

THE
MUNICIPAL
LIQUOR STORE

Volume 71, Number 5, 2012

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
MINNESOTA BEVERAGE ASSOCIATION
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MUNICIPAL LIQUOR STORE

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Official publication of the Minnesota Municipal Beverage Association. Published six times annually: September/October, November/December, January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August. For advertising and editorial inquiry contact Paul Kaspszak, Editor, Box 32966, Fridley, MN 55432. Phone 763-572-0222 or 866-938-3925. Advertising rates available upon request. Change of address: List both old and new address.

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ON THE COVER

Your editor knows the cover photo was included in the last issue. However, it is such an important commentary on alcohol attitudes and regulations, he felt it needed emphasis.

This picture was recently on Twitter with the heading, "Wisconsin supermarkets are GREAT!"

Here are some responses:

- *That makes me miss my hometown, Sheboygan, WI.*
- *They sell the hard stuff in the grocery store in Washington State, now, too.*
- *That's one way to get 'em to nap!*

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MMBA President's Message



Lara Smetana
President

As we prepare for the upcoming year I would like to remind you of two very useful events MMBA hosts.

In February, we will have "Boot Camp" at Breezy Point. When Boot Camp first started it was primarily meant for the new managers. It was set up to help with the understanding of the operations of the municipal liquor business.

I was a very green liquor manager when I attended my first Boot Camp. I completed all the exercises before I went and was prepared to soak it all in. I believe my understanding of the financials helped me to better understand the discussion in the groups.

I know some managers come with the information, but someone else has filled it all out for them. In those situations I suggest when you get the paperwork from whoever filled it out, have them go through it with you. In addition, if you have questions once you get to Boot Camp, please ask.

I have been attending for the past 9 years and each year I leave having learned something new.

We also have added a group discussion for City Administrators. We are seeing more Council members, Mayors, finance directors and City Administrator's attending.

This year there will be a wine club style dinner and we will again have the small group discussions and large group sessions.

Boot Camp is a more intimate style of learning, with lots of interaction within the group. Discussions can be centered on more store specific questions. It is a great way to network with managers from stores of similar size and clientele.

The annual spring conference is held in May at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria. The Conference has a vendor showcase, speakers and entertainment events.

The Vendor Showcase is designed to show you the latest technology in POS systems, new products, vendors' for new store and floor designs. The 2013 Showcase will include an expanded list of vendors and a Sunday Brunch.

The sessions are not as interactively intense as Boot Camp. The information

given is about new product lines, marketing, and business philosophies.

During the entertainment events there is time for networking with the vendors and other city managers and administration. The conference focuses on current issues in our industry and the legislature.

In addition to the Vendor Showcase additions, we are planning several new aspects to the 2013 conference.

Whether you are a seasoned manager or someone just starting out in the business, both the Conference and Boot Camp are designed to give you the resources and information to improve your business.

I encourage you and your administration to attend.

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12 Steps to Improve Your Sales & Profits

By Bob Nelson
President of POWER Retailing

The purpose of any business is to bring in customers. If your cash registers don't ring, something is wrong and you had better find out what is wrong fast. Because in today's competitive world... getting results is what counts.

1. Know Yourself. Your basic roles are in marketing, finance, administration, and the responsibility of personnel. To get the best results, it is rare for one person to play all these roles equally well. You must know which parts you can handle yourself and which parts you're going to need help with.

2. Plan Ahead. Many stores are run by well-intended people but who don't have all the information they need to do their job. This includes a clear idea of market segment, target markets, customer service, product selection, marketing mix, promotional activities and pricing tactics. If you want to succeed you need a well thought out business plan that helps you make the right decisions.

3. Know The Industry. You can gain the greatest competitive edge if you have an intimate knowledge of your business. To thrive and prosper, you must be committed to learn and have the desire and energy to accomplish your goals. These are five main reasons why most businesses fail:

- Lack of Industry Knowledge
- Lack of Vision
- Poor Market Strategy
- Failure to Establish Goals
- Inadequate Capitalization

4. Understand Your Customer. Make it your business to give your customers what they want, and they will do business and buy from you. The products and services you provide

should reflect your customers needs and wants. Think in your customers' terms; buy, show, sell, and say things that interest them, not just what interests you. Remember, it is the customer that determines whether or not you succeed.

