

Client Insider's Guide

From Doing the Work to Running the Business A Draft Service Owner's Scaling Guide



I owned a draft service company in Toronto for six years. Like you, I started as a one-man operation, doing every service call myself. When I sold the business, I had a team that ran without me touching a faucet wrench. Here's exactly how I made that transition - and how you can too.

The Problem Most Draft Service Owners Face

You're trapped in your own success. More accounts mean more service calls, which means you're working longer hours but not necessarily making more profit per hour. You can't take a vacation without losing customers, and you're one injury away from serious problems.

Sound familiar? I've been there. The good news is there's a proven path out.

But first, a note on capacity...

On average, a technician can clean **40-60 beer lines per day**, but that number can vary quite a bit depending on several factors:

Route density is the biggest factor. If you've got accounts clustered together, you can hit 60+ lines. But if you're driving 30 minutes between stops, you might only get through 20-30 lines.

System complexity matters too. A simple direct-draw setup with 4-6 lines per location? You can move through those quickly. But if you're dealing with long-draw systems, multiple floors, or hard-to-access coolers, it slows you down significantly.



Account size plays a role. I'd rather clean one 20-line account than four 5-line accounts because it eliminates drive time and setup/teardown at each location.

Establishment hours of operation are often overlooked when searching for new business. We secured a chain of dinner-only steakhouses in year two, and that was a total game-changer for us. We could finish two sports bars in the morning by 11am (they opened at 11:30am) and be on our way to a steakhouse that didn't open for almost 5 more hours. Signing these establishments on as customers let us knock out four to five establishments a day, effectively doubling our daily line completion count.

Finding establishments where you have access to the taps and beer cooler early in the morning also helps - think sports complexes, hotels, airports, clubs,... Chain restaurants typically have people there earlier than independents do. In some cases, you can find trusting owners who will give you a key and the alarm code if you are bonded. My point: find accounts with a cleaning window of 2-3 hours or more and start your day as early as possible.

When I ran my service company in Toronto, our techs averaged around 40-50 lines per day, but our best guys with tight routes could hit 60-70. New technicians usually could do closer to 20-35 until they got their systems dialled in.

At the end of this article, you'll find a straightforward calculation to help you assess your capacity and know when to add new technicians. I'm going to use 50 lines per day over a two-week cleaning cycle, for a total of 10 business days of cleaning. That sets one tech's capacity at 500 lines (50 x 10) for this article's metrics.



Stage 1: The Foundation (0-500 Lines)

Build Your Systems First

When you're starting out, you're doing everything - sales, service calls, billing, and scheduling. This stage is about proving your system works, building a reputation for quality, and, most importantly, establishing the documentation habits that will enable scaling.

Here's what most owners don't realize: the biggest challenge isn't finding customers or hiring techs. It's maintaining visibility and control as you grow. The foundation for successful scaling isn't built when you hire your first employee; it needs to be built from day one.

In the late 1990's, I read [The E-Myth by Michael Gerber](#) and learned that you have to build documented systems for everything if you want your business to succeed. So from my very first draft service company account, I started documenting everything, including using index cards for each customer. Every detail about their system, their preferences, their equipment quirks, their contact information - all written on index cards that I kept in a small box. I also used an Excel spreadsheet to track scheduling and service history.

It was messy and time-consuming, but it saved my business. When I eventually hired help, all that information was already documented. My techs could walk into any account and know exactly what needed to be done, what to watch for, and how the customer liked things handled.

If Tap Trackers had existed when I started, it would have saved me countless hours and eliminated the headaches of managing paper cards and



spreadsheets. More importantly, having all that data in a proper system from day one would have made scaling so much smoother.

Your focus should be on:

- Perfecting your service standards.
- Building strong customer relationships - Answer the phone!!
- Documenting every detail about every account from day one.
- Creating systems for scheduling and billing that can grow with you.
- Tracking all service data systematically.

Don't rush this stage. I spent a lot of time early on really dialling in my service quality and learning what customers valued most. But more importantly, I was building the information foundation that made everything else possible.

The Documentation Foundation You Must Build

Most owners think documentation is something you do later when you hire help. This is backwards. The best time to document is when you're doing the work yourself and learning every detail about each account.

