

Automatic MERCHANDISER

Convenience services for
vending, micro markets
and workplace beverages



VENDING WITH VALUES

**Patrick Moran, owner of Moran Refreshments,
shares his secrets to success.**

page 28

Strategies to mitigate micro market theft

page 17

Fresh and frozen food solutions

page 22



*Individual
and
group awards*



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yourself or
a colleague!*

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Vending • Micro Market • Office Coffee Service

The annual *Automatic Merchandiser* and *VendingMarketWatch.com* Pros to Know Awards recognize vending, micro market and office coffee service industry professionals who are leading initiatives to help prepare their company, organization and the industry for the significant challenges of today's business climate. This award highlights both individual and group achievements that promote industry innovation and future growth.

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CONTENTS

AUGUST 2023

Features

10

Take the advice of an expert witness when you are selling convenience services

Bill Ackerman is a successful expert witness who understands the importance of having a sales strategy.

14

Trends update for vending and micro markets

Technology is making it more convenient and easier for customers to get what they need and go.

17

Spike in theft reminds operators to remain diligent about micro market security

While technology is making it easier to track inventory levels and to catch the occasional chronic thief, experts say the formula for success involves deterrence, inventory control, design and communication.

22

Fresh and frozen food solutions

Consumer preferences continue to shift toward fresh, frozen and healthier options.



Success Story

28

Vending with Values

The 2023 NAMA Operator of the Year, Patrick Moran, owner of Moran Refreshments, shares his secrets to success.

Departments

5 Editor's Note

6 Industry News

A roundup of the latest news and events

34 Social Hubs

What's happening in the industry on social media

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On the cover: Patrick Moran with Texas-based Moran Refreshments

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Interviews, Expert Insight & Tips



OCS Operator

Delivering the 'wow' means investment that goes beyond equipment



Bob Tullio

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS IS especially relevant today for operators who want to capture every available dollar during the hybrid workweek that seems to be with us for a while.

VendingMarketWatch.com/53063306

6 tips for implementing grab-and-go fridges for a micro market

Choosing the right products, presenting them well, keeping the fridge stocked, running promotions, choosing convenient products and analyzing sales data will all contribute to a successful grab-and-go fridge that drives sales. Check out these tips from Randy Skyba with Due North.

VendingMarketWatch.com/53063490

The emotional side of selling your vending or office coffee business

If you are selling your vending or office coffee business, expect a range of mixed emotions. These tips from Mike Ferguson, a business broker and owner of VMAC Solutions, can help you better prepare when it comes time to exit the business.

VendingMarketWatch.com/53066686



Micro Market

Advancing the consumer journey in foodservice unattended retail



In this NAMA session, panelists talked about key consumer trends that are driving away-from-home eating and snacking and shared ideas on how operators can take steps to create the necessary experience to attract and retain micro market customers.

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Planning for the long range

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FOR SOME, THIS MIGHT BE A SLOW TIME OF THE YEAR,

but not for us. We have been busy getting ready for our annual long-range planning, which is a chance for our team to explore new ideas and opportunities on how we can better serve our readers and advertisers. Stay tuned for what's to come in 2024 and beyond.

This year, we launched a new podcast, Automatic Merchandiser's Vending & OCS Nation, and if you haven't already, I encourage you to check it out for some engaging conversations between host Bob Tullio and special guests. There are several ways to listen: You can find all of the episodes on our site at vendingmarketwatch.com/podcasts/VendingOCSNation. You can also go to our podcast page on Podbean at vendingandocsnation.podbean.com. Lastly, all episodes are available on your favorite podcasting app – just search Vending & OCS Nation. They are a quick listen, about 15 minutes, and if you don't want to miss an episode, simply subscribe.

For this issue's operation profile, we turn the spotlight on Moran Refreshments based in Tyler, Texas. The 2023 NAMA Operator of the Year, Patrick Moran, shares his secrets to success, and his story tells of an incredible journey for the operator and his family.

You can also read about self-service technology for vending and micro markets on page 14. Then, find solutions to help mitigate theft in micro markets on page 17. Experts say deterrence, inventory control, design and communication are all critically important.

Lastly, check out consumer trends for fresh, frozen and healthy foods as well as equipment solutions on page 22.

