

“We wanted the character to be a lovable, entertaining rogue, and only one person could play that – Rik Mayall” **Wells & Young’s marketing director Chris Lewis, page 42**

Brulines: One year on and still satisfied

The Brulines iDraught system installed in his Greene King tenancy a year ago is proving invaluable, argues licensee **Mark Daniels**

Few things are more likely to get a tenanted licensee frothing at the mouth than a discussion about beer-monitoring equipment, and the distrust this generates between said tenant and their pub company can, in some cases, lead to a break-up of the relationship.

But modern beer-line monitoring solutions aren’t just about trying to catch licensees out and prove they are breaching the terms of their agreement. Brulines’ iDraught, for example, focuses more on helping publicans understand their beer sales and improve their stock control but, sadly, many who have had it implemented aren’t using the system to their advantage.

iDraught has been installed in my premises for more than a year now and I have grown to rely on the system to ensure my sales and product movements match, to monitor wastage and quality control, and to identify products that are simply not making my business enough money to warrant their position on the bar.

When I last wrote about the worth of iDraught the response I had was, unsurprisingly, one of strong negativity and ridicule towards me for finding the system of value.

Many failed to understand the difference between the modern iDraught system I was writing about, and that is steadily being rolled out, and the older, flow-monitoring systems that provide the licensee with little or no information.

Such suspicion is understandable, as there is little to disguise the fact that when such technologies were introduced to the trade they were put there to ensure those of us who are tied to our beers with breweries and pub companies were not purchasing outside of our agreement. While an element of this still exists – iDraught also reports on the difference between

“**Many people who have had the iDraught implemented aren’t using the system to their advantage**



Refreshing: line-monitoring solutions help licensees understand their beer sales

product delivered and product poured – Brulines’ focus has significantly altered to give the licensee intelligence on what is happening within their own business.

So more than a year on, where does the system provide me with the best value? Most frequently, it is on till yield – the difference between sales posted through the EPOS system and beer poured. One year ago, the system showed an average yield per week of 97% on a single cask-ale product; on that one line, that’s a loss of seven pints a week, or an average of £21. Over a year, such a yield would equate to a till loss of £1,092. I have 10 active lines on my dispense.

Most of us will be aware in our businesses that there is an element of wastage, errors do happen, and that a certain element of over-pouring takes place. Stocktaking is an important element of our business, and this isn’t a replacement for a stocktaker (it doesn’t, after all, monitor spirits, food and wine sales etc). But usually we wouldn’t find out the hard facts of such information until the next time our stocktaker visits, typically every three months; in these austere times, many have either stretched their stocktaker out to six months, or done away with this valuable service completely.

With the information provided by the iDraught product readily available the next business day, I find I can spot such mistakes or issues in my business much quicker and resolve them before they become a bigger problem.

With my staff now much more aware of the impact their actions can have on the business – I share the reports with them regularly – it’s pleasing to see a dramatic improvement in the profitability of my beer sales.

One year on and last week I took a few days off work, often a



57%

the proportion of the **Tharp Arms' draught sales** taken up by Carlsberg

97%

the average weekly till yield on a single cask-ale product 12 months ago

£1,092

the yearly till loss the above yield represents



nerve-racking time as you can never be sure what the crew will get up to while you're away.

But the till yield showed a difference of just half a pint between what was sold and what was poured across all my lines.

Earlier on this year, Brulines updated the iDraught interface even further. Now, when logging in, users are presented with a quick and simple interface that immediately highlights any issues the system might have spotted, using the time-honoured method of traffic-light colours: red for bad, green for good, and amber for 'better go take a look'.

Everything is reported on, from line cleaning to cellar temperature and on to quality of the product and its sale.

After till yield, the other report I gain plenty of value from is throughput: looking at a typical four-week sales period, this allows me to determine whether I have a product on sale that is losing money. For example, one product on my dispense was selling at an average of just 7.18 pints per week, while that same line was losing 2.74 pints of lager each week in the cleaning process.

That's 38% of sales on one product being lost in line cleaning just because it was a slow seller, while a competing product sitting alongside was selling more than 100 pints per week with a line-cleaning loss of under 2%.

This information, therefore, made the decision to remove the first product from sale a no-brainer.

The "Trading Report" informs me that last week Carlsberg made up 57% of my draught sales.

That's a handy figure to have at your disposal when beating your business development manager about the head to receive some PoS material.

There isn't a day goes by that I don't find the reports the system produces of use to me. From monitoring the sales my staff put through the till to measuring the profitability – and therefore validity – of the products I have on sale.

To me, the iDraught tool is not



Invaluable insight: Brulines' equipment can be a key tool

something to be ridiculed but, instead, a key tool with which to manage and maintain my business; the paranoid chap in me even takes a look at the deliveries report from time-to-time, just to make sure there are no worrying discrepancies.

One year on, and I'm still satisfied that the accuracy of the reports is such that I am benefiting from its installation while proving I'm not breaking any rules.

Of course, most of us are capable of working out a lot of the information the product gives us by ourselves, but that takes time. Typically, comparing my till reports to iDraught's reports takes me under three minutes – I normally check them while waiting for the first kettle of the day to boil.

But why bother? After all, as many said to me after the last piece I wrote, we trust our staff, we've trained them well, and our quarterly stock-take reports highlight any issues. We don't need a "Big Brother" system to check it for us daily.

Well, I trust my staff implicitly, but when I run the till off at the end of each day I still count the money that's in it to make sure the two figures match up.

Mark Daniels is licensee of the Tharp Arms in Chippenham, near Ely, Cambridgeshire.