



# HOW TO AVOID THESE 5 COSTLY BEER SYSTEM MISTAKES

HORIZON





# 1. **LONG RUNS MEAN BIG EXPENSES.**

## **Smart design keeps the beer cooler as close to the bar as possible.**

The key to great draft beer is keeping it cold—a constant 36°-38°F. The greater the distance between your beer cooler and the faucet where the beer is poured, the greater your up-front and ongoing expense in maintaining that critical temperature along the entire path.

That's why smart bar design puts the beer cooler as close to the bar as possible—and keeps the beer keg cooler exclusively for keg beer. Otherwise, staff walking in and out of the cooler all day long will raise the temperature and make it harder to maintain the ideal temperature.

## **If there's no kitchen, the beer cooler might share a wall with the bar.**

In a dream application, the beer cooler shares a wall with the bar area, so simple punch inserts can be used to connect beer kegs to the taps. This greatly reduces the up-front cost, complexity and time to install the beer system, as well as saving you money every time the lines are cleaned or replaced.

Short runs—less than 25 feet between the cooler and the pour area—are the next-best alternative, as they can use less-expensive air-cooled

systems that use fans to push cold air from the beer cooler through ducts that house the beer lines to keep them cool. Shorter lines also allow you to cost-effectively run specialty products—like root beer or fruit-flavored beers—that may damage beer lines. Replacing a short-run line is cheaper than replacing a long-draw line.

## **Everything gets more expensive with long beer line runs.**

Once beer line length gets above 25 feet, a more expensive cooling system is required, in which multiple beer lines are wrapped around glycol cooling tubes—food-grade antifreeze—that maintain the constant temperature from cooler to tap. As these systems are more complex and have more components, they have higher up-front costs, as well as higher long-term maintenance and replacement costs.

Regarding maintenance, the longer the beer line, the more surface area there is to accumulate beer stone, bacteria and yeast build-up. Also, the more cleaning chemicals will be required and the more beer is wasted when it is purged and discarded during the cleaning process. So, for all these reasons, store the beer as close to the bar as possible.





## 2.

## GET SMART ON INSTALLATION TO AVOID HIDDEN COSTS.

First, hire a certified beer system installer, as general refrigeration professionals will typically not have the necessary expertise. Try to purchase only one brand of components for your beer system, as heights and depths on equipment vary by manufacturer, and can cause sharp edges and other hazards to staff.

Have the beer cooler layout with keg racks, shelves, etc, figured out before ordering bar equipment. This will allow you to know how many bottle coolers, mug frosters and other accessories you will need in your bar layout.

Always use coated line sets, especially any going into a chase inside the floor. Be aware, most beer lines have a life span of about 10 years, so, take that into consideration when running lines.

### Money-saving installation tips:

1. If an extended warranty is available for purchase on the compressor on your power pack, get it. Trust us, you'll thank us later.
2. Have the beer system supplier provide all gauges, hoses, regulators, hardware, and fasteners specific to their brand of beer system.
3. Make sure the beer system installation quote includes a startup review of the system after the beer kegs have been installed.
4. Insist your beer suppliers provide you with a list of specific equipment, procedures or considerations for their specific type of beer. (For example, craft beers often run at different pressures than domestic beers, and domestic beers can even require dispense pressure variations.)
5. Have the electrician turn the outlets that are on the back wall beneath the bar horizontally. Have them mounted as high as possible to miss the backsplashes of equipment. If they are mounted vertically, backsplashes will likely have to be cut around them. For this reason, ask for backsplashes on underbar equipment to be 4" instead of the standard 6". This helps with the electrical outlets and allows more room for rope lighting or hanging of small utensils above the backsplash.



# 3.

## DON'T AVOID MAINTENANCE THAT DRIVES QUALITY.

In the age of social media, where upset customers pour their thoughts directly onto the web—impacting your sales—issues like beer temperature, taste and clean glassware are simply non-negotiable. Avoiding beer system cleaning and maintenance can create taste changes customers notice—and Tweet or Yelp about.

Remember, once your lines reach a certain age, no amount of cleaning or maintenance will make the beer coming out of them taste better. Vinyl jumper lines near the kegs should be replaced annually, with longer beer line barrier tubes replaced every 10 years.

### **Clean your beer lines every two weeks.**

Cleaning your beer lines bi-weekly is not only an accepted industry best practice (and may be required by law in your state—check with your local officials), research shows it increases sales by improving overall beer quality and taste. (Weekly line cleaning actually bumped up sales even more, the research showed.)

### **Keep a handy beer system troubleshooting guide on hand.**

Inevitably it seems, beer systems act up at the worst time—when your house is full and

profits are humming along. Since you'll most likely have only 1-2 beer system experts on staff, why not prepare a simple, handy troubleshooting guide for common beer system problems the rest of your staff can use when the experts aren't there? You can use it for in-depth staff training and keep it on hand so staff can respond to a system problem during peak times without losing valuable revenue.