From my first service call, I documented:

- Cleaning chemical requirements based on line length.
- Customer preferences and special requests.
- Historical problems and solutions.
- Optimal service timing for each location - Closed days and No Go Hours.
- Key contact information and decision makers.
- Pricing agreements and any applicable special terms.



Using index cards and Excel spreadsheets was better than nothing, but it was a constant struggle. I spent too much time managing information instead of serving customers.

The beauty of starting with proper tracking software right away is that every detail is captured as you build your business. When you eventually hire your first tech, they have access to months or years of detailed history for every account. They can see what you've done, what problems you've encountered, and what each customer expects.

Building Your Reputation Through Differentiation

During this stage, every customer interaction matters. You're not just cleaning lines - you're building the reputation that will carry you through growth phases. You need to differentiate yourself from the beginning, not after the competition gets tough.

I made the decision early to position myself as the premium service provider. While competitors were charging \$8.50 per line, I charged \$16. How did I justify nearly double their price?

I provided value they couldn't match:

- **Free service calls, even after hours** - If a customer had a problem, I came out at no charge.
- **Recirculating pump cleaning** - I was the only company in our area at the time using this method, which provided superior cleaning results.
- **Monthly draught quality assessments** - I proactively checked every system from keg to glass and provided detailed reports on my findings.



- **Free staff training** - I taught bar staff how to maintain quality between my visits, troubleshoot, and how to increase draft sales.
- **Proactive problem-solving** - Instead of just cleaning lines, I was preventing problems before they happened through the assessments and staff training.

This differentiation strategy did two critical things. First, it attracted customers who valued quality over price. Second, it gave me the margins I needed to invest in proper systems and eventually hire good people.

The monthly draught quality assessments were particularly powerful. It put the onus of keeping the system running on us. If we were offering free service calls, I wanted us to find the problem on a Tuesday afternoon instead of Saturday night when we had to provide the service call for free. It also gave us something to do during the afternoons when we couldn't clean lines.

Also, our clients loved having detailed data about their system performance. It showed them exactly what they were getting for their premium price. We used to handwrite them on a three-page carbon copy sheet, but now this feature is built into Tap Trackers, making it easy for any service company to provide this level of detailed reporting electronically.

Stage 2: First Growth Push (500-800 Lines)

Hiring Smart, Not Fast

This is where most owners hit their first wall. You're maxed out on service calls, but customers keep calling. You have two choices: turn away business or start building a team.



Here's what worked for me, and more importantly, the costly mistake I made that you can avoid:

1. **Wait until you hit 500 lines before hiring anyone** - You need the cash flow to support help.
2. **Start with part-time, not full-time** - Build revenue gradually to support the expense.
3. **Make sure your tracking systems are bulletproof** - Your new tech needs access to all the account knowledge you've built.
4. **Maintain your differentiation strategy** - Don't compete on price as you scale.

The Hiring Mistake That Almost Killed My Business

I made a nearly fatal error in my first year. I got excited about growth and hired a full-time tech when I had only about 300 lines to clean. I thought I could generate enough revenue quickly to cover the expense.

I was wrong.

The cash flow hit was immediate and painful. I was paying full-time wages but only had enough work for part-time hours. For a couple of months, I was bleeding money and seriously considering letting him go.

I managed to save the situation by aggressive sales efforts and eventually adding 15 new accounts (almost 200 lines), but those 2-3 months nearly broke me financially. The stress of not knowing if I could make payroll was crushing.



Don't make my mistake. Wait until you have a solid cash flow from 500 lines before hiring anyone. When you do hire, start with part-time help. Let them prove themselves and let your revenue grow to support full-time wages before making that jump.

The Part-Time Strategy That Works

Your first hire should be part-time, handling 15-20 hours per week of basic line cleaning while you focus on complex issues, sales, and account management. This gives you:

- Breathing room on cash flow.
- Time to train them properly - they work with you for the first few weeks.
- Ability to assess their performance before committing to full-time.
- Flexibility to adjust hours based on business needs.

The part-time tech should move to full-time once you're consistently giving them 35+ hours per week and your cash flow comfortably supports the transition. This usually happens around 800-900 lines.

