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509 Spirits hires Helmsman Imports to clear compliance hurdles in its U.S. expansion

The Washington brand is shifting label approvals, state registrations and back-office administration to Helmsman’s importer-compliance platform.

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Washington-based 509 Spirits has partnered with Helmsman Imports as it pushes into new markets across the United States, a move aimed at shifting regulatory and back-office work away from the brand's founders and toward a specialized importer-compliance platform.

509 Spirits was founded in Washington State by Jeff and Aileen Yost. Its portfolio includes vodka, London Dry gin, Canadian whisky, silver Tequila and light rum sourced from distilleries across North America. As the company expands, each product category and country of origin brings its own regulatory filings and financial administration.

Helmsman said it will handle label approvals, state registrations, accounts receivable and payable, and distributor chargebacks for 509 Spirits. The company said those functions will be managed through a single system so the brand can focus more on distribution and community engagement.

Jeff Diego, founder and chief executive of Helmsman Imports, said the partnership reflects a broader change in how growing U.S.-founded spirits brands are approaching compliance. He said many companies still assume importer-of-record services are mainly for foreign brands entering the U.S., but domestic operators can face similar operational burdens once they scale.

"509 Spirits is exactly the kind of operator we built Helmsman for," Diego said. "They have a real brand with real roots, and they reached the point where the back office was competing with the business for attention."

Jeff Yost said 509 Spirits was created to give its community "a label it could be proud of," not to turn its founders into full-time compliance and accounting managers. He said bringing in Helmsman would allow the company to redirect time and energy toward brand building.

Janzen Eagler, Helmsman's chief strategy officer, said the work with 509 Spirits focused on identifying where outside support could improve efficiency rather than replacing functions already handled well internally. He said tasks such as chargeback disputes and state registrations can consume time that founders might otherwise spend growing sales and market presence.

The deal also points to a wider issue in the beverage business as brands expand across state lines: growth often depends not only on consumer demand and distributor access, but also on navigating a fragmented U.S. compliance system. For spirits producers, that can make importer and regulatory infrastructure an important tool for entering new markets faster and with fewer administrative delays.

Helmsman said it now works with more than 100 brands. Its recent partnerships include Dutch independent whisky bottler Bottle Dreams, Peruvian cacao liqueur Vieroma and Pájaro Agave Spirits.