Don't forget, maintenance includes smart inventory management, like proper beer keg rotation, using older kegs first.

### **Keep your glassware beer clean.**

For the perfect pour every time, don't use petroleum or other oil-based detergents, or wash beer glasses in sinks used to clean dishes, as greasy residue destroys beer foam. Use only the manufacturer's recommended amount of detergent, so there's no lingering chemical taste. Allow glasses to completely air dry in a stainless steel wire basket or other corrugated surface, allowing the sanitizer to evaporate completely to avoid residual odors. Never dry glassware with a towel, as lint and contaminants can be transferred from glass to glass.



## 4. **KNOW YOUR KEY BEER METRICS—OR WORK IN THE DARK.**

A well-managed draft beer system can be twice as profitable as selling beer in cans or bottles—and it's better for the environment to boot. Overall you should shoot for a draft beer profit margin of about 80%, although it might be a bit less depending on what kind of beer you serve.

According to bevspot.com, establishments average around 24% pour costs for beer, 15% for spirits and 27% for wine, for an average liquor pour cost of 18%. Compare this to typical food costs of 28-35%, and you see why liquor sales are generally more profitable than food sales—and why managing your beer system properly can significantly improve your bottom line.

### **Get in on the craft beer movement.**

Currently, craft beers make up only 10% of total beer sales by volume, but they account for 25% of profits. Some 57% of Millennials drink craft beer at least weekly, and some 27% of GenXers. Having a smart selection of craft beers is a great way to drive sales, and stay top-of-mind with key market demographics.

Be aware, though, that craft beers have different dispense requirements than domestic

beers—namely they often require more CO<sub>2</sub> pressure—and may require a different serve temperature. Check with your beer distributor for specific requirements.

### **Get key trend data from your beer distributor.**

Your beer distributor can provide data on beer sales trends, hot brands and other information to help you develop your own unique mix of selection, quality and pricing that's right for your operation. Online data management tools, like bevspot.com have excellent resources on data trends that impact your business.

### **Foam pours profit down the drain.**

The Perlick company has done the math on lost revenue due to excessive foaming (which 90% of the time is caused by improper beer temperature.) If your system puts out a total of 50, 8-ounce glasses of foam a day, (which contains two ounces of liquid beer), that's 100 ounces of lost beer a day, or 600 ounces per week if you serve six days. At \$4 a glass, that adds up to \$300 a week, or \$15,600 in lost profit per year! It pays to have a good beer system.



# 5.

## DON'T LET PEAK REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES PASS YOU BY.

A few best practices can help keep your profits flowing on your busiest days—maximizing your revenue.

One of the best ways to maximize weekend nights and special occasion rushes is to connect the kegs of your most popular beer in series. This allows you to keep pouring without switching out kegs.

Couple things to remember, though. First, don't connect more kegs in series than you can use in a week or less, otherwise they'll go flat and you'll wind up wasting beer. Second, put your newest (freshest) keg closest to the gas source (CO<sub>2</sub> or nitrogen, as the case may be), and your oldest beer closest to the faucet. This ensures you're using up your oldest beer first. For this reason, never start your series connection with an old keg sitting around.

### **Staff training has significant sales impact.**

Aside from smart inventory management, one of the most effective ways to drive sales is to train your staff to be beer experts. Passionate, enthusiastic, knowledgeable staff can increase

beer sales dramatically. First, if you serve food, highly trained staff can help customers pair menu items with great beer choices. Secondly, your regulars will appreciate it when your staff can consult on new beers they might like to try based on their previous favorites. Either way, having a highly trained staff reflects well on your establishment and helps drive sales. ■

---

**Let Horizon's team of beer system experts help on your next system installation, renovation, maintenance or repair.**

Horizon is your full-service equipment outfitter, with over three decades of experience in all aspects of food and beverage operations. From your initial planning phase, to system design, equipment purchasing and installation, to maintenance and optimization, we're here for you.

**Call Horizon at (800) 394-4674, or visit us online at [horizonequipment.com](http://horizonequipment.com) and maximize your beer system profits today.**

## About Us

Horizon outfits cooking and beverage professionals with the gear they need to create incredible customer experiences. Our experts provide personal consultation on every aspect of the food and beverage equipment in your operation. From the purchase of a single faucet, to the creation of an entire cooking suite and beverage system, we will design, equip, install, service and provide the parts to make your operation a success. In the Minnesota area, our fleet of factory-trained service professionals are on call for you 24/7/365, and will custom-design a planned maintenance program to optimize your equipment investment.

# HORIZON



HORIZON EQUIPMENT, LLC  
1960 SENECA ROAD  
EAGAN, MN 55122

(800) 394-4674 (651) 452-9118  
[www.horizonequipment.com](http://www.horizonequipment.com)