Business Communication Case Study
THC Beverages, Hospitality, and Public Policy in Ohio

Case submitted by
Dr. Rikki Price, University of Mount Union

Scenario & Background

For decades, the beer and hospitality industries have played a major role in Ohio's economy and social culture. However, changing consumer habits, rising health consciousness, and declining alcohol consumption among younger generations have forced many breweries, restaurants, and beverage companies to rethink their business models.

As recreational marijuana legalization expands across the United States, a growing number of beverage companies have begun investing in cannabis-infused drinks as a potential alternative revenue stream. THC-infused beverages — drinks containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the psychoactive compound found in cannabis — have emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments in the hospitality and beverage industries.

Supporters of THC beverages argue that these products provide consumers with alternatives to alcohol, create opportunities for economic growth, help breweries and hospitality businesses remain competitive, and allow Ohio businesses to participate in an expanding national market.

Several breweries and hospitality groups have expressed interest in entering the THC beverage market as traditional beer sales continue to decline.

However, concerns surrounding public safety, regulation, and consumer protection have led to significant political debate in Ohio. Governor Mike DeWine and other Ohio policymakers have pursued restrictions on intoxicating hemp-derived THC beverages, citing concerns related to youth access, impaired driving, inconsistent dosage regulations, accidental overconsumption, and public health.

Members of Ohio's hospitality industry have publicly opposed these proposed restrictions. Industry leaders argue that a ban could negatively impact restaurants, bars, breweries, distributors, and small businesses already struggling with inflation, staffing shortages, and shifts in consumer spending.

According to reporting from *Crain's Cleveland Business* (Nobile, 2026), members of the hospitality industry have actively pushed back against the proposed ban, framing THC beverages as both a business opportunity and a regulated consumer product that should remain available within Ohio's marketplace.

At the same time, healthcare professionals, community leaders, and policymakers remain divided on whether THC beverages should be embraced, more heavily regulated, or prohibited altogether.

The issue represents a complex intersection of business innovation, ethics, public health, economic development, and government regulation.

Assignment Instructions

For purposes of this case, assume that Ohio has convened a THC Beverage Policy Working Group to review the future regulation of THC beverages. The group includes representatives from the Governor's office, state legislators, the hospitality and beverage industries, public health organizations, the Ohio Department of Development, and consumer safety organizations. Before developing recommendations, the group has invited stakeholders to submit persuasive memos.

Professional memos help leaders make decisions and can influence organizational or policy change by presenting research, analyzing competing considerations, and recommending a course of action in a concise format that can be reviewed and circulated efficiently. Your memo should therefore do more than explain the debate. It should help your reader answer: What should Ohio do, and why is this course of action preferable to the alternatives?

Your Role:

Step into the role of a professional stakeholder directly connected to the issue. Choose ONE of the following positions:

- CEO of an Ohio craft brewery
- Public Relations Director for a hospitality association
- Representative of the Ohio Restaurant & Hospitality Alliance
- Public Health Official
- Policy Advisor to Governor DeWine
- Economic Development Consultant
- Consumer Safety Advocate
- Beverage Industry Executive

Your Goal

You have been invited to submit a persuasive memo to decision-makers regarding the future of THC beverage regulation in Ohio. Your memo should clearly advocate for ONE of the following positions:

- THC beverages should remain legal with regulation
- THC beverages should face stricter restrictions
- THC beverages should be banned entirely

Your goal is to persuade your audience by balancing evidence, stakeholder concerns, ethics, business impact, and public safety considerations. Your memo should demonstrate professionalism, audience awareness, and strategic persuasion.

Your Audience

Address your memo to ONE member of the working group: a Governor's policy advisor, Ohio legislator, hospitality or beverage industry representative, public health representative, a representative from the Ohio Department of Development, or a consumer safety representative. Consider what matters most to that decision-maker. Your role and audience should influence how you frame the issue, select evidence, and address counterarguments.

Remember that your audience may have competing priorities related to economic growth, public safety, ethics, consumer demand, and corporate responsibility.

Memo Format
Submit a professional persuasive memo that includes: a clear subject line, professional memo formatting, organized headings, persuasive business writing using evidence-based arguments and APA citations.

Your memo should be approximately **750–1,000 words**.

Notes to Keep in Mind
Write with the understanding that persuasive business communication requires both professionalism and strategic audience adaptation. Your audience is likely busy, skeptical, and decision oriented. This means that organization, clarity, tone, and evidence matter! Use headings, bullet points, bolded key ideas, concise paragraphs with logical transitions to improve readability.

Additionally, strong persuasive memos acknowledge opposing viewpoints rather than ignoring them. Address counterarguments professionally while reinforcing your position with credible evidence. You are expected to integrate research thoughtfully rather than simply summarizing articles. Your audience wants analysis, recommendations, and persuasive reasoning.

Required Research
Students must use the following Crain's Cleveland Business source as part of their research:

Nobile, J. (2026, March 9). Ohio hospitality industry fights Gov. DeWine's THC drink ban. *Crain's Cleveland Business, 47*(7), 1. https://www.crainscleveland.com/cannabis/restaurant-beverage-industry-call-lawmakers-veto-ban-thc-drinks/

Because Crain's is a subscription publication, access may require an institutional library login. If the publisher link is paywalled, search the exact article title through your institutional library or EBSCO Business Source Complete.

Students must also locate and incorporate at least **three additional credible sources** related to: hospitality industry trends, cannabis beverage regulation, alcohol consumption trends, economic impact, public health, business ethics, or consumer behavior.

Recommended resources:
- scholarly articles (Google Scholar/ Library Sources)
- government reports (Ohio Dept of Health, CDC)
- trade publications (Search for these using Library Sources)
- credible news organizations (AP News)
- or healthcare organizations (Cleveland Clinic or other)

Additional Background Resources

Grischow, E. T. (2026, April 8). Ohio hemp ban takes effect: What cannabis businesses need to know about Senate Bill 56. *HBK.* *https://hbkcpa.com/insights/ohio-hemp-ban-senate-bill-56-cannabis-business-guide/*

Nobile, J. (2026, August 17). More THC drinks return to shelves in blow to state restrictions. *Crain's Cleveland Business, 47*(25), 4. https://www.crainscleveland.com/cannabis/ccl-glbc-wins-tro-in-hemp-drink-lawsuit-20260807/