5. Keep Good Financial Records. If you don't know where your money is going, it will soon be gone. The "game of business" is played with computers -- and the score is evaluated in dollars and cents. Good financial records are like the instruments on an airplane, they keep you posted of your height, direction, and speed. Without them you're flying blind with no controls to guide you to your destination.

6. Manage Your Cash. It doesn't matter how unique and wonderful your store is, your business can't survive without cash flow. Money coming in your store is the vital component that keeps your business financially healthy. If you budget wisely and know the interval of your monthly income and expenses, you won't have to worry about running out of money.

7. Use Sound Management Practices. You have to make decisions, offer customer service, manage time and resources, and know how to merchandise and run the business better than anyone working for you. Give your employees the opportunity for growth, treat them fairly, pay them what they're worth, and they will help make your business successful.

8. Develop A Distinctive Image. Your image is important and is a function of your marketing efforts and materials. Customers create their perceptions of your business from your name, web site appearance, store location, products, prices, visual merchandising, signs, displays, business cards, newsletters, advertising material, customer service and anything else that relates to your business.

9. Control Your Inventory. All retail stores need to manage inventory. It is your money sitting on a shelf and represents a large portion of your business investment. The retailer who merely watches the store's shelves can't maintain a proper balance between the right amount of merchandise and probable customer demand. Without adequate control, slow-moving inventory becomes dated and very costly.

10. Buy and Price For Profit. To understand retailing, one must start with the concept that the price of your merchandise is nothing more than a temporary estimate of what the customer is willing to spend. In devising your overall pricing strategy, a practical approach can be based on the function of supply and demand. To be more competitive, join buying groups and seek out manufacturer discounts that allow you to purchase merchandise below wholesale prices. By offering better values, you'll be able to attract more customers, and offer more opportunities to shop at your store.

11. Learn From The Pros. In today's explosive markets, making the right moves is absolutely essential; there is little room for error. Without knowing how to navigate through these fast-moving times, it can be a tricky and even a self-destructive experience. Because of the emotional and sometimes difficult decisions that must be made, the crucial difference is having fresh ideas with an impartial business position.

12. Ask For Help When You Need It. Remember, getting results is what counts! Don't be too proud to ask for help, we all need help sometimes. It is important to recognize that what you don't know can end up costing you money, hurt the odds of success, and greatly reduce the chance of achieving your business goals forward.

Understanding the Profit & Loss Statement

By MMBA Conference presenter
Tom Shay

While there are many types of financial statements, the profit and loss statement is what most business owners choose to watch most closely.

The profit and loss statement tells the story of what has happened in the business during the accounting period whether it is a month or year. As compared to other financial statements, the profit and loss statement is much easier to read and understand.

Let's look at a profit and loss statement as it would be created for a single month and see what we can learn. The first part of the statement contains the revenue, or sales of the business. It may be stated in one line, or can be broken down according to how the sales occurred – cash, bankcard, or 'house' charge account.

The second line of information is probably the most confusing aspect – 'cost of goods sold'. What is commonly thought to be a number equal to the amount of inventory purchased is not

the case. It is what the name implies; it is the cost of goods sold and not the cost of goods purchased.

It is a mathematical calculation that begins with the amount of inventory, at cost, on the first day of the month. Added to that amount is the cost of the inventory purchased, at cost, during the month, and then subtracting the amount of inventory on hand, at cost, on the last day of the month. The resulting answer is the 'cost of goods sold' and is stated as a dollar amount.

The third line of information is the gross profit. It is calculated by subtracting the cost of goods sold from the revenue. The gross profit is stated in dollars and cents. With many profit and loss statements to the right of this dollar amount is the same information stated as a percentage and is referred to as the gross margin.

The next section of the statement is the one most people are familiar with. It is the operating expenses. Things such as rent, payroll, utilities, advertising and all of the other expenses associated with operating the business are listed here.

