

My Alternative CV: Hayman Distillers MD James Hayman on exports, MJ and British brands

By [Charles Wright](#) | 9 October 2026 | 3 min read



Name: James Hayman

Job title: MD and fifth-generation co-owner

Company: Hayman Distillers

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What was your first job? My very first job was working on the bottling line during my university holidays but my first proper role was working at a [marketing](#) agency on the

McDonald's account – it gave me a great insight into consumer preferences and business life.

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What was the first music single you bought? Michael Jackson – Bad.

How do you describe your job to your friends? I never find it that easy to be specific on this – so I usually just open that I work in our family company.

“I am concerned that the government do not appreciate the value of British owned businesses”

What is the most rewarding part of your job? I travel frequently to many of the 70 countries we [export](#) to. Seeing Hayman's in shops, bars and restaurants is hugely rewarding. Especially when you don't expect it.

What is the least rewarding part? I am concerned that the [government](#) does not appreciate the value of British-owned businesses. They contribute so much to the [economy](#) in terms of jobs, creativity, and reinforces the British brand internat' However, [policy](#) doesn't seem to support these businesses to thrive further.

What is your motto in life? Don't be complacent.



If you were allowed one dream perk, what would it be? To be in two places at the same time!

Do you have any phobias? Rats!

If you could change one thing in grocery, what would it be? More space for family-owned brands vs [private equity](#)-owned brands with deep pockets!

What luxury would you have on a desert island? A radio

What animal most reflects your personality? My dog, Fenton.

What's your favourite film and why? The Shawshank Redemption – I first watched in a backpacker hostel in Australia – it is just a great film. Timeless.

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What has been the most embarrassing moment in your life? Too many – but my first here was presenting Hayman's to a Waverley TBS buyer some 20 years ago. He said no one drinks gin these days and gave me my presentation back as a souvenir. They went out of business and people do now drink gin!

Which [celebrity](#) would you most like to work with and why? Jürgen Klopp, the former Liverpool manager. Any Liverpool fan will know why!

What would your death row meal be? I'd probably go for a spicy Indian curry but if you asked me what my death row cocktail would be – a Martinez with Hayman's Old Tom. No debate!

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