Why we started Sellar

Thursday the 28th of August 2019 marks the day that my life would change significantly.

A year since graduating I was living the dream. I'd founded a startup with 2 great friends and things were happening pretty quickly. We had over 10,000 users, we'd been backed by Techstars (a leading early-stage investor) and Metro AG (the European hospitality giant) along with a handful of fantastic angel investors. We'd only just recently been awarded Sussex Startup of the Year. So how did a conversation with Chris, the founder of [Good Things Brewing](), make us stop in our tracks and take a completely new direction within a matter of weeks?

We were showing Chris some of the cool new functionality we'd just released over some casual 'water-cooler' conversation. Chris then said something along the lines of "this could be exactly what we've been looking for". He went on to say that what

we had built could change the way breweries sell their beer. I remember feeling slightly uncomfortable. How could the software we'd built for restaurants to optimise their orders help breweries sell their beer? The truth is, we practically knew nothing about brewing, other than our consumption of the end-product. But there was something in Chris's sense of conviction that made us feel like there was a real opportunity here, we just didn't know what it was…yet.

The way breweries sell their beer is archaic.

You see, Chris and Good Things Brewing were at a pivotal point in their journey. After the significant investment they made into building the first closed-loop, [fully sustainable brewery](), they needed to ramp up their sales and unlock that next phase of growth. A feat that was becoming increasingly challenging given just how competitive the craft beer space has become.
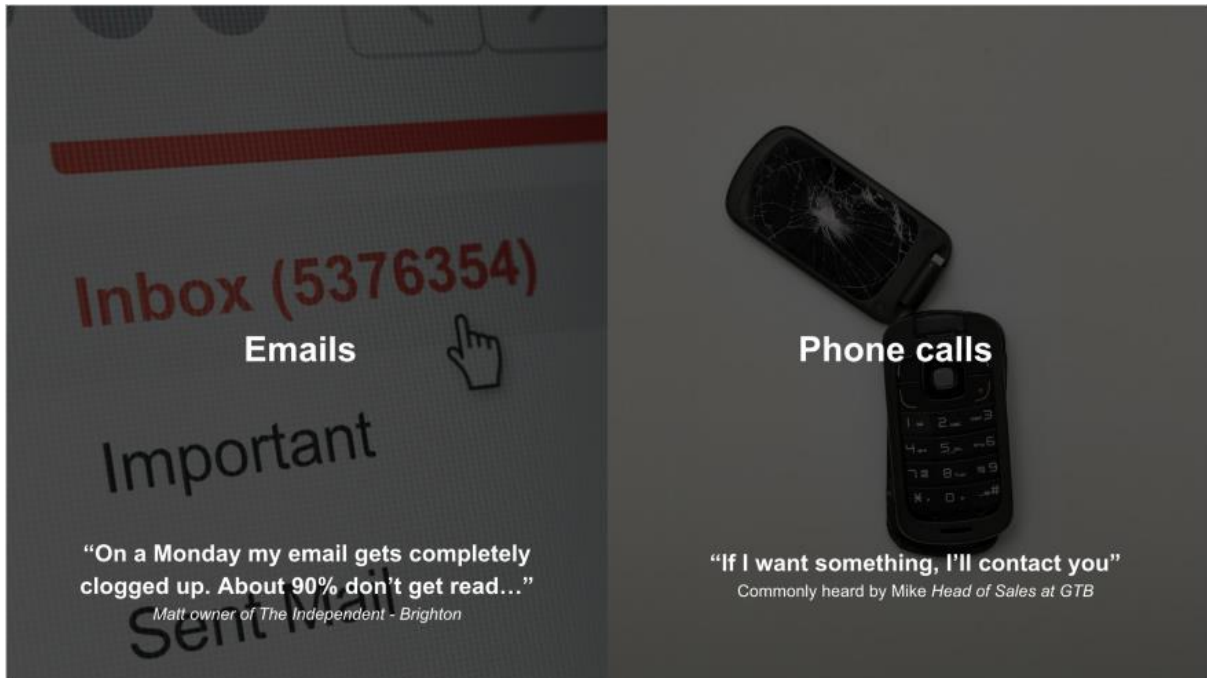
Chris realised that continuing with the classic brewery sales blueprint of weekly mailouts, phone calls, and email wasn't going to cut it. So he started looking for solutions.

Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that the classic blueprint is inherently inefficient. There is a limit on the volume of orders you can manage on a 1:1 basis over the phone or email before you reach a capacity ceiling. Chris and Mike (Chris's Head of Sales) found themselves spending all of their time on email and phone calls managing orders from their existing customers, which meant finding the time to focus on new customers or closing larger deals was out of the question.

THE OLD WAY
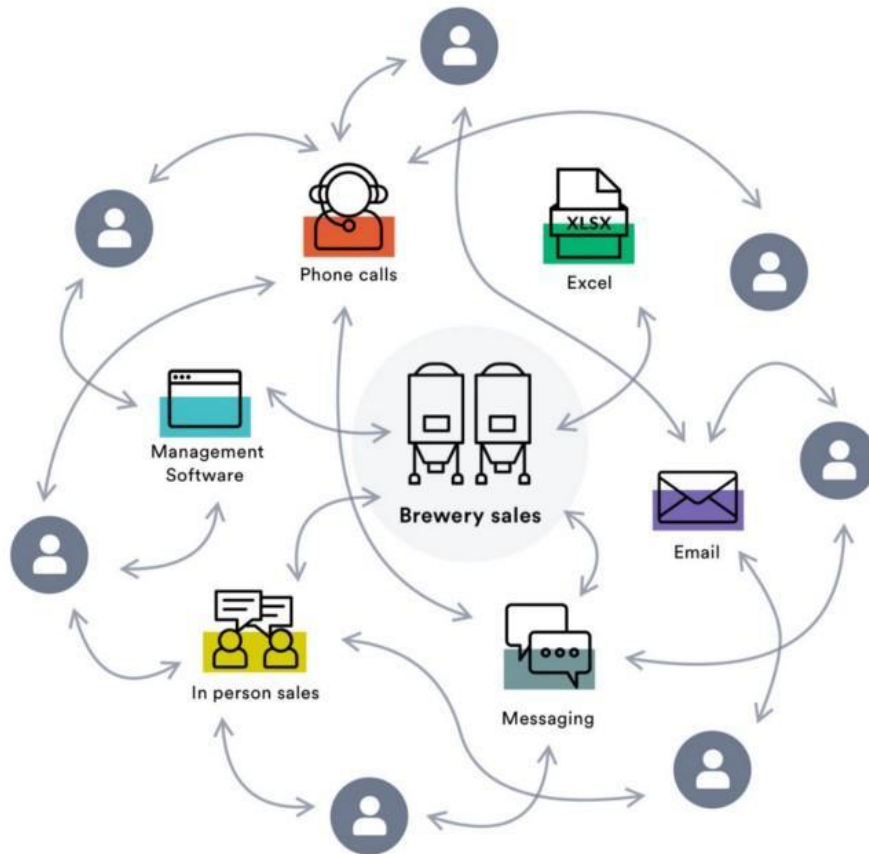
But not only are email and phone calls unnecessarily time-consuming channels for selling beer to trade (or almost anything these days…). They are quickly becoming less and less effective as they become increasingly oversaturated. We decided to speak to more breweries so we could see for ourselves how the industry was operating.

Emails

Inbox (5376354)

Important

Sent Mail

"On a Monday my email gets completely clogged up. About 90% don't get read…"
Matt owner of The Independent - Brighton

Phone calls

"If I want something, I'll contact you"
Commonly heard by Mike *Head of Sales at GTB*

In our research, we were told tales about the dark craft of mailouts — how breweries and distributors alike would attempt to increase open rates by timing mailouts down to the minute on a Monday morning (when pubs typically re-order). We heard one horror story of a brewery that ran a mailout with the subject heading of 'free beer' that received a grand total of…. zero opens.

"On a Monday my email gets completely clogged up. About 90% don't get read…"

Matt, Owner of The Independent — Brighton

As for sales calls, one prominent Sussex brewery shared that the number of orders they receive per 100 calls has decreased from 30–40% to a mere 4% in the last 10 years.

If you have any experience in the area, you'll probably be familiar with some of the following responses:

"We've done our ordering for the week now. Maybe try again next week?"

"Who is it you're after?… oh, they've just popped out, try again after lunch" (they probably haven't just popped out. They just don't want to speak to you right now.)

"Can you email me?" (that email then never gets opened)

Clearly, something needed to change.