In listing the expenses, they can be arranged in any sequence. Traditionally, expenses that are related are grouped together. As an example, the telephone, water, gas and electric bills would be sequentially listed as they are all occupancy costs. They would be shown on the profit and loss statement next to other occupancy expenses such as rent or mortgage payment and property taxes.

The proper sequence is that which helps the owner to best understand the profit and loss statement and to make the appropriate decisions about the business. All of the expenses are added together for a summation of 'total operating expenses' that is then subtracted from the gross profit amount.

There is one item that does not appear as an expense. Even though checks are written for inventory through the month, inventory is not an expense. The inventory that is paid for during the month is a part of the cost of goods sold calculation that we have previously explained.

As with the gross profit and gross

May I Produce Spirits for Personal or Family Use?

From: Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau

The short answer? Not without paying federal excise tax and filing federal paperwork.

Unlike wine and beer, federal law does not permit the production of distilled spirits for personal or family use. In order to produce distilled spirits for beverage use or industrial purposes, you must first qualify with TTB under the requirements of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and under the Federal Alcohol Administration

Act in the event you are producing or bottling distilled spirits for a beverage use.

Some of these requirements are:

- Paying special tax
- Filing an extensive application
- Filing a bond
- Providing adequate equipment to measure spirits
- Providing suitable tanks and pipelines
- Providing a separate building (other than a dwelling)

- Maintaining detailed records, and filing reports

All of the requirements are listed in 27 CFR Part 19. There are significant civil sanctions and criminal penalties for the unlawful production of distilled spirits.

In addition, you should check with your state alcohol regulator to determine the applicable state law requirements. A federal qualification to produce distilled spirits does not exempt you from complying with state law requirements.

margin, each of the operating expenses is likely to be stated as a percentage as well as in a dollar amount. When stated as a percentage, that operating expense percentage is referencing the revenue. As an example, if the dollar amount of rent is also 8%, this indicates that 8% of each dollar of revenue goes toward paying the rent.

These percentages are important to monitor as there exists industry guidelines to help an owner measure the success of their business. Continuing our rent example, if guidelines show to this owner that rent should be approximately 5%, we can see that the rent is too high with regards to the revenue. There exists several possibilities for solutions; negotiating for a lower rent, increasing revenue, or finding other expenses that can be lower than industry standards so that operating expenses as a whole will be in line.

As we subtract the operating expenses from the revenue, the resulting number is the net profit for the month for the business. And again, the net profit is stated as a dollar amount and as a percentage.

The purpose of the profit and loss statement is not to just eat up your time and give an accountant something to do. Instead it is meant to be a tool that you can and should utilize as an integral part of your management decision process. And as we mentioned in a previous column, your profit and loss statement is the starting point for your creating a budget and a projectionary cashflow chart.

Without it, you are just hoping that what you have done in the past will continue to work or that the mistakes you have made will not repeat themselves. And as the title of a book suggests, "Hope is not a strategy."

Editor's Note: One difference between the private and municipal liquor sector is the role of depreciation.

According to the Internal Revenue

Service, "Depreciation is an income tax deduction that allows a taxpayer to recover the cost or other basis of certain property. It is an annual allowance for the wear and tear, deterioration, or obsolescence of the property.

Most types of tangible property (except, land), such as buildings, machinery, vehicles, furniture, and equipment are depreciable."

Cities / municipal liquor operations do not pay taxes, yet depreciation is routinely listed as an operating expense that directly impacts net-income amounts.

This is important since the success of municipal liquor operations is based on net-income numbers.

In fact, according to state statute, "In any city in which the report of the operations of a municipal liquor store has shown a net loss prior to interfund transfer in any two of three consecutive years, the city council shall, not more than 45 days prior to the end of the fiscal year following the three-year period, hold a public hearing on the question of whether the city shall continue to operate a municipal liquor store."

Consequently, because of depreciation a city may show negative net-income (and have to have a public hearing) even though there is an increase in the amount of money in the bank. These increases are usually shown in a "Retained Earnings" or similar line item in a different financial statement and rarely shown in an profit and loss statement footnote.

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Good News for Perham Taxpayers

By East Otter Tail Focus

Landmark Liquors is having a good year, and that's good news for Perham taxpayers.

