



Yoav Gilat: Building a Wine Empire with Passion and Resilience

Regine T. Rousseau



Meet the Author: **Regine T. Rousseau** is the founder and CEO of Shall We Wine, a strategic marketing company. Rousseau is a wine and spirits entrepreneur, writer, presenter and media personality, focusing on making wine knowledge accessible to people at all levels of proficiency. She is recognized as a 2022 "Leader in the Wine Industry" by *WineBusiness Monthly*, a nominee for the 2020 *Wine Enthusiast* "Wine Star Awards," "Wine Educator of the Year," a WSET Level 3 with Merit, an International Sommelier Guild Level II and an Executive Bourbon Steward, Stave and Thief. She has authored and/or been featured in articles in *The Drop*, *New Yorker*, *Wine Enthusiast*, *Black Enterprise*, *Black Food and Beverage*, *Wine Spectator*, *Forbes* and *Chicago Tribune*.

IN A RECENT INTERVIEW, 2022 *WineBusiness Monthly* Leaders Regine T. Rousseau and Yoav Gilat shared stories of Gilat's journey, highlighting the challenges, triumphs, and invaluable lessons he's learned along the way.

In the world of wine, success stories often revolve around heritage, tradition, and generations of expertise. However, there are individuals like Yoav Gilat who break the mold, carving their own path in the industry. Yoav Gilat, the founder and CEO of Share-A-Splash Wine Company, is a testament to the power of passion, innovation, and resilience in the world of wine.

A Family Man and Entrepreneur

Yoav Gilat's story begins with his identity as a family man. He introduces himself as a husband and a father, emphasizing the importance of family in his life. This foundational aspect of his identity has a profound impact on his approach to leadership and business.

Being a family man has taught Yoav the art of balance. He acknowledges that perfection is elusive, both in personal life and as a CEO. He strives to do his best in all roles, setting an example for his children, employees, and colleagues. This blend of roles in his life, from husband and father to CEO and friend, is a testament to the complexity of modern leadership.

The Drive Within

When asked about the source of his unrelenting drive, Yoav reflects on his upbringing and early experiences. Growing up in a family where hard work was the norm, he internalized the value of dedication and tenacity. Unfortunately, he lost his father at a young age, which instilled in him a sense of self-reliance and determination.

Yoav's drive is not solely about personal ambition; it's also about leaving no room for regrets. He wants to look back on his life and say he gave it his all, both in his personal and business endeavors. This pursuit of excellence, even when perfection remains elusive, is a driving force behind his success.

The Power of Curiosity

Curiosity emerges as a defining trait in Yoav's character. He attributes his passion for learning and exploring to his insatiable curiosity. Whether it's about different cultures, traditions, or industry trends, Yoav is always eager to expand his knowledge.

He emphasizes the importance of staying informed through reading, podcasts, and engaging with people. This constant thirst for knowledge helps him adapt to changing circumstances and make informed decisions in the dynamic world of wine.



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Embracing Challenges and Failures

Yoav Gilat understands that failure is an integral part of growth. He believes that mistakes are valuable learning experiences. He encourages others to embrace failure as a means to becoming better, both personally and professionally. Failure is not a source of shame but a steppingstone to improvement. "There are many failures. This is how you learn. I always tell my kids and my coworkers and anyone else as well, this is how we learn. If we don't make mistakes, we don't learn."

Yoav's comeback story involves navigating financial challenges and adapting to the evolving wine market. Share-A-Splash Wine Company's initial scrappy beginnings required personal investments and significant risks. The journey involved taking loans, personally guaranteeing them, and constantly working to meet financial obligations.

"I don't have investors. It's my own money and it's not that I inherited billions of dollars. We had to take a second mortgage on the house. I personally had to guarantee all the loans that we are taking. Till this day, we're taking some loans from the bank and it's on me, it's on my head, it's on no one else," he said.

One of the most significant challenges came during the COVID-19 pandemic when the company's reliance on restaurants and boutique wine shops left them vulnerable. Yoav had to adapt the company's strategy and expand its presence in larger retail chains, a move that required resilience and a willingness to change course.

Supporting Women and the Community

Yoav Gilat is not just a successful entrepreneur but also a leader who values diversity and community engagement. He proudly mentions that over 80% of his company's employees are women, emphasizing the importance of equal opportunities for all. He believes in supporting women in leadership roles and the significance of this not only for women, but also for men who should see women as equals.

Furthermore, Yoav encourages individuals and businesses to be actively involved in their communities. He believes in giving back and making a positive impact beyond the confines of the workplace. Engaging in community work and supporting causes that matter can enrich both personal and professional lives.

Inspiration From a Leader

Yoav Gilat's journey in the wine industry is a testament to the power of passion, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to continuous learning and growth. From his beginnings as a family man to his role as a CEO, Yoav's life is a harmonious blend of various roles and responsibilities. His drive, curiosity, and ability to learn from challenges and failures have been instrumental in his success.

In addition to his personal accomplishments, Yoav emphasizes the importance of supporting women in leadership roles and actively engaging with the community. His dedication to diversity and community involvement reflects his belief that success should be shared, and the wine industry, like any other, benefits from a diverse and inclusive approach.

Yoav Gilat's story is not just one of business success but also one of personal growth and positive impact. It serves as an inspiration to wine professionals and entrepreneurs alike, encouraging them to embrace challenges, learn from failures, and make a difference in their communities. Watching Yoav's journey is not just an invitation to enjoy his wines; it's an invitation to be a part of his story of passion and resilience. **WBM**