

## **DraftLine Technologies, The Business of Beer**

**2019**

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Host: Podcasting from Orlando, Florida, this is the Lowndes Client Corner where we highlight and celebrate our law firm clients and their many achievements. Who are we featuring today?

Drew Sorrell: Today we're interviewing Jennifer Hauke, the founder and president of DraftLine Technologies, as well as the creator of the DraftLine SmartSystem, a technology platform providing distributors with realtime technician routing, scheduling and brewery approved reports designed to adhere to best practices while improving performance and efficiency throughout all facets of draft service and maintenance.

Jennifer's company currently manages over 700,000 draft lines across the United States. I'm your host Drew Sorrell. Let's find out more about our entrepreneur guest. Hello Jennifer. I'm glad you could join us.

Jennifer Hauke: Thanks Drew.

Drew Sorrell: Tell us if you would, what is DraftLine?

Jennifer Hauke: Sure. So DraftLine is a twofold program. It's a web interfaced dashboard for managers of companies that clean draft beer lines. We also have mobile applications for technicians that are working out in the field going from restaurant to restaurant cleaning draft beer lines, making them taste better of course. And currently we manage just over 700,000 lines across the US. That's about 40% of the market.

Drew Sorrell: Wow, and obviously you have a pretty big technology component in that with the software as a service. How and when did you come up with the idea for DraftLine?

Jennifer Hauke: Oh, gosh, so this is kind of a funny story. About ten, eleven years ago I was at a dinner with somebody who was very important in the industry, and I have been in draft beer – I grew up in a family business in Detroit, so I've worked in every facet of draft service and installation and just had many years of experience. I then went on to marry another Drew who owned a chemical company, and he is the market leader in draft beer cleaning chemicals across the US.

I had just been submerged in this industry for many, many decades and had dinner with somebody that called me a couple of months later and he said, "Jen, I've been thinking about you. I've been thinking about Drew. You need to come up with the automatic dishwasher of the line cleaning industry." So I took the phone call, I listened and I thought to myself, this guy is out of his mind. But he's really important, so I don't want to embarrass myself or my husband, and I want to make sure I take his suggestions under consideration.

And so I thought about it for a couple of months, and at that point in time I had a lot of time to think, let's put it that way. And I called him back two months later and I said, "You know Peter, we don't need an automatic dishwasher." I said, "What we really need is an app." And he goes, "Exactly, now go build it." And so I get off the phone and I thought to myself, oh my gosh, what have I just gotten myself into?

That really was the impetus and that person is important in my life now. He works with us. But of course he was really a visionary in a lot of different fronts as it came to draft beer. And he's kind of nurtured me along the way

when, honestly, a lot of people didn't take me seriously. So what ended up happening is, I kept pushing, kept pushing, kept pushing and at first we worked with a company here locally in Orlando and just designed the screens for how DraftLine would work. And then we had part of the program working and just over the course of a few years, we finally had this program that was working.

And then I was able to go out and, because of the relationships we had built in the business over so many years, the largest company in the country that does line cleaning, I went to them and I said, "Hey, I've got this program." And we didn't even have a name for it at that point. We called it SmartSystem. That was before we called it DraftLine. And I said, "Can we test?" And sure enough, they were very nervous, but there was such a need at the time for a program like DraftLine, that they went for it. And we tested in small batches over the course of the year, finally got all of their technicians transferred and transitioned onto DraftLine, and it was going really well. And it turned out that they were saving about 75% of the time for their office staff. And it was much more functional for the technicians out in the field because part of my process when I thought about the idea for DraftLine is, how is this going to work for the technician? What's the workflow?

So I started with the steps that they would go through. Interestingly enough, I had a little bit of background in programming from another family business that I had been involved in. But I think the way that I went about it, really thinking about the end user first, is ultimately what made it successful. So the end user being the technician out in the field and what he or she would come into contact with.

The other benefit that I had was that I had worked in my parent's office running 26 line cleaners. So most programmers or most people spec'ing out

how a program would function, whatever the activity is, wouldn't approach it necessarily from those two angles. So I think that was the interesting thing that happened with DraftLine.

Drew Sorrell: That is interesting. So you launched a little over three years as I understand it. Have you had any surprises?

Jennifer Hauke: Every day. I call it inventors in draft lines. Every day. So yes, I mean, so many surprises. One of the surprises was that, you know, even though it's over three years ago, it's still relatively fast to have 40% of the market that we're managing. So many surprises on so many levels. Sometimes things aren't going to work out the way you try to manifest them when you're planning for your programming. Or sometimes you think you've anticipated everything a technician could do wrong, and they come up with something else.