Sales at the municipal liquor store are up 12.5 percent from this time last year, putting the store on track to have its second-best year ever. That means more money in the city coffers, going toward projects that would otherwise be dipping deeper into taxpayer's pockets.

"We had great summer traffic again," said manager Bob Dreger in an interview last week. "It shows that people are responding to things that are going on here and that it's a good place to shop."

Dreger and the liquor store staff have been making efforts over the last year to improve the shopping experience and attract and retain more customers. A store remodel in January has helped "make things flow better," he said, and customers are now noticing products that they used to just walk right by.

A billboard that went up along Highway 10 last spring has also "been a big plus," he said, as it's been bringing in new customers. Store sales and other incentives, along with good customer service and a wide selection of products, keep those customers coming back.

Not to mention the sheer size of the store, adds Dreger - with its wide, open aisles and "more cooler doors" than most other liquor stores for miles around. The store has also held some successful open house and tasting events, and has just created a new facebook page.

But the real secret to the liquor store's success, Dreger said, is the people - both the staff and the customers.

"The people we have here are just solid," he said of his staff. "They're great people and they care about the products we sell. And then if you have a community that supports you, it all just comes together."

Already this year, \$30,000 in liquor store revenues has been dedicated to a community project - the new grandstands at Tuffy Stadium.

Liquor store revenues are used to support a variety of community events and projects. They also fund the Perham Area Community Center to keep membership rates as low as possible, and go into the city's general fund to help keep property taxes down.

Last year, a total of \$172,000 was channeled from Landmark Liquor's revenues back into the community. Of that amount, more than \$134,000 would have otherwise come from increased tax levies. Without the liquor store, the city's tax levy would have gone up 11 percent in 2012 (instead, the levy is preliminarily set at a 1 percent increase).

"You can come in here and get what you need, and help the community," said Dreger.

Upcoming MMBA Events

Legislative Day January 28, 2013

11:00 am - 1:00 pm
Lunch and legislative briefing
at the Kelly Inn

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm - Legislative Visits

4:00 pm - 6:00 pm - Reception
at the Kelly Inn



Boot Camp February 19 & 20, 2013

The Boot Camp will cover the "basics" of municipal liquor operations (pricing, inventory control, merchandising, promotion etc.) and includes new topics and a new How to Conduct a Wine Event tasting dinner.

All participants will leave with 12 specific items to improve facility operations!!!

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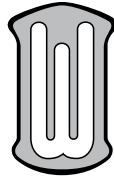
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15 Things Every Retailer Must Train Employees

By Bob Phibbs, The Retail Doctor

- When you see a customer, stop what you are doing, look up so you can meet their eyes and then approach them in a non-threatening way with a greeting like, "Good morning" or "Good afternoon." If a customer is at the register waiting, take the initiative to see if you can ring them up.
- Listen to the customer to find out why, on this day, they came in to your store. Your time will go by more quickly, when you see every interaction as different.
- Say "we" not "them" or "they." Otherwise you sound like an outsider. You are a part of our success. We will not survive in business without you.
- Be on time. There will be traffic. There will be parking off-site and having to wait for a shuttle. There's still no excuse for being late for a shift.
- Turn your phone to vibrate and put it away while on the floor. We're not paying you to look in the palm of your hand, so use your phone on your time.
- Customers can be rude, angry and unreasonable. Don't share your stories of how awful they were with other employees - and especially not to our customers. The people are crazy busy; keep your own attitude above the fray.
- We all have stress, family and personal concerns. We will all get along much better if there is no additional drama brought onto the sales floor. When you walk in the door, leave your problems at the door.
- Patrol the floor. If you see it, step over it or kick it - pick it up and dispose of it. That goes for anything from a ripped price tag to a used diaper- yes, we get those now and then.

- It's great to have friends, but please don't have them visit you while you are working; you're working.
- Since we spend a lot of time on scheduling, a manager has to approve any "switching" of days, times or breaks.
- We take theft seriously and will investigate and prosecute accordingly. We also conduct random checks of the trash.
- Just because you may not be able to

afford some of our more expensive items, doesn't mean our customers can't. Your goal is to help us sell that merchandise.