Sellar — The new trade ordering experience.

Having come from building technology for the restaurant space, we couldn't help but draw parallels to the transformation that had been made in table reservations.

Think back to 10 years ago. How did you make a reservation? Over the phone or email, right? When you rang and hopefully got through to someone, they would have then checked the physical book at the front of the restaurant to see if they could accommodate you, and if so, taken down your details.

As the world became increasingly digital, the physical books became software, that upgraded the pen & paper scribbles to interactive digital table plans. This change allowed for some great extra functionality such as table optimisation or customer booking history. Fantastic. What an improvement right? There's been a similar progression in the brewing industry where the brewery management software brought a similar level of improvement to brewery sales teams.

So am I advocating that you should start using Brewman? Not quite. These types of solutions are seeking to bring efficiency to a system that is no longer effective. It would be a bit like sharpening your sword in preparation for battle in which the

enemy is bringing guns. Here's why. When you consider the experience of the end customer nothing has changed. Breweries are still selling through the same broken channels.

The real transformation for table reservations happened when companies like Opentable allowed diners to *bypass* the phonecall and make a reservation at their own convenience. Diners now had access to all the information they needed at a glance, in real-time. They no longer needed to wait for the restaurant to open to confirm if there was a table for them. Not only did this prevent restaurants from missing out on bookings when phone lines were busy or when no one was there. But restaurant owners no longer needed to pay staff to sit by the phone repetitively inputting trivial data into a system. Or worse, waste time doing it themselves.

The Sellar team outside the brewery when we started working with Good Things.

That conversation that we had with Chris back in August 2019 made us acutely aware that the way breweries sell their beer was on the cusp of a significant transformation. The chance to play a part in re-writing the playbook for brewery sales was too exciting an opportunity to pass up.

Conversations with breweries and publicans made it clear that continuing down the path of mass emails and telesales call lists would be continuing along the losing path. Which begs the question — what does the winning path look like? What was the answer that Chris was looking for? He wanted an entirely new buying experience for his customers. One that made him closer and more connected them. He wanted a way to cut through the noise and be seen.
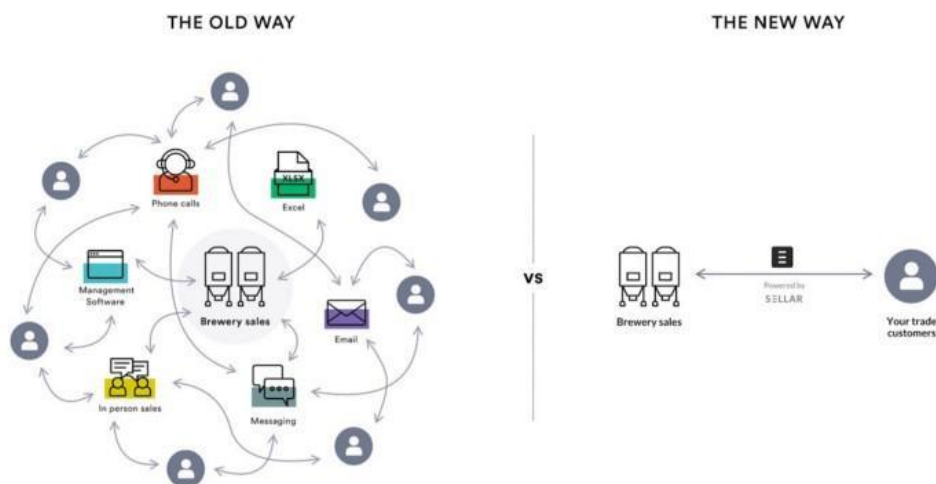
So [Sellar](#) was born, and together with a handpicked selection of Sussex brewers, we designed [The New Way to Sell Beer](#). Our goal was simple. Help breweries sell more beer, in less time.

Eliminating time-consuming, repetitive tasks. Cutting away as much fat and inefficiency from the sales process as possible. But from the start, we knew this was only half the battle. In an industry with relationships at its core, what good is soulless efficiency? So we built the entire experience with relationships and the connection

between people in mind. A way for breweries to be closer than ever to their customers and eliminate the friction in starting new relationships. With Sellar, breweries are only ever a few taps away from a new customer or receiving their next order.

To join the movement and help shape the future of trade sales, leave your details [here](#) and one of the team will be in touch.