

## Meet Aron Langellier of Barleymash in Downtown



Today we'd like to introduce you to Aron Langellier.

**So, before we jump into specific questions about the business, why don't you give us some details about you and your story.** My career with the Verant group started roughly 14 years ago. At the time, I worked all over San Diego in places ranging from corporate restaurants to

prominent nightclubs. I happened to be hanging out at Sandbar one night and the barback didn't show up. My best friend Dave Jones was managing the place asked if I would barback for tips and a few drinks. I agreed and after my first two shifts, they asked me to officially join the family. After graduating from SDSU in 2003, management was restructuring at the time and I was asked to join the team.

This was my first time managing people and needless to say I had a lot to learn. After two years of managing the Sandbar, I was transferred to another Verant Group property, Tavern at the Beach. I spent the next 8 years managing that property and helped open multiple properties with the Verant group. In 2011, the Verant Group decided to open a property downtown and I was named operating partner of what eventually became barley mash.

This was the biggest challenge I had ever faced in this business! We had an amazing opening team and we worked very hard to make barley mash one of the best operations Downtown. In 2017, my partners and I felt the need to grow again and we put together a multi-use space at 555 Market St. called the Smoking Gun. The Smoking Gun features a coffee shop (Spill the beans) and a hair salon (brick and mason).

In addition to running restaurant operations, I am the Vice Chair of the Gaslamp Quarter Association and have been actively involved since the better part of 2012. It is an amazing opportunity to help make one of our city's most prominent entertainment districts even more robust and lively; not to

mention, I have the honor of rubbing shoulders with some amazing local businessmen and businesswomen.

**We're always bombarded by how great it is to pursue your passion, etc – but we've spoken with enough people to know that it's not always easy. Overall, would you say things have been easy for you?**

Most of the struggles pertain to the vast majority of restaurant operators looking to build a culture and to compete with new & electrifying concepts. The hard part is simply the marriage of your concept and the immersing trends at large. Family adversity is always present as we tend to work while outside industry plays. This certainly makes holidays and three day weekends a bit more challenging as an Operator.

We leave our cell phones on after we depart work. We're traditionally available during our time away with friends and family, We're used to most problems appearing during the rush and certainly on the weekends. What makes the struggle tolerable is being surrounded by partners and employees that are passionate, involved, talented and ever-present. I imagine not having to face the common adversities of opening and operating a restaurant alone is the most soothing.

**So let's switch gears a bit and go into the Barleymash story. Tell us more about the business.**

I run daily operations for barleymash. I would say I specialize in coming up with creative concepts to push every aspect of the business possible. I'm known for having high standards for every member of my team from the top down. My

business partners with the Verant Group will simply tell you that the pace of the leader is the pace of the crew.

Verant Group is known for creating high energy local taverns that become neighborhood mainstays. We believe in employee empowerment, a positive approach to employees, embracing technology and priding ourselves in innovation and creativity alike. We also believe in creating a space for visitors and locals alike to have a good time, with great food and drinks!

### **Has luck played a meaningful role in your life and business?**

One thing I tell everyone is that nothing worth doing is ever easy, and most people simply assume you got lucky when things go well. It has taken dedication, hard work and a strong, enthusiastic team in place to get us where we are today.

For those just starting out, I feel like San Diego is a tough place to start a new business simply because we are a huge local's community and San Diegans love supporting local companies. I feel like if you are able to open a business here in San Diego you deserve an award for getting the doors open. The process is long and has 100's of moving parts. The balance will always be between overall density and paying respect to the San Diego lifestyle. San Diego loves small neighborhoods, less traffic and a business model shaped after San Diego culture.

The challenge will always be balancing ourselves as America's Finest City and ourselves as America's number one tourist destination. Given rising costs and elevated taxes, we as local businesses rely on additional business which can

and will cause more traffic, more congestion and contribute further to rising prices. I believe our biggest challenge is to remain both affordable and profitable.

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