- You are an important part of our business. We can't do it without you.
- It's never a sin to wear a grin. Remember to keep a sense of humor.
- If you don't know the answer to a question posed by a customer, tell them you don't know and that you'll find someone who does.

*We should never change our minds
about where we are going, but always
be curious about different ways to get there.*

MMBA / Coors Light Food Drive Generates 39.7 Tons of Food!

The recent MMBA / Coors Light Food Drive generated 39.7 tons of food for local member food shelves!!!

This is up from 11.5 tons generated in 2008, 20.5 tons in 2009, 28 tons in 2010 and 34 tons last year!!

Congratulations to everyone who participated!! Your contributions, large and small, are helping an important need in all of our communities.

The overall winners of this year's contest are:

Miltona (Under \$1 million in annual sales) & Hackensack (Over \$1 million in annual sales)!!!

The food shelves in these communities

will be receiving a \$1,000 donation courtesy of MillerCoors and MMBA.

Each of the food shelves in these communities, chosen through a random drawing of all participants (not including the overall winners) by random.org will receive a \$100 donation:

Baudette Downtown
Brooklyn Center #2
Darwin
Fairmont
Hawley
Northfield
Pickle Factory (Nisswa)
Rogers
St. James
Stacy Off Sale

Ethical Considerations Between Council & Staff

These materials were prepared for the Santa Clara University Markkula Center for Applied Ethics program in Government Ethics by Senior Fellow Judy Nadler and Communications Director Miriam Schulman. The Center provides training in local government ethics for public officials.

What is the relationship between elected officials and staff?

City councilmembers, county supervisors, and other elected officials represent the citizens. Staff—such as traffic engineers, waste management specialists, budget directors, IT professionals and others—are the experts who make government run. Elected officials are responsible for setting the priorities for the municipality or other district; staff have the know-how to make those priorities into realities.

The fact that the professional staff,

unlike many elected officials, are not subject to term limits means that they have an institutional history, which is very beneficial in developing the concrete plans to put policy decisions into practice. They also often have advanced degrees in management, engineering, finance, and other technical areas, a knowledge base they can bring to bear in devising solutions to local problems.

In many municipalities, city councilmembers are elected by wards or districts. Once invested in office, they are supposed to serve the entire city, but often they feel a special responsibility to the constituents who elected them. By contrast, staff are mandated to serve the needs of the municipality as a whole.

In a council-manager form of government, staff report to the city manager. In a strong mayor system,

staff answers to the mayor. In either case, when council makes policy decisions, it is the role of the manager or mayor to see that they are carried out by the staff. City council has no role in staff personnel issues; they hire and fire only the city attorney and city manager. As the Institute for Local Self Government explains in *Everyday Ethics for Local Officials*, “The manager [holds] staff accountable on the council’s behalf for implementing the council’s policies and directives. The entire council, in turn, holds the manager accountable for staff’s overall performance.”

What do these relationships have to do with ethics?

Many of the ethical issues that come up between elected officials and staff are best seen through the lens of virtue

Continued on Page 16

Reasons Customers Will Buy Other Than Price

By Geoffrey James, Inc.com, based upon a conversation with Dr. Robert B. Cialdini, an expert on the psychology of influence.

1. You have already helped this customer. For example, you have provided a unique industry perspective during your discussions or have brought your customer a referral for a potential customer for the customer’s business.

(Editor’s Note: The MMBA office was told the director of a local food shelf said he is going to be making purchases at a member’s facility more often, instead of the privately owned liquor store he lives next to, because of the member’s participation in the MMBA Food Drive.)

2. The customer believes your offering is unique or rare. In general, this means that you have established that your firm is the only viable source for what the customer actually needs to solve the problem.

3. The customer considers you an authority. You have revealed something about your specific background or experience that leads the customer to consider you uniquely knowledgeable about the issues involved.

4. Buying will bolster this customer’s self-image. The customer has made specific statements that define himself or herself as the type of person who needs and buys what you’re offering.

