



Mary Clarke Moderates Industry Forum on the Future of Hemp Beverage Distribution

Spencer Fane attorney [Mary Clarke](#) served as moderator for the session [*The Inevitable Shift? Preparing for Hemp Beverage's 3-Tier Future*](#), at the Hemp Beverage Expo in Austin, Texas, on June 18.

The discussion explored the evolving regulatory landscape for hemp-derived beverages and the growing possibility that policymakers may ultimately incorporate hemp beverages into the alcohol industry's three-tier distribution system. Panelists examined the operational and compliance implications of such a shift, including the potential benefits and challenges for a developing category.

Under Mary's moderation, the panel addressed practical considerations for suppliers facing the potential end of direct-to-consumer retail models. Topics included choosing the right wholesaler, understanding why the largest distributor is not always the best fit, and recognizing how beer and wine and spirits distributors differ in their cultures and approaches to novel categories.

The panelists also discussed alternative distribution models, such as incubation and logistics platforms, for companies not yet ready for a traditional distributor relationship. They offered practical guidance on distinguishing offers from genuine opportunities, identifying questions brands should ask before signing, and determining how candidly a brand should discuss its resources and goals with a prospective distributor.

At Spencer Fane, Mary advises clients on regulatory, compliance, and business matters affecting the alcohol, hemp, cannabis, and emerging consumer products industries. Her practice includes helping businesses navigate complex legal frameworks, assess operational risk, and develop strategies for growth in rapidly

evolving markets.