So then you have to program around that. So the other surprise initially, so if you asked Jen ten years ago, how are people going to use this program? Initially I thought that they would be like me where they would sit in their office all day staring at the computer screen and just enamored with monitoring their draft lines. And so what I found out is that is definitely not the case. They've got many, many other jobs that they're doing throughout the day.

So they have very little time. So everything that we had to do on DraftLine needs to be really geared towards making them have to look at the least amount of screens and the least amount of reports. So that's definitely been an adventure. And as well, when we designed the program or when I came up with the concept for it and we started designing it, I thought this would be something that we would hand off. So, like, back in the day when you used to

get your disc and you'd install that disc on your computer, right. And then you'd have to call an 800 number, but you never want to do that. So you'd just figure it out, right?

What I realized is that I have a lot for my customer base because I was one of my customers at a point in time. And I realized that we needed to have this technology platform, but in order for it to be long lasting and keep our subscriber base happy, we were going to have to build out what I called DraftLine Cloud Support. And so these are teams that are in Europe. They're in Florida. They're in California. And they help our users all throughout their use of the program, and they're there all the time.

So we have a support desk platform where we're fielding thousands of calls, texts, emails every day, helping our technicians and also helping, again, our managers back in the office interpret the information and do it as quickly as possible. So that's something I didn't envision in the beginning was having the technology help the people, and then having more people to help everybody else move through it and keep it in good working order all the time.

Drew Sorrell: Right, and you don't use discs anymore I'm imagining.

Jennifer Hauke: Oh gosh, no, there's no discs for DraftLine, no. Well, everything's cloud-based now, right? So I tell them, we're no longer on earth. We're up in the clouds, when we upload our service centers because we operate off of a service center model. So beer distributors that we work with or third party, what we call line cleaning companies who go out, manage and make sure lines are in impeccable order for other beer wholesalers or retailers out in the market that serve draft beer, those are the companies that we work with on a day-to-day basis. Some of them are rather large. But it's funny because when I

do tell people what we do, they're, like, oh, I like draft beer. And I'm, like, good {laughs}. We want to keep it that way. That's my goal.

Drew Sorrell: Keep you in business. What's it like working with your family on a day-to-day basis? Because you work with your husband, and I think you have other people in your office that you're related to.

Jennifer Hauke: Oh, yes. So that's also been a surprise since the initial onset of the DraftLine fever in the Hauke house. So there was a day where I worked for my parents for many years, and then of course I worked for my husband Drew for many years. I want to say almost probably 16 years before we started DraftLine. It was a big turning point in all of those relationships where they're, like, oh my gosh, she's now in charge on a lot of different fronts.

So it was difficult, but I have to say we've worked it out. My mom and I, she oversees everything in the DraftLine office. She and I have worked together for so many years it's almost seamless. So my parents are now retired. They're down here in Florida, thank goodness, left Detroit. And that's been great. And of course in the early days when I had no other staff because my dad was so familiar with line cleaning, I'd have to pull him in and he's very, very sassy {laughs}. But only to me. All the other girls, like if we ever need somebody to fill in or we have a big start up, they're, like, I'll take your dad. I'll take Chuck anytime, because he's just a man on a mission.

So that part's funny. And then I have to say, you know, I met my husband at work many years ago in Troy, Michigan. And we have always from day one that we've known each other worked together. If it's not one business, it's another. And he's not an employee of DraftLine, but of course he's an advisor on all things. And I realized that I just married him because I thought he was cute. But he's really smart. {Laughs} So that really worked out well because

in an advisory capacity, some people cannot work together, especially when you live together. That can be difficult. But he is really a nice guy, and he's really a smart guy. So at the end of it, we've kind of worked it all out individually.

So in some ways, to answer your question, it's wonderful working with your family. In other ways, it's terrible. But at the end of the day, we're all going to be celebrating together over the holidays. So I think it's all worked out {laughs}.

Drew Sorrell: So along those lines, I'm obviously a guy, you are a woman, do you think that your gender has impacted what you do in your business experience?

Jennifer Hauke: Well, so I think that's a great question. I'm in an almost totally male dominated industry. And so when I go in, you know, I'm almost six feet tall, relatively attractive I'm told. People are not expecting me to be the person that comes in and talks about cleaning draft beer lines. So when I show up, they think, hmm, what does this chick know? And then of course five minutes after the conversation starts they're, like, holy smokes, she's got this every which way.