Next issue, we will present our prestigious Top 40 Under 40 award winners to honor young leaders in the vending, micro market and office coffee service industry. We will also release our annual State of the Industry for Office Coffee Service Research Report, which will take an in-depth look at how much the industry has recovered from the pandemic as well as trends in coffee service.

In addition, we recently opened up the nomination period for our annual 2023 Pros to Know Awards, which recognizes both individual and group achievements that promote industry innovation and future growth. The winners will be announced in the November issue of Automatic Merchandiser. Be sure to submit your nomination by September 5.



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Be sure to submit your nomination for our 2023 Pros to Know Awards by September 5.



PepsiCo selects 10 Hispanic-owned startups to join the Greenhouse Accelerator Program

[FOOD & BEVERAGE]



PepsiCo

PEPSICO INC. ANNOUNCED THE 10 FINALISTS

chosen to participate in the Greenhouse Accelerator Program: Juntos Crecemos (Together We Grow) Edition. For the first time in its history, the program is focused on supporting emerging Hispanic businesses that provide products, services and technology solutions across the food and beverage industry.

The finalists represent a diverse range of emerging businesses in the categories of consumer-packaged goods, beverages, market analytics and technology, sustainable packaging solutions, and environmental impact and waste reduction. Selected Hispanic-owned companies will participate in a six-month business mentoring program and receive a \$20,000 grant. One finalist will receive \$100,000 at the end of the program to further advance their business.

The 10 Hispanic-owned businesses chosen to participate in this year's cohort include: CHUZA Inc., Date Better Snacks, Dathic, FoodWare, Hyfé, I Eat My Greens, Katrina Brewing Co, Pisqueya, Tia Lupita Foods, and True Spirit Beverage Company.



Franke Coffee Systems Americas names new marketing manager

Franke Coffee Systems Americas announced that Tim Cox has joined the company as marketing manager. Cox will continue to bring category expertise and thought leadership to the coffee industry while enhancing marketing resources provided to its customer partners across North America. Most recently, Cox was director of coffee programs at Texas Specialty Beverage, where he led sales and marketing teams for coffee and foodservice segments. Cox brings 15 years of experience in the food and beverage industry across both commercial and specialty segments in a variety of roles including multi-unit retail management, wholesale roasting management, training, sourcing, product development, market research, data analysis and distribution.

VendingMarketWatch.com/53064701



Mars acquires Kevin's Natural Foods

Kevin's Natural Foods, a high-growth nutritious meal company, joins the Mars Food & Nutrition segment. Kevin's makes chef-inspired sous-vide meals, sides and sauces. Using whole foods and simple ingredients, it meets consumer needs by helping them eat healthier food within minutes. Kevin's will operate as a standalone business within the segment.

VendingMarketWatch.com/53065611

ZippyAssist announces native integration with VendSys VMS

ZippyAssist, a mobile-first customer support and engagement SaaS platform, reached a new milestone as it announced its native integration into Nayax's VendSys Vending Management System (VMS) – ZippyAssist's first native integration into any VMS. This powerful new native integration with VendSys makes connecting the ZippyAssist customer support platform to VendSys a little more than plug-and-play. Customers of both VendSys and ZippyAssist can now easily import their VendSys equipment data into ZippyAssist and keep it up to date.

VendingMarketWatch.com/53065104

Matt Bisenius joins NAMA as vice president, external affairs



Bisenius brings a wealth of experience in government affairs and legislative acumen, joining NAMA's advocacy leadership team. Prior to joining NAMA, Bisenius served as the director of government affairs at the American Cleaning Institute (ACI), where he played a significant role in shaping public policy and advocating for the industry. He has over 15 years of experience with federal legislative and public-policy-making bodies, including federal government experience on Capitol Hill and within the association space. He takes over the role previously held by Mike Goscinski who departed NAMA earlier this year.

VendingMarketWatch.com/53063167

Royal ReFresh makes top 100 list

Portland Business Journal ranked Royal ReFresh as Oregon's 50th fastest-growing private company on its Top 100 list. Royal ReFresh provides a comprehensive range of breakroom solutions, including vending machines, micro markets, office pantry service,

office coffee service and water dispensing systems to Oregon and southwest Washington businesses. For over 15 years, Royal ReFresh has been serving Portland area businesses as a family-owned and operated company. The business has grown strategically over the years by investing in breakroom services technology, adding offerings and expanding its service area into Washington state.

