsite Visit to Our Client - Sublime Ale House

Providing these essential communications means the Stromsoe Insurance Agency team has to stay on top of insurance industry changes. The Team Leader believes it's critical that their coverages and programs are flexible enough to adapt to both customer and industry changes—and that customers are aware of those changes. "It's amazing to me how often I hear that people try to contact their insurance company or agent and never receive a return phone call," he marvels. "Or that they haven't spoken with their current insurance provider within the last 12 months."

The value Stromsoe's agency brings doesn't end with the policy itself, nor with the ongoing series of communications. The team also helps clients implement safety programs, improve their human resources operations, maintain OSHA compliance and more. All of that translates into a stronger business with fewer claims, lower premiums and bigger profits.

When those claims do come, Stromsoe and his team jump into action. He admits that claims are the most difficult aspect of his industry, both because of the affect it has on his customers and because no two claims are ever the same. Not to mention that sometimes there's a lack of understanding between the customer and the insurance carrier claims' representative. "That's when we intervene to make everything as painless as possible," he explains. "And there's nothing more satisfying than helping people become financially whole after a loss."

Also satisfying for Stromsoe is that fact that his beloved industry still challenges him every day, even after thirty years in the business. He relishes the daily opportunity for growth and then passing that knowledge onto customers in the form of



When Your Why Becomes Big Enough, The How Becomes Easy

enhanced protection and a better insurance experience. While his days are wrapped in the guise of insurance, what he's ultimately trying to do is inspire people to new levels of happiness by delivering protection in a way that others simply can't.

Stromsoe's mission is to take BeerLoversInsurance.com to an even wider audience. In the near future, he intends to continue to grow his team and the agency so they can help more people. Currently, he's able to protect businesses in an impressive 31 states, but his goal is to become the beer industry's most trusted agency. It's a personal dream, as well as a professional ambition. "We love the beer industry and the people in it," he says. "And that passion helps our customers reach new levels of success and grow their dream."

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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Can Your Agent Answer These Questions?

Your livelihood is tied up in your business. Why would you trust your family's income and legacy to an insurance agency that doesn't specialize in the beer industry? You know your operation, but it's crucial to ensure that the company insuring your future knows it just as well. Run these scenarios by any agent to gauge their knowledge:

- What would happen if one of my key supplier's facilities was damaged and they were unable to make deliveries for an extended period of time? How would I be able to honor my contracts? Would my income suffer?
- Am I covered for damage to or break down of my equipment, specifically my glycol chiller or a disruption to my online services if my network falls prey to electronic vandalism?
- Moving water to the mash tun and lauter tun, yeast to the fermentation tank, and the final product to the bottling/kegging operations leaves my business vulnerable if the maze of pipes serving these areas are out of commission for any reason. Are these essential repairs covered?
- How is transportation covered, whether it's raw materials coming to me or the finished product going to local pubs or others?
- Beer making can sometimes be a seasonal business. When I gear up for the summer months, does my insurance automatically keep pace with increased protection?
- If my brew kettle is accidentally hit by a forklift, puncturing the tank and spilling beer everywhere, how would this loss be covered?
- If I lost an important portion of my raw materials and/or final product, am I covered or am I out of business?
- Our safety, HR and OSHA compliance programs are the backbone of controlling the cost of our insurance program

The biggest mistake insurance agents make is trying to place an insurance contract for an industry they don't completely understand—and that they don't have the right carrier partners for. Stromsoe knows this because he often has to sort through other agencies' policies in order to help a new beer industry customer. "What I find is that critical coverages aren't included," he says.

Another problem with non-niched agencies is that their carrier partners don't necessarily have specially trained claims adjusters on staff. In the event of a claim, it's essential that representatives understand how to properly take care of the customer—not a guarantee if the adjuster has a knowledge gap.

Stromsoe urges potential customers to remember that insurance safeguards everything you work so hard for. "Your business is your baby," he stresses. "It's with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. This is your source of joy and, of course, your income, and we want to help you thoroughly protect it."