So in my particular case, I think it's been incredibly helpful to be female because it gives me more attention. And so for a second they look up and they're, like, oh, this isn't the normal person I would be seeing pitching this. And then they realize it's somebody who not only has been in the industry for three decades plus, but also has all this other knowledge base because I've just been immersed by DraftLines. My cousins, my uncles, my dad.

And so for me being a female has definitely been a plus because it makes me a little bit different. So I like that. I like that it's not just the same old guy

coming in. I get some attention due to it. But I also feel a bit of a responsibility for the younger ladies who will come after me because the majority of my employees are female. And I did a presentation at my daughter's class about inventorship a couple of weeks ago. And one of the girls said, "Oh, I can't believe Mrs. Hauke, people didn't listen to you just because you were a girl." And I said, "No, people didn't listen to me because I didn't really have anything to say when I was 18." I put a lot of work in and people in the beginning – because in the beginning when I came up with the idea for DraftLine, everybody said no.

And that goes right from my father to everybody except for Peter, who I mentioned earlier was a big supporter, including Drew. They said, this is a terrible idea. You're working with people that are not technologically adept. Had all these other excuses. But of course in the matter of ten years from the time I came up with the concept for DraftLine to today, everybody is very savvy, especially young people with mobile devices and all these sorts of things. Technology is just so easy to use now. So in that presentation with the little girl I said, "Listen, everybody has a right to speak up. But you have to make sure that you're saying something that's important and valuable to the people listening to you."

And that again has become another surprise for me, is that not only did we have this great technology platform that we came up with for a niche industry that very badly needed it. But it's almost like a Trojan Horse. There's some benefit that comes out of it, whether it's for the user, whether it's for the company that implements it because they get up to 800% more efficiency out of their labor, which is a fixed cost that they're paying for anyway. So there's always been some great surprise, but all of that, again, hails back to, I sure like being a female in this industry. And I try and set a good example out in

the field for women that work within my organization and that will come after us as well.

Drew Sorrell: So taking that piece with the app, do you think there's one thing that folks just don't get and that they should get about the app?

Jennifer Hauke: You know, I always feel like as the ambassador for DraftLine, DraftLine Jen, I am – it's up to me. And if people don't get it, it's because I'm not communicating it the way I should be. I see that as an ongoing process. And the way I try and express information is mainly through reporting. So we have spent a lot of time over the last couple of years – initially when you come up with an idea, you're fighting to make the idea happen. And for me that idea was DraftLine.

So then you get a little bit of a foothold and oh my gosh, isn't this a surprise, they're going to make it. You get that first big contract, and all of a sudden – where people were saying initially, well, okay, maybe you can do it, but you're not going to get any data or any information from that app. What happened with us is, we got tons of data. We got tons of information. And I realized that our user base is so busy, because everybody's running lean these days, right. There's plenty to do and not enough time.

So what I see our job and one of our initiatives moving forward into 2020, is to make sure that we're the best in class at interpreting that data and conveying it to our customer in the shortest amount of time possible through visuals. So if somebody doesn't get it, I haven't communicated it well enough for them to get it. And it sounds easy to say that, but oh my gosh, that's probably the hardest thing, is to communicate information that's coming in. Especially about somebody's business that you're working with and making

sure that they're fully understanding it. And then also giving them an action plan to move on that information. Very hard.

Drew Sorrell: That makes sense. We've talked about sort of the past of how this came about, and we've talked about the present and what you're working on. So you can probably predict my next question which is, so tell us what you think the future for DraftLine is.

Jennifer Hauke: Oh gosh, well, you can tell I probably have a lot of plans. I think the way technology is moving is so fascinating. People are catching up to it slower than the technology is actually developing. But I think along the path of what we just discussed, making the data realtime, which it already is in DraftLine. But dialing in the reporting and the information going to the customer in such a way that they just have it right at their fingertips. They don't even have to log into DraftLine. That's the future and again, down to the analytics. And no matter what business you're in, any type of analytics that you can apply and help people see within their own business that saves them money, there's a value in that. There's a value in that for a company like DraftLine because it brings value to the customer.

So I think dialing it in more, continuing doing what we're doing with our brewery programs, our third party outsource companies and making them more efficient. But then also, like I said, the analytics that they use internally, and integrating those sometimes into another platform and dashboarding and things like that that they use within their own organizations. That's going to be something we work heavily on over the next 18 months.

Drew Sorrell: We will certainly be watching you and rooting for you and thank you for joining us today.

Jennifer Hauke: Absolutely. Thanks so much Drew.

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