Why Your Systems Make or Break This Transition

When I hired my first tech, all those recipe cards and spreadsheet entries became gold. He could walk into any account and know exactly what needed to be done. The documentation I'd built from day one meant he could deliver the same level of service customers expected.

But managing paper cards and spreadsheets with multiple people was a nightmare. Information got lost, updates weren't shared, and I spent way too much time on administrative tasks instead of growing the business.



This is where starting with Tap Trackers from day one pays huge dividends. All your account history, service notes, customer preferences, and system details are already in the system. Your new tech has instant access to everything they need. No lost recipe cards, no outdated spreadsheets, no confusion about what was done on the last visit.

The software handles scheduling, route optimization, and service tracking automatically. Instead of spending hours updating spreadsheets, you can focus on training your new tech and growing the business.

The best part: your Tap Trackers investment is based on how many lines you clean; it is designed to grow with your business from the beginning. If you clean 450 lines a month, your fees are only \$54.

Stage 3: Building Your Team (800-1,200 Lines)

Now you have one full-time tech and you're still doing service calls. This stage is about systematizing everything so you can add more techs without chaos.

Key moves:

1. **Create detailed service protocols** - Every tech should clean lines the same way.
2. **Implement route optimization** - Plan efficient schedules that maximize productivity.
3. **Add your second part-time tech** - Again, start part-time and grow to full-time.
4. **Maintain quality control systems** - Ensure consistent service across all techs.



I made the mistake of trying to hire experienced draft techs. Train someone with the right attitude instead. Look for reliability, mechanical aptitude, and good customer service skills. The technical knowledge can be taught.

Adding Your Second Tech - Learning from Experience

Your second hire should also start part-time. When I hired my second tech, I applied the lessons from my first hiring mistake. I started him part-time and gradually increased his hours as business grew. This approach was much healthier for cash flow and gave me time to properly train him.

Systematizing Service Quality

At this stage, you can't personally oversee every service call. Your systems need to ensure quality consistency without your direct involvement.

I developed detailed checklists for different types of service calls:

- Standard bi-weekly and monthly cleaning procedures.
- Deep cleaning protocols (recirculating pump with both caustic and acid).
- Emergency service response steps.
- New account setup procedures.
- Equipment troubleshooting guides.

But checklists alone aren't enough. You need visibility into whether your techs are actually following these procedures. With Tap Trackers, you can see exactly what work was performed at each account, how long it took, which lines were cleaned, and what issues were discovered. Your team can



upload photos and take notes for each service call, giving you the same level of detail you'd have if you were there in person.

Equally important, the built-in online draught quality assessment tool ensures your techs are maintaining the proactive, problem-prevention approach that differentiates your service. They can perform the same detailed system analysis you used to do, generating professional reports that reinforce your value proposition.

Route Optimization Reality

Poor route planning kills profitability. I see too many companies where techs are driving all over town instead of working efficient routes. Typically, around 80ish accounts, this becomes a serious drain on profits. Effective route optimization means:

- Grouping accounts by geography into Territories then linking a tech to a Territory to build customer relationships.
- Scheduling services to minimize drive time.
- Balancing workload across techs.
- Planning for emergency service calls, establishment No Go hours, scheduled days off, truck maintenance, and holidays.

Manual route planning becomes nearly impossible at this scale. You need software that can automatically schedule routes based on account locations, service frequencies, and tech availability. The time savings alone pay for themselves quickly.



Managing Multiple Techs

With two or more techs, you start facing another management challenge: time tracking.

The hours that your techs work need to be tracked and if you pay them mileage, you need to make sure it is also tracked and accurate.

Tap Trackers has a built-in time-tracking feature that records their hours and mileage, which you can compare to the system-calculated route time and mileage.

Stage 4: The Management Transition (1,200+ Lines, 3-5 Techs)

With 3-5 techs, you can step back from daily service calls and focus on growing the business.

At this point, your third tech and beyond can be hired full-time from the start. You have the systems, cash flow, and work volume to support immediate full-time positions.

But getting here requires discipline. You need to:

1. **Stop doing routine service calls** - Only handle emergencies and complex problems.
2. **Focus on account management and sales** - Your highest-value activities.
3. **Develop your lead tech** - Someone needs to handle day-to-day operations.



