

# From Two-Person Bottleneck to Teamwide Efficiency: MadTree's Operational Evolution

EKOS : CASE STUDY



## Who is MadTree Brewing?

Starting as a small taproom with a distribution model in 2013, MadTree Brewing quickly grew in Cincinnati, OH. "We had a really small space crammed in the corner for people to come and drink beer," says MadTree Director of Brewing Operations, Ryan Blevins, who has been with the company since the beginning. "We quickly found out that people actually wanted to come visit our space more than we thought." MadTree outgrew its space rapidly, needing to brew 24/7 in its 15-bbl brewhouse to meet a 20,000bbl/year demand.

In 2017, the Ohio-based brewery moved into its current production facility in the Oakley neighborhood, increasing capacity to a 100-bbl brewhouse. In the new space, Blevins says they've been able to "do all the things from tons of different types of beer to vodka sodas to a little bit of contract brewing."

Over the last thirteen years, Blevins feels the company has grown beyond just a brewery. "The heart and soul of this place is our taproom and gigantic beer garden," he says, noting the space in a very walkable neighborhood attracts crowds with events every single night. "The neighborhood has really embraced us, and we've embraced the city as well."

Beyond the beer, Blevins says MadTree staunchly believes in protecting the environment, earning a B-Corp Certification and joining 1% for the Planet. "We live and die by that," he says.

Now with three dedicated spaces, including a more refined food- and cocktail-focused restaurant downtown, a second taproom near a popular park where "you can grab a beer and take a hike in the woods," says Blevins, and a second restaurant location on the way, MadTree has evolved into what Blevins calls a hospitality company. "We're really just about connecting people to nature and each other through our spaces and through our beer," he says. "And to have fun while doing it!"

## Challenges

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**Ryan Blevins**  
DIRECTOR OF BREWING OPS

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When MadTree opened at the height of the craft beer industry in the early 2010s, they kept track of their inventory and brewery production like many other breweries, “with a lot of horrible spreadsheets,” laughs Blevins.

Eventually, the company invested in a brewery management platform called Orchestrated Beer (OBeer). But as MadTree grew from a small 15-bbl operation making only beer to a 100-bbl brewhouse now producing a vodka soda line called Sway and copacking for other brands, along with operating a separate restaurant and second taproom location, OBeer didn’t grow with them.

“We grew out of OBeer’s capabilities,” he explains. “We wanted a system that could really bring the whole team along with it and with us, and one that seemed more user-friendly.”



## Solutions & Results

Two years ago, MadTree switched from OBeer to Ekos, the market-leading all-in-one beverage management platform streamlining operations for breweries, distilleries, cideries, and wineries. Blevins admits that the switch has been a game-changer.

First and foremost, Blevins loves how Ekos connects all three (and soon to be four) of MadTree's locations. Because Ekos is integrated with VIP, MadTree's sales team and general managers have access to the platform to place inventory orders from MadTree's main production facility. "That's been huge for us as we've built more taprooms and restaurants," says Blevins. "We're using Ekos to receive orders into production from all of our spaces to our sales team."

Previously, two people managed everything, handling all the ins and outs. "Now everybody is involved, from the brewers putting in their batch details to the packaging crew closing out batches and putting in how much they packaged," explains Blevins. "We've been able to spread the love and the responsibility across the team where it needs to be." Blevins says that if he had to put a number to it, the two-person team previously spent fifty percent of their job managing MadTree's inventory. Now with Ekos, those team members have been freed up to help with other tasks. "It's been huge," says Blevins.

Another feature Blevins loves is Ekos' production forecasting tool, which he says MadTree relies on heavily, using sales orders as input. According to the director of brewing operations, MadTree uses the data gleaned through that tool to build its whole production schedule. Metrics and analytics are a strong advantage with Ekos, whose dashboards Blevins says he's used to make "really good, educated production decisions." He adds, "I love digging into and getting data that we didn't have access to [before]."

Blevins gives a good example of how Ekos has helped MadTree improve its variety pack production, a somewhat complicated and nuanced product in the beer industry. "Managing variety packs is difficult for every brewery," says Blevins, noting that it is tough to play Tetris with a production schedule for every different beer in the mixed pack. By using Ekos' data, Blevins says MadTree could analyze sales rates with its sales team, get a line on what they thought the growth rate would be and then properly plan out managing variety packs a couple of months ahead of time, especially since with variety packs, you're pulling volume that would typically go into 6-packs or draft. "Ekos has been really helpful managing our variety packs," sums up Blevins. "Overall, it has made it logistically easier for us to manage from a production standpoint."

Overall, Ekos has allowed MadTree to build out custom, comprehensive dashboards for sales and volume, broken down by distributor. Blevins says he shares these with the top-level leadership team, ensuring everyone has visibility into the brewery's performance. "We're all looking at the same thing," says Blevins. "This is probably one of my favorite things about [Ekos]."

