

10 Questions | Jim Sweeney, Wine Country Channel

# Helping channel wine country

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Jim Sweeney is the vice-president of sales and marketing at The Wine Country Channel, an online streaming television channel featuring where to eat, stay and play in Napa Valley and Sonoma County.

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After moving to wine country in 2000, Jim Sweeney worked as the sales manager for several industry leaders including Constellation, Huneus Vintners and Vintage Wine Estates.

He recently joined The Wine Country Channel as a vice president of sales and marketing.

Officially launched on Jan. 29, The Wine Country Channel is an Internet-based TV broadcast network providing wine enthusiasts around the world with multiple channels showcasing everything wine country has to offer.

Sweeney enjoys working with wine because of how it's shared, he said.

"I am just so fortunate that I ended up in such a fun industry."

### 1. What job would you like to try/not try?

Try: Being a deckhand while sailing around Cape Horn.

Not try: Being a chef at one of our world-class restaurants. They are 'on' every hour, every plate is expected to be perfect and they can be judged on Yelp within minutes of the guest leaving the property.

### 2. What was your first job?

Working at a twice-daily newspaper in Corpus Christi, Texas. Having morning and evening editions of separately branded newspapers was the most chaotic, invigorating non-stop business environment I have ever been in.

### 3. What's the worst job you ever had?

Summertime dock worker at the Dallas Furniture Market. Moving roll-out sleeper sofas and heavy Barcalounger chairs in and out each of market show every two weeks on a Dallas dock that was well over 100 degrees every day.

### 4. How did you get into the wine industry?

A family friend was a regional manager at Gallo. I was sharing my newspaper experience when he recommended I should join Gallo in Los Angeles. I'd have more fun, and even with Gallo's standards, my life would be a bit more in balance.

### 5. What is the biggest challenge the wine industry has faced?

I think the proliferation of custom/private label brands is a real challenge. The category will soon be +/-25 percent of the business making it much harder for wineries/winemaker-driven brands to succeed, and the consumer is losing the sense of place and tradition for the appellated wines with family stories.

### 6. Who do you most admire in the business world?

Any of the early innovators/visionaries who helped develop the 'sharing' revolution: Airbnb (Brian Chesky), Uber (Travis Kalanick) and others.

### 7. What is one thing you hope to accomplish in your lifetime that you haven't yet?

Work a vintage in Portugal.

### 8. If you could change one thing about your business/industry, what would it be?

Develop a much more transparent way to find the ultimate end-user buying our brands. With this information, we could develop a more personal rapport with our consumers and promote and protect the identity and personality of our wines and stories.

### 9. What's something people might be surprised to know about you?

I once won a car in a 'hand-a-thon.'

That was in Corpus Christi in 1985. It was a radio station contest. Twenty of us started with our hands on the car - a little red Toyota. The last person on the car wins it.

I think I went three and a half days. You get a five-minute break every hour. We were just staring at each other in complete delirium.

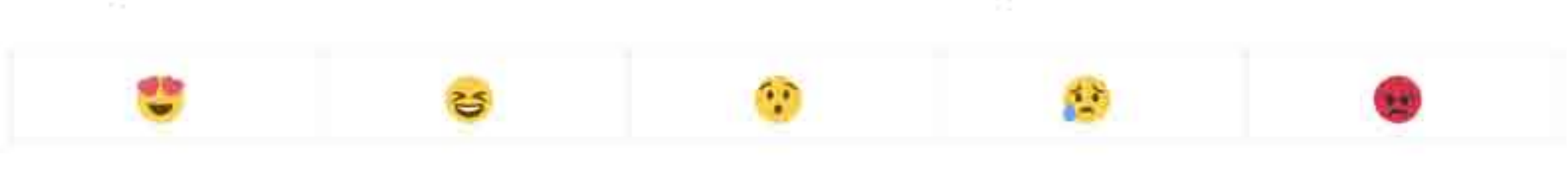
It was a crazy experience.

I had the car for six months and then I gave it to my girlfriend. I broke up with her and moved to California because I got a job with Gallo and had a company car.

### 10. If you could be anywhere right now, where would you be?

In a little seaside village in Greece.

Sweeney can be reached at 707-738-4942. For more information visit [winecountrychannel.com](http://winecountrychannel.com).



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Jennifer Huffman is the business editor and a general assignment reporter for the Napa Valley Register. I cover a wide variety of topics for the newspaper. I've been with the Register since 2005.