4. **Maintain your differentiation strategy** - Continue providing premium value.

I hit this point around 1,300 lines. It felt scary to step back, but my business grew faster once I focused on management instead of cleaning lines.

The Management Mindset Shift

The most challenging aspect of this transition isn't the operations; it's the mental aspect. You've grown your business by personally engaging with each account. Letting go can feel like losing grip on control.

But...you can't grow beyond this point without making the shift. Your highest value activities are now sales, account management, strategic planning, and team development. Every hour you spend on routine service calls is an hour not spent on activities that drive real growth.

I lost many hours of sleep with this transition. It took me several months to fully trust my team and stop jumping in to handle routine calls. But once I made the shift, my business really began to grow.

Stage 5: True Scale (Over 1,500 Lines, 5+ Techs)

At this level, you're running a real business. Your focus shifts to strategic growth, market expansion, and potentially additional service offerings.

This stage requires:

- Sophisticated reporting and analytics for your brewery/distributor customers.
- Advanced scheduling and route optimization.



- Quality control systems that work without your oversight.
- Financial controls and profitability analysis (QuickBooks Integration).
- Strategic planning for continued growth: offering maintenance plans and expanding services like ice machine cleaning.

The companies that succeed at this level are the ones that invested in proper systems early. The ones that try to manage growth with spreadsheets and basic scheduling software hit a ceiling around 800-1,000 lines and struggle to grow beyond that point because it just becomes too much to manage. Cleanings fall through the cracks and the word on the street is that you don't answer your phone or show up when you said you would.

Summary

The Numbers That Matter

From my experience and talking with other successful owners:

- 1 tech can effectively handle 30-50 accounts, assuming each has 10-15 lines.
- You need 500 lines before hiring your first part-time help.
- If you can, wait for 800-900 lines before moving your first hire to full-time.
- Management becomes your full-time job around 1,200 lines.
- Premium pricing (40-70%+ above competitors) is sustainable with proper differentiation.
- Route efficiency improvements of 20-30% are typical with proper optimization.



- Average call/cleaning times should decrease 20-40% as techs gain experience.

Why Most Companies Fail to Scale

1. **Poor tracking systems from the start** - They can't see what's really happening in their business.
2. **Hiring too fast without cash flow support** - They overcommit financially before building sustainable revenue.
3. **Competing on price instead of value** - They can't support the margins needed for growth.
4. **Inadequate training systems** - New techs don't meet quality standards.
5. **Route inefficiency** - Poor planning wastes time and fuel.
6. **No management transition plan** - Owners can't step back from daily operations.

Your Next Step

Look at your current line count and ask yourself: what systems do I have in place to support the next stage of growth?

If you're under 500 lines, focus on perfecting your service, building your reputation, and most importantly, documenting everything systematically. Don't wait until you hire help to start tracking detailed information about every account.

If you have over 500 lines and are still doing everything yourself, it's time to hire part-time help. But make sure you have the cash flow to support it and



the systems to manage it effectively. If you don't hire someone, then stop onboarding new customers because you probably can't service them properly.

The key is having systems that track everything from day one and maintaining the differentiation that justifies premium pricing. That's exactly why I built Tap Trackers - because I know how crucial these foundations are when you're scaling a draft service operation.

Every feature in our software addresses a specific challenge I faced during my scaling journey.

- Detailed line-cleaning tracking and establishment notes would have replaced my messy recipe cards and spreadsheets.
- The route optimization tools would have saved me hours of planning every week.
- The time tracking would have helped me manage multiple techs more effectively.
- Online draught quality assessments would have made it easier to maintain my premium positioning versus giving them a piece of paper.

What stage is your business in right now? More importantly, what systems do you have in place to support the next stage of growth?

[Book a short demo video call](#) where we can chat about your needs and I can show you how Tap Trackers may be able to help.



Calculating Your Line Capacity

Average number of lines you can clean in a day:	
Multiplied by the number of business days in your cleaning cycle: (2 week cycle is 10 days, 4 week is 20)	x
Total lines that one tech can handle (capacity):	=

Bonus: Use our [Clean Time Calculator](#) to estimate how long it takes to clean each establishment.

