

Wine & Spirits



Creators of Great Company

An Interview with Bryan Fry,
President and Chief Executive Officer, Pernod Ricard USA



EDITORS' NOTE Bryan Fry assumed his role in September 2012 after serving as Chairman and CEO of Pernod Ricard Brazil since 2009. Fry began his Pernod Ricard career in 1995 as Grower Liaison Officer at the company's Orlando Wyndham unit in Australia. He subsequently held the role of National Agribusiness Manager before moving to the Sales and Marketing side to assume the roles of International Regional Manager, Asia/Pacific and Global Marketing Manager. He subsequently served as VP, Marketing for Pernod Ricard Asia. Bryan is a graduate of Adelaide University and holds a graduate diploma in Economics from University of New England in Australia.



Bryan Fry

COMPANY BRIEF Pernod Ricard USA (pernod-ricard-usa.com) is the premium spirits and wine company in the U.S., and the largest subsidiary of Paris, France-based Pernod Ricard SA, which employs a workforce of nearly 19,000 people worldwide and is listed on the NYSE Euronext exchange. The company's leading spirits and wines include such prestigious brands as Absolut® Vodka, Chivas Regal® Scotch Whisky, The Glenlivet® Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Jameson® Irish Whiskey, Malibu®, Kablúa® Liqueur, Beefeater® Gin, Plymouth™ Gin, Seagram's Extra Dry Gin®, Martell® Cognac, Hiram Walker® Liqueurs, Pernod®, Ricard®, and Aviön™ Tequila; such superior wines as Jacob's Creek®, Kenwood® Vineyards, and Brancott Estate®; and such exquisite champagnes and sparkling wines as Perrier-Jouët® Champagne, G.H. Mumm™ Champagne, and Mumm Napa® sparkling wines. Pernod Ricard USA is based in New York and has roughly 850 employees across the country.

What does your tagline, "Creators of Great Company" mean?

Generally, it means that if our brands are at the center of great experiences in the company of family and friends, and we can continue to promote and grow that presence, then we will create a great company because there will be more of our products and loyal customers at future experiences.

It's also an anglicized version of our global tagline, which is "Créateurs de Convivialité," and conviviality in France is about getting a group of people behind a common goal, a movement, and

something that we passionately believe in. It's making sure that we're making new friends every day through our brands and our people.

With a global company, how close is the coordination region to region? Is the messaging seamless or do you consider markets individually?

Most of the people who are running our affiliates around the world have come up through somewhere else in the Pernod Ricard business, so that culture is core in each affiliate.

Of course, we absolutely respect the local culture, but the core tenets of our business are stable around the world. One such tenet involves responsible consumption – we develop and support shared initiatives aimed at discouraging inappropriate or excessive drinking.

How do you keep an entrepreneurial feel at your size?

Again, a lot of the leaders within Pernod Ricard have come up through the company, so we have a good memory for the roots of the business. Regardless of the true size and scale that we are now, we're taught to maintain a small, entrepreneurial company mentality, given our heritage.

In addition, ego is not something that goes well at Pernod Ricard. The idea is that people should be able to talk to anyone up and down the organization very easily. Doors are kept open and everyone is free to talk to anybody, anywhere, at any time – even getting out into the field into a salesman's car or an ambassador's bar is critical to the business.

If it got around that I was sitting in my office all day and never got my hands dirty, I wouldn't be here long.

How do you avoid becoming complacent when you have such great brands?

When you have more money to spend, the danger is to suddenly start doing massive campaigns. We do have great brands and we're lucky for that, so now it's often about how to avoid screwing it up.

With Jameson, for instance, we determined that we had to draw a big protective fence around what makes this brand great and never lose sight of that.

As a result, we've put more investment into getting additional people on the street, and more people pressed against the bars and bartenders in each individual neighborhood.

It's about focusing on how we win in each neighborhood with ambassadors, with young people working for us driving that advocacy and keeping it fresh. If we started doing big, flashy campaigns with a brand like Jameson, a lot of people who already consume the brand would walk away from us.

At day's end, is it still a business of knocking on doors and building relationships?

Our business is all about relationships, but we definitely take advantage of all of the new digital opportunities. However, I have a mantra for my guys: I don't care about "likes" – I only care about when you turn "likes" into shots.

We have 150,000 guardians of The Glenlivet brand in the U.S. that love the product so much that they are heavily invested in it – they read our apps, they talk to us, and they interact with us.

But we need to make sure we get them into a bar with their friends, because in the end, that is the purest form of enjoying single malt – when you can enjoy it with other people.

So it should be more about using digital to facilitate that moment of great company among family and friends with our brands. This is when it comes to life.

Will growth come from the current brands or will you acquire new brands?

First and foremost, we have a responsibility to keep our great brands great.

But that isn't to say that we don't look at taking on new opportunities: Aviön is a classic example. Ultra-premium tequila was (and still is) a rapidly growing category, and we didn't have one. So we took on this opportunity with Aviön, which proved to be successful. It's a new brand, but a great brand, and we want to keep it a great brand for a long time.

We also have to look at the fact that U.S. consumers make up one of the most dynamic drinks markets in the world for two reasons: first, the size and scope, and second, the willingness of the consumer to try and to absorb new things.

So you need to keep things fresh, be it with cocktails in the bar, or new offerings that cater to this experimental consumer's needs along with changing palates, and to changing demographics.

So at the end of the day, we think about how to keep our existing brands great and current; how to enter new spaces with great brands; and where we can look at innovation either through our existing franchises or ones that are new to world, where we can really capture the hearts and minds of consumers seeking something new. ●