VendingMarketWatch.com/53064019

Bernick's breaks ground on new vending building

Bernick's broke ground on a new building planned to open January 2024. The 36,000-square-foot vending building will be located at its Waite Park, Minnesota, headquarters and will feature multi-tiered vending pick lines, product storage bays, a 3,800-square-foot cooler, 1,800-square-foot freezer, offices

and a breakroom. There is also a separate area large enough to hold 20 vending delivery vehicles.

VendingMarketWatch.com/53065849

Utz Brands appoints executive VP, insights, innovation, marketing services

Jennifer Bentz has been appointed executive vice president, insights, innovation, and marketing services. Bentz will oversee all insights and analytics, innovation, and marketing services functions and will further develop the company's e-commerce and digital marketing capabilities as it seeks to accelerate its market share opportunities within the salty snack category. Bentz comes to Utz with over 30 years of experience in marketing roles, most recently as executive vice president, applied technology and insights at Clif Bar & Co.

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Shopper Conversion	+32.0%
Return on investment Year 1	5.8
Days to pay off investment Year 1	54
Performance of Non-Illuminated	
Unit sales change	+3.1%
Shopper Conversion	-1.4%
Dollar Sales	+14.0%

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*Performance comparison:
Q3 2021 vs. Q3 2022
Customer traffic
change +3.9%.

Vertex PureWaterCoolers

Great Income for Vending and OCS Operators



California-based Vertex Water Products is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Founded in 1998 by Hank and Hal Voznick, the multi-generational, family-owned company manufactures quality Point-of-Use bottle-less and bottled water coolers; reverse osmosis filter systems; traditional ion exchange water softeners; and other water purification products.

Vertex is an industry leader in water cooler innovation, and offers a wide range of products and technologies to serve their customers' needs. They have many

different water cooler options, features and price points that make choosing the right combination easy. Their new Sparkling water dispenser enlivens any break-room experience and their Ice and Water dispensers make up to 20 pounds of ice a day for ice-cold refreshment. Their touchless coolers with a proximity sensor to operate the dispenser, keep users safe from pathogens. The PureChill™ line uses a chill-on-demand design to eliminate an open reservoir so there is no need for costly in-tank sanitation. They have both Point-of-Use and bottled water models that look great, and have been engineered and built to provide years of service in the field.

Since water is the key to life, Vertex's motto "Pure Water for Everyone" is especially meaningful in today's ever increasing water quality problems. Vertex believes they can help Vending and OCS Operators use water to expand their business with their full line of PureWaterCoolers™ because water coolers are an easy add-on to existing business.



Vertex's National Sales Manager John Miller cites the conclusion of a 2012 study conducted by the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) – "WATER should be the "TIP OF THE SPEAR" for every company offering break room services!!,"

Some key findings of that study are:

- 100% of the companies surveyed want high quality drinking water in their break rooms.
- 80% of the respondents specifically want FILTERED water as opposed to bottled water.
- Point-of-Use water solutions saved customers as much as 60% over traditional bottled water.
- Savvy OCS operators turn that savings into additional sales of break room products and services.

A Vertex Point-of-Use water dispenser is easy to maintain, with recommended maintenance only twice a year. And the typical Return-on-Investment is less than a year. The result is an unending supply of great tasting water "where you need it, whenever you want."

Vertex assembles and tests their products in-house to ensure the highest quality products. They stock a large inventory of systems and replacement parts for quick response to customers needs, as well as world-class customer support. They are opening a warehouse in Virginia this fall to reduce lead times for the east coast.

Vertex's motto: Pure water for everyone.



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Take the advice of an *EXPERT WITNESS* when you are selling convenience services

Bill Ackerman is a successful expert witness who understands the importance of having a sales strategy.

By Bob Tullio, Contributing Editor

WHEN I INTERVIEWED HIM FOR Automatic Merchandiser's Vending & OCS Nation podcast, "Lessons in selling from a prominent expert witness - A conversation with Bill Ackerman," it became clear to both of us that there were striking similarities in what it takes to succeed, both as an expert witness and as a sale rep, selling convenience services.

I asked Ackerman an obvious question, why would his interview be relevant for vending, coffee service, micro market and pantry service operators? Ackerman said he saw a definite connection. "It's absolutely a connection, because what I do for a living is sell my opinion. I have to go into a courtroom, and I have to sell or convince 12 strangers or a judge as to why they should buy what I'm selling. Yes, I'm very much a salesman, even though I'm an accountant."

