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Jeff Druek *Talks Launching* *Outer Reef Yachts*

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FEARLESS VOYAGER

A CONVERSATION WITH JEFF DRUEK OF OUTER REEF YACHTS

ARTICLE BY KEISHA VIRTUE | PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY OUTER REEF YACHTS

There are certain qualities one needs to be truly successful in business. Drive, work ethic, vision, and the ability to see opportunities where others may see merely obstacles. Such qualities are clearly defined in Jeff Drupek, CEO and founder of Outer Reef Yachts. Most people ask why, Jeff asks, “Why not?”

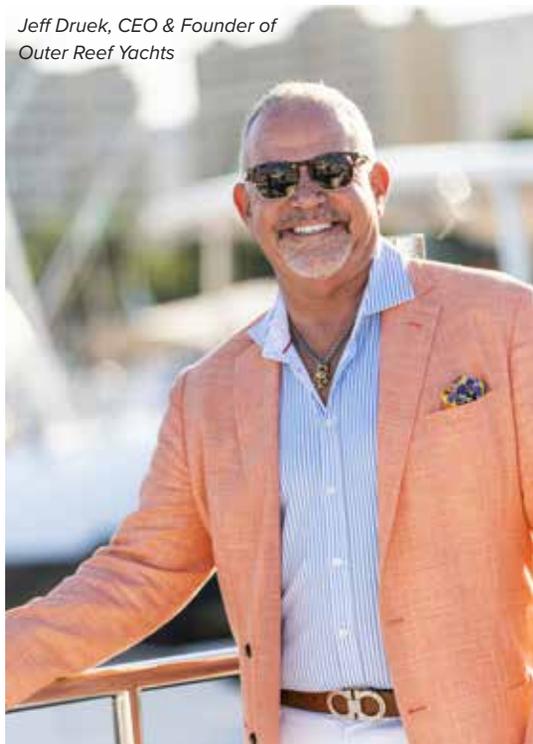


Outer Reef Yacht in Cape Horn

Jeff's entrepreneurial spirit was launched during his school days in Long Island. While taking a shop class at age 13, he decided to build a boat while all his classmates were building items like shoeboxes. He kept the boat and used it to start his first business, digging for clams after school. His father worked at MIT, but it wasn't long before young Jeff was making more money than his father, buying his first pickup truck and 45 acres of land with cash at age 16. This early success was something of a double-edged sword. Jeff's 4.0 average qualified him for a full-ride scholarship with MIT, but his commercial fishing business was doing so well, that he opted to continue working. Jeff has effectively used his cumulative experience to parlay into new ventures, learning from his successes along the way. At one point, he was running seven businesses simultaneously, including contracting, property management and custom home building for luxury homes in the Hamptons. It was this last business that started his foray into yachts.

We caught up with Jeff to hear in his own words how Outer Reef Yachts was launched and what has made it the success it is.

Jeff Drupek, CEO & Founder of Outer Reef Yachts



HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN YACHT DESIGN?

I've always loved long-range cruiser yachts, so when it came time to move from a production boat to a long-range cruiser, I knew what I wanted.

I went to a high-end yacht manufacturer with my wish list, and it was just like Henry Ford saying, "You can have any color you want as long as it's black." The Aha! moment came when I realized I was spending \$1.2 million on a boat and couldn't get exactly what I wanted. This would be unheard of in the custom home building business.

I put myself on a plane to Taiwan and started looking for a shipyard to build a boat for myself. Three weeks later, I contracted with a shipyard, built the boat for myself, and it was sort of an experiment. I built a 60-footer and brought it back to the States. I put in a boat show, sold it, and made a profit. Then I took that money and built a 75-footer for myself at another shipyard in Taiwan. I began to see a business model at play here. Within three years I had 17 offices worldwide.

At first my custom home architect started drawing my boat designs on AutoCAD, but he eventually left to start his own business. I could not let down clients depending on custom designs, so I had to learn AutoCAD in a weekend, pulling from my memory all I observed my architect doing over the years. Now I do all the drawings myself. I currently have around 2,000 drawings in my portfolio.

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WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MODEL AND WHY?

My favorite probably is the 72-footer in the Classic series. It's an easy handling boat and it can take you anywhere in the world nonstop for 3,500 miles. You can go trans-Atlantic, or trans-Pacific.

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES YOUR YACHTS FROM THOSE OF YOUR COMPETITORS?

Our customization is paramount. People can have basically anything they want. Anything their mind can dream up or their heart desires, we will build for them. That really sets us aside from everyone else. Our quality is top-notch. We compete against the best of the best in the industry.

It's business 101 that if you keep the customer happy, they keep coming back. We have just recently sold our fifth Outer Reef to the same client. And we have several customers that are on their second or third boats with us. Clients love our boats because they're very seaworthy and extremely safe. We've had clients come from other manufacturers because they know our boats are unquestionably capable, particularly if you want to cross an ocean or the Gulf Stream.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT RUNNING OUTER REEF YACHTS?

Seeing a smile on people's faces when we deliver the yacht to them. They've waited all their life to build their dream boat, and the joy they have when they finally take delivery, or they take their first cruise is contagious. Our clients send us photos from all over the world, including the Bahamas, Alaska or Cape Horn.

SO ARE THERE ANY MUST HAVE NEW FEATURES THAT YOU'D RECOMMEND TO YOUR CLIENTS THAT WERE NOT AVAILABLE BEFORE?

When I started the company 23 years ago, the average age of our client, was about 65 years old. Right now, I would say our average age is about 50 to 52 years old. We just sold to a client who is 43 years old, and I attribute that to some of the more modern features we've incorporated.

For example, we've added a Bridgeview Deck™ which is a little sitting area in front of the steering station. We also started adding the Serenity Foredeck Lounge™, which was inspired by European boats, where boats in the marina have their stern facing the dock and they're sandwiched in side by side. The Serenity Foredeck Lounge™ is a big U-shaped lounge with a dining table on it. You can fit about 15 people up on the foredeck of the boat now. You can sit and dine anchoring out and looking into the sunset.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD YOU HAVE FOR THOSE BOATING, WITH PETS OR YOUNG KIDS?

Most of our clients have pets. They will often bring aboard artificial grass and put it on the aft deck on the swim platform. After the dog does his business, they wash it off. Or we've had clients that train their dogs to go in litterboxes like cats.

Our boats are very safe for kids, because the bulwarks are high and there are gates all over the place. So, you can send a toddler out on one of our boats, he can walk all the way around, and you never have to worry about him falling off. So yes, they're very kid-friendly.

