

# BEVERAGE COMPANY BOOMS WITH FINANCIAL GUIDANCE FROM THE SBDC

*Cal Poly CIE SBDC and Whalebird Kombucha*



# ABOUT THE CAL POLY CIE SBDC

The Cal Poly CIE SBDC offers a wide variety of services for both startups and established companies. Our services include no-charge expert counseling, low-cost training, information resources, events, and seminars. All counseling services are confidential and free of charge. Our Business Advisors assist their clients with a wide range of services, including:

business planning; marketing strategies and planning; sales; access to capital, including bank finance, SBA loans, and asset financing; venture funding; government contracting; strategic technology acquisition and practical, hands-on application; financial projections and budgeting; and operating challenges.



The SBDC helps entrepreneurs launch new businesses, and small business owners survive and thrive in SLO County. To take advantage of our no cost, expert business services, visit [SBDC.CALPOLY.EDU](http://SBDC.CALPOLY.EDU).

# ABOUT WHALEBIRD KOMBUCHA

Have you ever seen a Whalebird? Mike and Jake, avid Kombucha brewers and the minds behind Whalebird Kombucha hadn't either until the summer of 2014 when their lives were changed forever. It was a foggy morning on the Central Coast when the duo jumped into the ocean after their morning pint of Kombucha for an ordinary spearfishing excursion.

While diving amidst a thick cluster of kelp, Mike saw what appeared to be a huge whale move quickly through the water, breach the surface, then disappear from view as if it sprouted wings and flew away, the only reasonable explanation.

After that fateful day, they decided to dedicate their budding Kombucha brewery to the tale of the Whalebird and their mission became clear:

Make the best Kombucha the world has ever seen and spread its fizzy goodness across the coast in the hope that one day the wonderful and mysterious Whalebird will be found.

Today, with the help of a small but passionate team, they handcraft an uncompromising Kombucha from the heart of San Luis Obispo. Thanks in part to native strains of bacteria and yeast, Whalebird Kombucha is sessionable and refreshing while maintaining the low sugar, strong culture, and beneficial acid that makes Kombucha so good.

**"Since working with the SBDC, Whalebird Kombucha has been able to grow as a business with confidence. At each fork in the road, we've been able to trust them to provide intelligent and thoughtful guidance, allowing us to make the best decisions possible. We look forward to a long and continuing relationship and would encourage other entrepreneurs to look to them as well."**

