Pharos Brands Names Brown-Forman and Proximo Veteran Stephane Cantin CFO and COO

Delta-9 THC beverage maker also adds Casamigos and Aviation Gin dealmaker Lawrence Waks as counsel



Stephane Cantin, a 20-year Brown-Forman veteran, joins Pharos Brands International as Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer.

BILLINGS, MT, UNITED STATES, September 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Pharos Brands International, LLC, maker of Pharos Premium Infused Beverages, a Delta-9 THC beverage brand, has named Stephane Cantin Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer, effective September 8.

Cantin spent more than 20 years in the spirits industry, most recently leading contract manufacturing and supply network optimization at Proximo Spirits. Before that he spent two decades at Brown-Forman Corporation in senior roles across the United States and Europe, including Director of External Manufacturing Operations for Europe and the Americas, where he ran a co-packing network spanning seven countries and multimillion-case production volumes. He also served as General Manager of Chambord Liqueur in France and as Director of Manufacturing Operations for Western Europe. He has served on the Pharos advisory board since spring 2026.

His appointment follows the August naming of Matt Smith, a 15-year PepsiCo beverage veteran, as President and CEO. In five weeks Pharos has added two senior executives from three of the largest names in the beverage business: PepsiCo, Brown-Forman, and Proximo.

"The THC category is fragmented and unregulated today, and that is going to change," Cantin said. "The hemp beverage industry wants to align with the alcohol sector on compliance and

follow the same route to market. The spirits industry spent decades building those standards. We need to have them in place ahead of the rules, not after. All eyes will be on this category and we will not have the luxury to reinvent the wheel."

Cantin will oversee finance and operations as Pharos expands distribution and prepares for federal requirements including labeling standards, age verification, and domestic sourcing.



Lawrence Waks, a veteran beverage transactions attorney who advised on the Casamigos and Aviation Gin sales, has been retained by Pharos Brands International as counsel.

Pharos has also retained Lawrence Waks, a partner at Sterlington PLLC, as counsel. Waks advised George Clooney, Rande Gerber and Mike Meldman on the $1 billion sale of Casamigos Tequila to Diageo, advised on the $600 million sale of Aviation Gin to Diageo, and advised on the sale of Conor McGregor's Proper No. Twelve Irish Whiskey to Proximo Spirits.

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>
> *Stephane Cantin, CFO and COO, Pharos Brands International*

"I have spent a lot of years on beverage transactions, and the pattern does not change," said Lawrence Waks. "My job is to help clients see around corners, and in a category where the rules are still being written, that means building the structure now so you are ready to move when the framework arrives rather than scrambling to catch up. Pharos brought me in before they needed to, which tells you most of what you need to know about how they operate."

Pharos is carried in 401 retail locations across six states, up from 74 a year ago, and sells exclusively into alcohol-licensed accounts through Green Light Distributing in Florida, Crown Beverage across Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee, Keg1 in Missouri, and Capitol Husting in Wisconsin. Sales grew 153.5 percent over the same period. The company's Mango took Double Gold with a score of 97 at the 2026 Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America Tasting Competition.

Pharos is an active member of the Coalition for Adult Beverage Alternatives, and Cantin has been

active in the Hemp Beverage Alliance for the past 18 months, two organizations advocating for responsible regulation of hemp-derived beverages and alignment with the alcohol industry's established compliance and distribution framework.



Pharos Premium Infused Beverages in Mango, Black Cherry, Blood Orange Lime and Raspberry Lemonade.

"Getting a brand started and scaling one are two different jobs, and they need different people," said Matt Smith, President and CEO. "Stephane has run manufacturing networks at a scale most of this industry has never operated at, inside a business that already lives under the compliance standards we are moving toward. Larry has sat at the table for the transactions that defined modern spirits. This is the team we wanted."

"Rhyno and I are in our seventies, and when we started Pharos people asked what we brought to this that younger founders might not," said Mary Bernuth, Co-Founder and Executive Board Chair. "Our answer was patience. Slow and steady wins the race. We have built this methodically, and bringing in executives who have scaled real beverage brands is part of that. With Stephane on board and our Pharos Compass education program debuting in October, we will be ready to move the moment the runway is clear."

Cantin began his career in financial leadership, including Controller of Winery Operations for Fetzer Vineyards and Sonoma-Cutrer in California, where he oversaw production finance, information technology, and capacity planning. He holds a Master's in Management from École Supérieure de Commerce de Lyon, a Bachelor of Business Administration from HEC Montréal, and a Bachelor of Laws from Université de Montréal.

About Pharos Brands International

Pharos Brands International, LLC produces premium Delta-9 THC beverages for adults 21 and over, created for a customer the category has largely overlooked: adults 55 and up. Co-founded by Rhyno Stinchfield and Mary Bernuth and headquartered in Billings, Montana, the company operates under the tagline "Inspiring a New Era of Mindful Consumption." Products are sold only where permitted by applicable state law. Learn more at drinkpharos.com.

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