5. The customer knows peers who’ve bought from you. Customers are deeply swayed by “social pressure” which you generally create by providing examples and references that match the profile of the current customer.

6. The customer likes you personally. During your conversations, you’ve uncovered similarities between yourself and the customer, and have communicated in words and deeds that you truly respect that customer.

SCORING: For this checklist, the scoring is cumulative. If most of items on the list are “true” you’re likely to get a “YES!” If only a couple of the items are “true” then, it’s iffy. If all of them are “false,” the chances that you’ll get a “YES!” are slim indeed.



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ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

From Page 16

ethics, especially the virtue of respect. Elected officials need to show respect for the expertise of staff and avoid undercutting their efforts by ignoring the evidence-based solutions they propose. Conversely, staff need to respect the political give and take inherent in democratic government and the negotiation that is bound to be part of any council decision.

These relationships also raise ethical issues when elected officials try to circumvent established procedures and priorities to gain an advantage for their friends, family, or constituents. Going over the head of the city manager to pressure a staff member for special consideration is actually illegal. As an example, here is a section from the code of the city of Sunnyvale, California, about what is called “councilmanic interference”:

Neither the City Council nor any member shall give orders to any subordinates of the City Manager, either publicly or privately.

Typically, elected officials may make inquiries or exchange information, but they cannot issue directives.

What ethical dilemmas arise between elected officials and staff?

Many newly elected officials have an imperfect understanding of the division of labor between council and staff; they may act as though staff work for them as individuals and should be responsive to their individual priorities and the needs of their specific constituents. If a councilmember ran on a platform of clean streets, for example, he or she may believe that the proper course of action once elected is to meet directly with the sanitation director and encourage prompt action. But the councilmember must work through the democratic process with other councilmembers to make clean streets a priority across the city. That priority would then be conveyed to the

city manager, to whom the sanitation director reports.

Another set of ethical dilemmas arises when council sets priorities but then ignores them. In a public meeting the council may agree on the top five goals for the year-like renovate central park, draw up plans for a teen center, etc.-but during course of the year, individual councilmembers come up with separate projects and introduce them without regard to what the majority of the council decided. This puts a lot of pressure on city staff, when they have been given their marching orders on the top priorities, and they are now being diverted from accomplishing them.

Sometimes elected officials have their own staffs, and may ask their own transportation or sanitation expert to study a problem and make proposals. When the elected officials either on their own or through council or mayoral staff conduct their own research, they are not only duplicating the work of the technical staff and therefore wasting time and money, but they are also undercutting the authority and marginalizing the recommendations of the professional staff, who work for the entire city and not for any individual elected official.

It is also demoralizing to staff when they come up with a clear, technical report with an evidence-based proposal, which is then thrown out the window because there are 100 people in the audience or 100 names on a petition asking for something else. Traffic calming is a common area of contention, where, for example residents of a senior citizens housing complex may be agitating for a stoplight so that they can cross the street safely. But city staff may have evidence that a stoplight at that intersection will create more problems than it solves.

John Nalbandian, who has studied public administration as a professor at University of Kansas and also served as a city commissioner, points out, however, that such problems do not necessarily have a right answer. “From the engineer’s perspective,” he writes, “I suspect that there is a right answer to the problem, and the engineer might ask, ‘Will the council have the political courage to accept it?’ But, as an elected official, I do not see the right answer. I see a very complicated set of forces and a problem infused with choices about values symbolized by a decision about a traffic light.”

Quick Tip

Most staff in stores will greet customers with, “Is that all?” Train your staff to respond with more personal statements such as, “Did we help you find everything you needed today?”

Here’s an Idea

Have a contest that ties into the weather and related events:

When will it snow next?

When is the last night of freezing weather?