**- Jake Pritzlaff, Co-Founder and CFO, Whalebird Kombucha**



# THE CHALLENGE

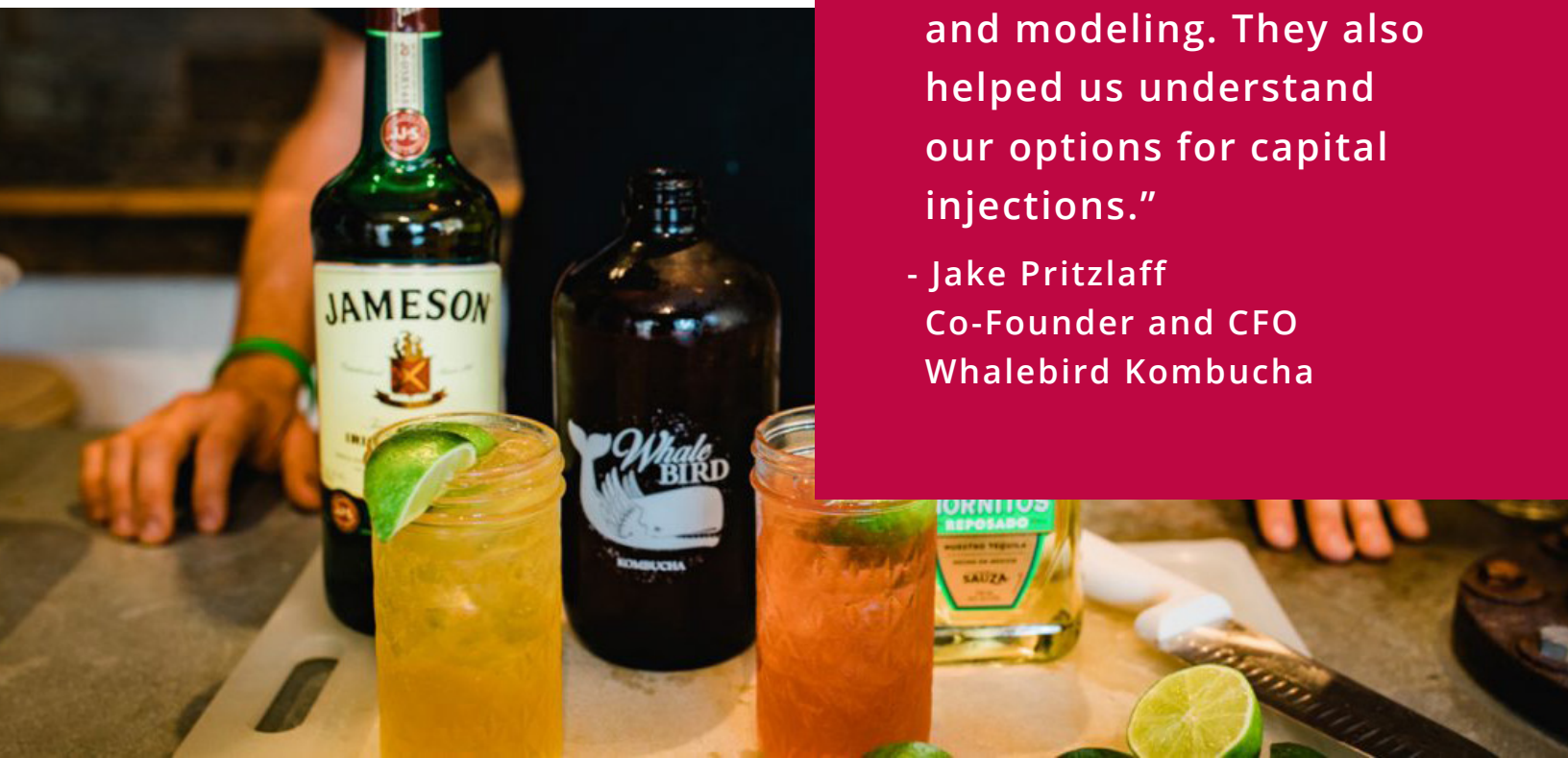
Whalebird Kombucha had humble beginnings. Co-Founders Mike Durighello, Jake Pritzlaff and Lee Wilkerson were passionate about an ancient effervescent tea from East Asia. They knew about the beverages' health benefits, and in 2014 after a fishing excursion where they encountered a breaching whale, hence the name, they decided to bring this beverage to the Central Coast.

By 2015 the Whalebird team knew they were onto something, as distribution was scaling up and down the coast of California. Like many young entrepreneurs they understood that they needed

to guide the company from an early stage start up into a growth phase, a somewhat daunting task. To accomplish this next phase of their business they needed solid financial projections, access to funding and ability to scale their team. Like many entrepreneurs on the central coast, they turned to the SBDC.

**“Through the SBDC consulting team, we were able to obtain sage guidance on long term financial projections and modeling. They also helped us understand our options for capital injections.”**

**- Jake Pritzlaff  
Co-Founder and CFO  
Whalebird Kombucha**



# THE SOLUTION

After the Whalebird leadership team's initial meeting with the SBDC, Judy Mahan, the CIE Economic Development Director, connected the entrepreneurs with financial consultant Rolando Locci. Like many of the consultants at the SBDC, Rolando was an expert in his field, and was able to pull on his 20+ years of experience to guide the team through financial modeling that would take Whalebird

into a growth phase. Simultaneously Mahan, introduced the Whalebird team to SBDC Consultants Jeff Wade (Food/Beverage), Kurt Friedmann and Michele Magee (Marketing/Sales). After receiving assistance in various areas, Whalebird understood that they were bankable, and the SBDC assisted them in obtaining an SBA loan.





# RESULTS

WhaleBird Kombucha has successfully scaled into growth mode. They have over 11 employees, are pushing distribution into Nevada and Arizona, and recently launched a hard Kombucha line. Key to this growth was a \$350K Angel Investment.

The company stays dedicated to its roots in San Luis Obispo and making the best Kombucha on the market.

