

ECONOMICS

There is no single way to run a Co-op bar. The only requirements are that prices should be affordable while raising enough money to clear costs and create a surplus while taking into account local laws. The following are some models to consider using or adapting:

Investor Model - Investors supply liquor and are promised a return on their investment. Investors are given perks at the bar (discounts, etc). Advantages are that investors have incentive for attending and bringing others to the event.

Big Bucket Model - Only bottle owners may attend the bar. All owners buy similarly priced bottles and are entitled to the quantity of liquor they invested (put in 1 Liter of Whiskey, take 1 Liter total of any combination of liquor). Advantages are that all investors equally "own" all the liquor collectively. Money exchanged is specifically for the purpose of fund raising thus possibly avoiding some legal issues regarding selling alcohol (i.e. you can't buy liquor you already own).

Anarchist Trust Model - Co-op Members donate alcohol. Attendees drink as much as they like and donate what they think to be appropriate to the cause when they leave. Advantages: no bookkeeping, attendees may donate more than expected to support the cause.

Remember: Liquor laws and permit requirements vary from state to state. The Co-op Bar is ideally intended for private affairs among friends. If you plan on inviting the public, temporary Beer & Wine licenses are available in New York for \$36/day and allow you to buy from wholesalers. If you are working with a non-profit, look into "Charitable Licenses."

STYLE GUIDE

Using these points as a guide, Co-op Bars will have some uniformity, thereby having visual commonalities with other Co-op Bars in the franchise.

The Co-op Bar Font is Coma, a free font from fountain.nu

The Co-op Bar colors are red and white. Natural finishes are preferred.

The Co-op Bar is decorated with images of crowds taken from the Public Domain. Works of the United States Government and all images from before Jan. 1, 1923 can be safely used. High-resolution, printable images can be downloaded from several sources on the web. Our favorite is: The Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog - www.loc.gov/rr/print/

The Co-op Bar, when possible, uses custom coasters cut and etched with a laser cutter. The designs are below. PDF files are available from visitsteve.com



What is a Co-op Bar?

A co-op is a business owned by its customers for their mutual gain. While each co-op business is set-up differently, it generally follows that each investor will frequent the co-op, maximizing the return on their investment. Through this continuing process of reinvestment, both financial and social, a co-op creates community.

As a prototype for such a community, Steve Lambert's Co-op Bar offers a low-level investment opportunity in the form of a beverage service business. The entire stock of the bar, every bottle poured, has been purchased by a different investor. The price of each shot is listed on each bottle, as is the name of the investor.

Each investment will see a 200% return in relation to shots poured. Investors also receive a discount on drinks at the bar. After covering costs, all profits will go toward a grant for artists. As an artist or a supporter of the arts, when you buy a drink at the co-op bar you are putting money back into the art community.

Why start a Co-op Bar?

In their ideal form, Bars, Taverns, Cafés and Pubs are public meeting places where ideas are informally developed, exchanged, debated, and discussed. At the same time, alcohol has a huge profit margin. A Co-op Bar strengthens the community that uses it and gives them access to the surplus money generated when they buy drinks. That surplus money becomes an independent funding source to create collaborative projects, produce publications, or give artist grants.

If we're going to drink anyway, we may as well do something with the money.

About the Co-op Bar

The Co-op Bar was developed at in the Eyebeam OpenLab by Steve Lambert during a 2006-2007 R&D fellowship and conceived over drinks with Joseph Del Pesco. It has been shown at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in partnership with the Collective Foundation exhibition from April-July 2007.

The Co-op Bar is in the public domain. Everyone is encouraged to use the Co-op Bar plans, as well as build and improve on the them. Feedback is appreciated - send email to steve@visitsteve.com

visitsteve.com
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collectivefoundation.org

Ready to start your own franchise?

These are loose plans that can be adapted to whatever materials you have available. Use found, recycled, and surplus materials where possible to keep start-up costs low.

Recommendations:

- Find an old french door. This is an inexpensive face for your bar that allows visitors to view your stock. 3 ft x 7 ft is standard size. The right old window may fit for the side of the bar.
- Make sure your bar is stable and won't want to tip forward or back.
- Consider adding casters to make your bar semi-portable.
- 2X4s are easy to find, inexpensive to buy, and will give the bar a sturdy frame.
- Add panels using Coroplast plastic or acrylic sheets in plywood frames.

Resources in New York City:

- Build It Green NYC non-profit salvaged building materials warehouse - bignyc.org
- Craigslist - newyork.craigslist.org
- Freecycle - freecycle.org
- New York WasteMatch - wastematch.org
- Your Local ThriftStore