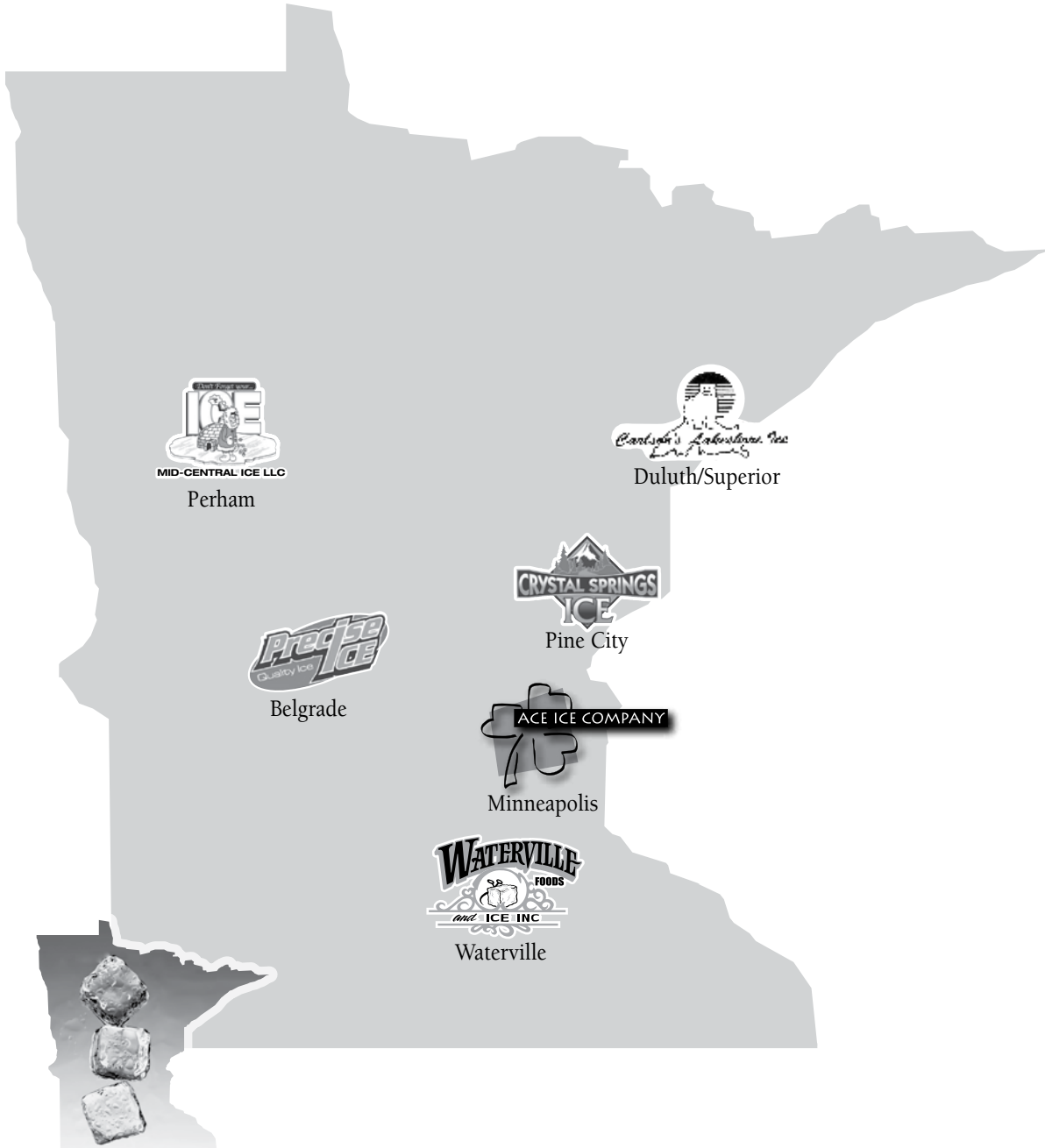
When will we get the first inch of rain?

When will it . . . ?

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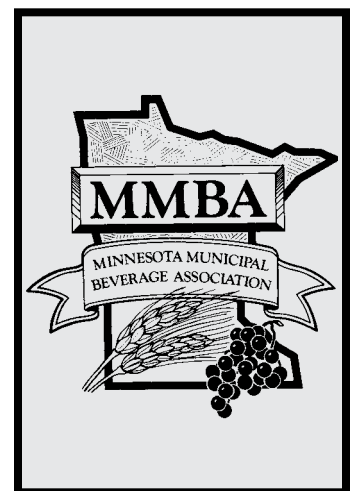
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