

Rapid growth has Migration Brewing ramping up, searching for new pub location

By [Jon Bell](#)

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When the four founders of Migration Brewing started out about nine years ago, their approach was simple.

"Make beer, sell beer," said [McKean Banzer-Lausberg](#), who co-founded the brewery in 2010 with his brother, Eric, [Colin Rath](#) and Mike Branes. "We didn't have a 10-year plan. We just wanted to be a successful neighborhood pub."

Along the way, however, things changed for Migration. They achieved the successful neighborhood pub piece, but also hopped on a growth track that's taken them far beyond what they ever imagined. Migration inked a sizable distribution deal with Columbia Distributing in 2017 and opened a new 16,000-square-foot production facility and 3,000-square-foot pub in Gresham last year.

In 2018, Migration made about 1,500 barrels of beer. This year, they're on track to do about 7,000. If all stays on track, they should hit 10,000 and open a third pub, this one likely on the west side of Portland, in 2020.

"It's pretty explosive growth," Banzer-Lausberg said.

The deal with Columbia certainly gave Migration, which had self-distributed before, much more reach. The new production facility allowed the brewery to serve that new demand: Three new 80-barrel tanks that arrived this summer will only bolster that. They also opened a popup location in the Lloyd Center over the holidays that did so well, it's staying open at least through the rest of this year.

In addition, through Columbia and other relationships, Migration has found its beer landing on the shelves at larger format stores, including New Seasons, Fred Meyer and Plaid Pantry.

"New Seasons was a great place for us to start in that space," Rath said. "They wanted to take a chance and be a part of what we were doing, and we wanted to be a part of what they're doing."

Migration is also getting in front of beer drinkers through partnerships with the Hillsboro Hops, the Portland Pickles and the Oregon Zoo, while also making sure to stay engaged with the community and working with local nonprofits like Basic Rights Oregon.

The growth has come fast in recent years for Migration, but Rath said that's not what the company is all about. Revenue and profits get pumped back into the business to keep quality and customer experience levels high. Migration started offering health insurance to its 45 employees in July.

The brewery keeps a close eye on the marketplace, so far keeping itself nimble enough to brew solid staples, like its Patio Pale and Straight Outta Portland IPA, while also dabbling in more creative beers that keep them innovative.

"Something that's successful in 2019 might not be what's successful in 2025," Banzer-Lausberg said. "You can't rest on your laurels."

"The biggest thing," Rath added, "is you have to be ready to pivot when you've got to pivot."

Migration has been hunting for a third metro-area pub location for about a year. Banzer-Lausberg hopes to land on something that could open in 2020. There's lots of room for expanded distribution into Northern California and Washington, but Migration will also keep focusing heavily on its stomping grounds.

"We're going with an old model of drilling deep," Banzer-Lausberg said. "We're going big on Portland and then it's kind of concentric circles out from there."