



Go Shorty – It’s Your Birthday!

by Ben Weston, Hoptown Handles

When marketing your brewery, you want to maximize the visibility of your point of purchase displays, especially your tap handles. Usually, that results in tap handles that are bright, bold, and most importantly, for this article at least, big! While I'm sure you would like to have control over the environments that your tap handles are located in, unfortunately, you don't. Each bar and restaurant that you place a tap handle in has its own design and style. Sometimes, there's a shelf immediately above the taps, or they're recessed into the wall, or spacers aren't used between the wall and the tap. The result ends up being an area that is too small for you to fit your normal tap handle.

Tap handles average between 8 and 12 inches, with some of the taller ones jumping up to 14 or more inches. Be prepared to encounter retail establishments that aren't able to accommodate an average size tap handle. When this happens, many breweries turn to "shorty", or "shotgun", handles. What is a shorty handle? Don't hurt yourself trying to figure it out. It's a handle that is usually somewhere between 4 and 6 inches tall. So, now you find yourself in a pickle what are your options?

1. Design a different shorty handle and order a bunch of them. If you distribute enough to be able to do this, great! However, with minimum order sizes, and quantity based pricing, you may end up paying a lot more than you want for your shorty handles.
2. When creating your normal tap handle, just make it short. The nice thing about this is that you end up with a handle that will (hopefully) be usable in most locations. No need to order and manage two different size tap handles. The down side, is that your handle may be less visible in tap lineups dominated by larger, more visible handles.
3. Create your shorty handle to just be the same shape as a part of your normal handle. If your normal handle has multiple pieces, maybe the bottom piece can be designed to work on its own as a shorty handle. Take the below handles as an example. The full sized handle on the left works great and gives prominent style branding, but the bottom oval can be used on its own as a shorty handle. Talk with your manufacturer about designing a shorty handle alongside your normal handle, place the order at the same time and you're likely to get some preferential pricing on the shorty handle.

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Now, the last question we usually get about shorty handles is "How many do we need". While you know your accounts better than we do, we usually like to recommend around 5-10% of your normal order size. So, if you're ordering 200 handles, you're likely to need around 10-20 shorty handles. Again, many manufacturers aren't going to want to take an order of that size, so you may end up needing to order more, or get creative with the design and construction of your normal handle. The last thing you want to do is not have a tap handle at a location pouring your beer though, so make sure to plan ahead for your shorty needs!



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Ben Weston is the founder and Head Honcho at Hoptown Handles, an American manufacturer of high quality, durable custom tap handles. He is also the co-founder and Director of Direction at SeaThirst Creative, a design firm that specializes in working with craft breweries of all sizes.