Beyond variety packs, Ekos has also helped MadTree manage its fairly new, but incredibly successful, line of vodka sodas, called Sway. MadTree started producing its own spirit-based RTDs around 2021, according to Blevins, because they saw the writing on the wall. People were switching away from malt-based seltzers, so MadTree looked at successful models from High Noon and Cutwater to create their own vodka soda. With nobody locally making that product at the time, MadTree knew they could provide an option for customers coming into their spaces who didn't drink beer or wanted something else to drink. "We hit at the right time," says Blevins. "We provided something unique because it was local and exactly what people were looking for."

Launching with just two flavors, Sway has grown to sixteen different flavors over the last three to four years, including seasonal one-offs and variety packs. Blevins says the spirits line has grown by about 1,000 barrels each year, reaching 4,000 barrels in 2025. Ekos' capabilities to handle spirits production drew MadTree to the all-in-one beverage management platform when they wanted to shift away from OBeer. Blevins cites Ekos' comprehensive TTB reporting as a major advantage, along with its ability to manage the bulk spirit inventory across different batches. "It's been really nice," he says. When he noted that, since Sway is such an important part of MadTree's portfolio, it's paramount to make sure they can manage it with the right tools, like Ekos, Blevins responded, "Absolutely, that's a great way to put it."

Blevins believes that, having used Ekos for only two years, MadTree has really just scratched the surface of its features and is excited to continue discovering its capabilities. "We're still just feeling it out," he says. "There's still a lot to learn!"

## Summary

### So, how does Ekos help MadTree Brewing?

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Before using Ekos, MadTree needed a two-person team that spent fifty percent of its time managing production in OBeer. After switching from OBeer to Ekos, MadTree could spread the logistics of managing production and sales across its entire team.



## About Ekos



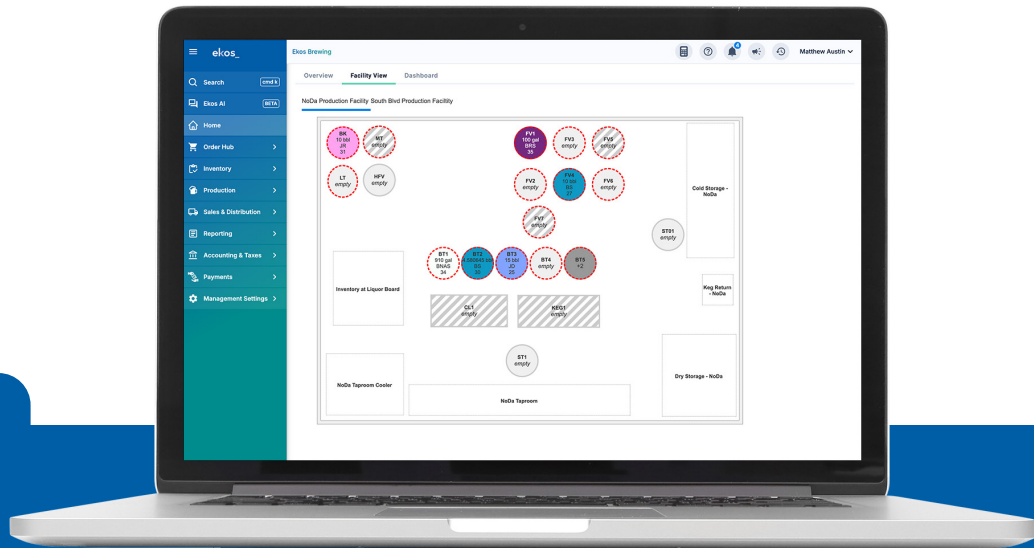
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Ekos is the leading supply chain management software platform for craft beverage producers, offering an end-to-end system to manage inventory, production, sales, and accounting. Founded in 2014, Ekos delivers a streamlined software solution to replace spreadsheets, clipboards, and other manual methods used to manage day-to-day operations for craft beverage producers. Now with over 1,200 active producers using its software, Ekos is the industry-leading software platform for beer, wine, spirits, and cider producers.

Ekos's backbone is inventory and production management along with other key functionality for sales, B2B ordering, and finance. Ekos also automatically generates pre-built reports (including COGS and TTB) that are simple and easy to understand. Its software integrations - notably with VIP, QuickBooks, Xero, and Square - and partnerships help maximize the benefits of its all-in-one platform.

From craft breweries and distilleries to cideries, wineries, and cannabis beverage producers, Ekos is a comprehensive software solution that streamlines production, manages inventory, and enhances sales efforts. By powering every aspect of a beverage producer's operations, the software boosts efficiency, reduces costs, and enables businesses to scale revenue with ease.



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