



Meet the Director, Brittany Gibson, Executive Director, Seneca Lake Wine Trail

Describe Your Business

The Seneca Lake Wine Trail is a 501(c)6 organization, with 31 member wineries. We also have over 75 associate advertisers in related industries (such as lodging, dining, and transportation). We are dedicated to informing consumers about Seneca Lake AVA wines and wineries through unique wine events and promotional activities. We manage a website, social media presence, conduct marketing efforts (such as digital media buys, email marketing campaigns, and so on), create marketing collateral, and much more in support of our mission.

Tell us your story:

I was born in northern New Jersey, but my parents (who were born and raised there) were concerned about the rapid development and didn't want to raise their family in that type of environment, so they moved my 4 sisters and I to the sweet little town of Dundee when we were little. I was a first generation college student and attended Ithaca College, assuming I was on the path to law school. I was working as a paralegal and prepping for the LSATs when I was sidelined by a lengthy illness, which resulted in a lupus diagnosis in 2007. That gave me some time (and good reason) to re-evaluate my path. I decided that maybe I could take the business and marketing background from my undergrad and apply it to the wine industry, where I had been working at Fulkerson Winery in what had – up to that point – just been a fun weekend job. I gradually worked my way into more substantial roles at the winery, going on the road in sales and festivals, planning events, and so on, as I tried to get my health on track and set a course forward. When an advertising director position opened, I jumped at the chance and the rest, as they say, is history. I spent 10 years there total. That was the best opportunity I could've been given, since it opened my mind to a totally new path. I joined the Seneca Lake Wine Trail as the Executive Director in November 2018, following 3 ½ years as the Tourism and Marketing Manager at the Watkins Glen Area Chamber of Commerce.

What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

I think one of the keys to success is drive. You have to be motivated and willing to work hard. Gaining experience is a byproduct of that drive and motivation. A quote I always loved is that hard work puts you where the luck can find you – and for the most part, I have found that to be quite true. I have also gained experience by trying new things, being rigid about my goals but flexible in my approach, and a willingness to be pretty tireless about making connections and networking. I try to learn something from every person I meet, especially those who look at things differently than me. That pushes me to keep learning and growing – as a personal and a professional.

What inspires you?

A few things. First and foremost, my son, Hudson. I want him to grow up and look to his mother as someone worth emulating. Also, my parents. They gave my sisters and I the most incredible childhood and upbringing. Their priority was family and they instilled incredible values, focused around loyalty, honesty, and hard work. I strive to be a good indicator of their parenting. Next, my husband, Sheldon. He balances me out in every sense and is my most trusted advisor. Beyond people, I am most inspired by challenges. I love an underdog story. I love being presented with a problem to solve or issue to overcome – it pushes me to think critically and strategically. As a helper at heart, I really love finding solutions and leaving things better than I found them.

What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

“Am I doing enough?” is the question that keeps me up at night, and that applies personally as well as professionally. I have always felt a tremendous responsibility in my professional roles. Right now, for example, I see it as, there are 31 businesses (and all of their employees) relying on me to be successful at achieving the objectives set forth by our organization. When I succeed, they succeed. If I fail, their businesses will bear the repercussions. Some people say it’s bad to things personally. I disagree and as my chamber friends have heard me say time and time again, “I take things personally because to me, it *is* personal.” When you’re dealing in the business of people’s businesses, their livelihoods, their family history (since so many businesses are family-owned these days) – it **should** be personal.

What is your favorite local activity?

My husband and I love classic cars and we especially enjoy cruising the beautiful Finger Lakes country side in our 1971 Chevrolet C10 and going to various car shows. We also love attending winery events, and being out on the lake – we rarely sit still!

Is there anything else we should know about you?

It’s easy to forget where you came from sometimes, but for me, the biggest benefit of staying local has been the ability to reflect on what has gotten me where I am – and how that will play out in my future. No one succeeds alone and truly, my journey is the result of the fantastic people I’ve been lucky to know and work with in my life. If I am the engine in my own success, it’s the people around me who are the fuel.

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