PREPARATION

The skills that Ackerman has and the challenges he faces will sound very familiar to convenience services reps. I asked Ackerman to tell me what he thought were the defining characteristics of a great expert witness. His answer was quick. "Preparation," he said. "You have to

know your product. I have to know how I got to the opinion that I'm rendering. I have to know all the nuances. I have to speak intelligently about it. Can't hem and haw on the stand. Know your product and be prepared to be able to sell whatever it is you're going to sell."

Bill Ackerman is one of the nation's most prominent expert witnesses. He specializes in testifying about damages in civil trials.



The connection to convenience services sales is obvious: Product knowledge is critical. It is all part of the preparation process. What do we know about the prospect through LinkedIn? What is our company history with the prospect internally?

CREDIBILITY

"Another huge aspect is credibility," said Ackerman. "That comes through

presentation, your background and experience. Are you composed? Are you articulate? You're trying to communicate to a group of people that generally, in my situation, have a seventh-grade education when it comes to financial concepts."

From a convenience services sales standpoint, credibility comes from connections you share with the prospect. Who do you currently serve that the prospect will respect? Do you have mutual LinkedIn connections? Do you have a long history in the business? If not, can you make your industry knowledge so obvious that credibility is instantly earned? While your clients may not have a seventh-grade education regarding office refreshment concepts, they certainly know less than you do, even though everyone thinks they are an expert, especially about coffee service. Can you educate them, moving them in the right direction?

KNOW THE AUDIENCE

Ackerman stressed the importance of knowing your audience. "I usually come in somewhere midstream at the end of a plaintiff case, or I come in at the very end of a defense case, so I could be the last witness in any trial. By then, you know your jury. We know who has a financial background and who doesn't," said Ackerman. "Catering your presentation, I'm looking at 12

strange faces. They've never seen me; I've never seen them. What we'll work on is finding me the three or four jurors that understand accounting or finance because of their job. You know what they do for a living, those are the people that I speak to, those are the ones I try to make eye contact with. They're the ones who, if I do my job effectively, will take what I've sold to them and then go back into the jury room and sell it to the other jurors."

For the rep selling convenience services, it is important to take note of the members of the prospect's purchasing team who are clearly excited about your program. Ideally, it is the CEO who wandered into your meeting to taste your dark roasted coffee – and loved it. Or that member of the employee committee who is enamored with your ability to deliver healthy selections. These are people you must turn into allies, and hopefully, they will sell your program for you, either on the spot or during the group decision-making process.

RESPOND TO OBJECTIONS

For Ackerman, cross-examination is the ultimate sales objection exercise. "What you can't control is cross-examination. I have no idea what the opposing attorney is going to ask me about. Yes, I know because of the facts of the case, what I would anticipate they might have asked me about, and so I try to prepare to make sure that I have candid responses, effective responses, for things that might be pitfalls for me," he said.

"Sometimes your product has a potential weakness," said Ackerman. "Well, sometimes my opinions have a potential weakness, and you need to be able to address that weakness, because people aren't stupid – they are going to find the weakness, and they are going to highlight it. You need to be able to address it in a short, concise and constructive manner so that it

minimizes what others were perceiving as a weakness."

That process should sound familiar to sales reps. Examples – strengths and weaknesses of single-cup brewers. Strengths and weaknesses of cold brew coffee – keg compared to bag in box. Strengths and weaknesses of kiosks, as opposed to phone apps. How about the fundamental comparison of micro market strengths versus vending strengths. Depending on which side of the table you are sitting on, like Ackerman, you must be prepared in advance to deal with the objections.

SOME VALUABLE LESSONS

What did we learn from Ackerman in the podcast? He provides lessons for anyone in sales. The importance of preparation, knowing your product

and material, doing your research, understanding your audience, being prepared to overcome objections and knowing what the customer needs to hear to ultimately decide that your product, service and solution is the right choice. ■

About the author



VendingMarketWatch.com contributing editor and industry consultant Bob Tullio is a content specialist who advises operators in the convenience services industry on how to build a successful business from the ground up and advises suppliers on how to successfully connect with operators. Tullio's YouTube channel, b2b Perspective, is designed to "elevate your business in two minutes." Visit www.tulliob2b.com or email bob@tulliob2b.com.

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The water cooler, once again, finds itself at the heart of workplace conversations thanks to Borg & Overström

Designer and manufacturer Borg & Overström has been at the forefront of premium design within the water dispensing industry for over 20 years. This year, the much-loved office water cooler, once the focal point of office collaboration, has been given a future-thinking upgrade. The new E4 and E6 point of use water dispensers from Borg & Overström are set to revolutionise the way we hydrate, benefitting from Totality® five-step hygiene methodology, and a powerful ProCore® compact system which fits neatly into any cupboard with discreet ventilation for minimal disruption and easy installation. For floorstanding units, the in-house, specialist R&D team have developed a completely touch-free SensorBeam™ control, which uses projection mapping technology to fill your glass as if by magic. SensorBeam™ drew the crowds at The NAMA show in May this year, adding a futuristic touch to the humble experience of pouring a glass of water.

Recent innovations from Borg & Overström are part of a long line of technological advancements from the manufacturer, who, from the beginning, set out to provide exceptional drinking water experiences with an emphasis on aesthetics, sustainability, and technology. Providing great tasting chilled, sparkling, hot and ambient filtered water, every Borg & Overström machine is part of a wider drive to eliminate single-use plastic bottle waste.

With the F-gas legislation coming into force in January 2024 in accordance with the AIM Act, all Borg & Overström products



are compliant, only utilising eco-refrigerant gas R600a. The E-Series' sustainable technology doesn't end there, with the E6 featuring EcoMode, which puts the unit into a 'sleep' to prevent unnecessary chilling of water when no one is around to enjoy it, saving both energy and cost. Unique to Borg & Overström, DryChill® technology provides eco-efficient cooling to rapidly chill water hygienically, thanks to its reservoir-less, closed system design which minimises risk of contamination.

While technology and our approach to the environment is continuing to evolve, one thing is for certain, clean drinking water will always be an essential priority. Borg & Overström, with their global operator network, are bringing exceptional filtered water dispensing to the workplace. With a virtual showroom and class-leading technical support and training, operators are increasingly seeing

the value that comes from offering premium, point-of-use, filtered water dispensing.

As the conversations in the office turn to microplastics in tap water and the importance of clean, bottleless hydration, are you able to offer safe and sustainable drinking water solutions to your customers?

To find out more about becoming a Borg & Overström operator or for a virtual demonstration, talk to one of their sales team today on (877) 558-4111 and they will be happy to assist you.

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TRENDS UPDATE

FOR VENDING AND MICRO MARKETS

Technology is making it more convenient and easier for customers to get what they need and go.

By Molly Rogers, Managing Editor

SELF-SERVICE TRENDS FOR VENDING AND micro markets are providing many advanced technology opportunities for operators to offer their customers – from new payment options to new machines with features that make it more convenient and easier for customers to get what they need and go. Some of these can be implemented now, yet others are expected to have a bright future ahead in the convenience services industry.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Technology is making it easier for operators to meet consumers' increasing preference to make tap payments. Cantaloupe's recently released 2023 Micropayment Trends Report showed a significant increase in the amount of EMV transactions at food and beverage vending machines in 2022. EMV-enabled credit cards allow for a faster and easier tap-to-pay experience.

"We saw huge growth in contactless payments at vending machines in 2022, especially as operators upgraded to EMV contactless-enabled card readers over the course of the year," Elyssa Steiner, CMO of Cantaloupe, said in the report's release. "The transition to EMV-enabled contactless card readers represents a huge benefit for the operator, the consumer and for us as a payment processor." The use of EMV chip cards has seen a steady increase at self-service retail applications including vending machines, self-service kiosks and micro markets.

Cantaloupe's 2023 Micropayment Trends Report included analysis from a sample set of about 675,000 active card readers on food and beverage vending machines in the U.S. and Canada from January to December 2022. The results showed EMV payments were the main drivers of contactless sales at food and beverage vending machines in 2022, making up more than 52% of contactless transactions by the end of 2022. The report indicated that this growth suggests that many vending operators are upgrading their equipment to provide a safer, faster way to accept credit card payments.

"Our 2022 sales data reinforces that consumers spend more when they go cashless, to a staggering degree," Ravi Venkatesan, CEO of Cantaloupe, said in the company's release with the report. "For self-service retail operators,

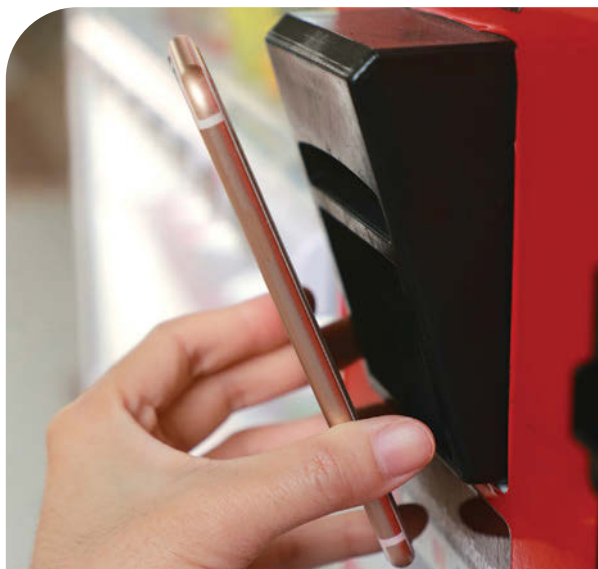


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this showcases the significant revenue increases they can realize by having cashless card readers on their machines. Especially since, for food and beverage vending machines alone in 2023, we expect cashless payment transactions to grow 6 to 8% and contactless payments to grow 6 to 7%.”

Venkatesan continued: “Our findings reinforce the consensus that consumers are shifting to cashless and contactless payment options, even for smaller, on-the-go purchases. We feel the trends revealed in the report are relevant to self-service retail as a whole and look forward to observing how they evolve in 2023.”

In the education session at the 2023 NAMA Show, “How Operators Are Surviving and Thriving with New Economic and Environmental Challenges,” the panelists all agreed that technology and payment options are a top priority for customers. Kyle Murphy, business development director, Buffalo Rock, said operators benefit from the ability of micro market technology to adapt to customer’s buying habits. And, he added that he was surprised to hear in a recent sales meeting that the first thing the prospect asked about wasn’t the food, the products, or the pricing – instead, it was, “Do you accept Apple Pay?”

Palm payment and age verification

Amazon continues to announce new locations and retailer partnerships that offer its Amazon One palm recognition service – a free, contactless service that allows customers to use the palm of their hand to pay, enter or identify themselves. Earlier this year, Aramark Sports + Entertainment announced that Amazon One’s new age-verification capability will be available at Coors Field in Colorado, so customers can prove eligibility to purchase alcohol in a few seconds. The technology not only offers more convenient payment methods but also opportunities to sell age-restricted products.

SMART MARKETS ARE GETTING SMARTER

Walk-in walk-out

Several new unattended retail solutions were on display at the recent NAMA Show, including Cantaloupe’s Smart Market, a completely locked micro market that allows consumers to log into a user account or unlock the market with a credit/debit card. Once the consumer has made their selections, they complete their purchase at the kiosk.

Aramark also launched its artificial intelligence (AI)-powered store in Scotland. The fully autonomous shop offers customers a checkout-free, convenient, walk-in

ADVERTORIAL | COMPANY PROFILE

Lock America of Corona, CA develops and markets locks and security hardware for a number of industries, including amusement and vending, ATMs, petroleum marketing, self storage and video games. They produce camlocks, padlocks, plug locks, puck locks, all with a number of different security levels. Lock America registers each key code uniquely to a customer. Lock America’s tamper-resistant high security locks, assembled in its California plant, have millions of key combinations, built around a time-proven mechanism.

Since its founding by Frank Minnella and Steve Shiao in 1981, Lock America has produced security locks and hardware for vending and amusement machines, video games, self-storage units and cash dispensers. In the last decade, they have added a full range of locks for ATMs and kiosks, petroleum dispensers, and propane tanks and storage cages. Lock America produces retrofit kits for virtually every petroleum dispenser, to replace the Universal Lock and other low security locks. For petroleum dispensers, the Lock America tamper-resistant high security dispenser lock does more than prevent insertion of data skimmers. It also prevents insertion of devices that enable thieves to steal product by bypassing internal meters, which is now a growing problem for the industry.

Assembled in California, all of Lock America’s high security locks are available with registered pick and drill-resistant keyways. With millions of key codes, each customer is assigned its own unique key code, and replacements are available only to authorized users. For more information, contact 800-422-2866, sales@laigroup.com, or go to www.laigroup.com.



LOCK AMERICA INC.
The Definitive Word in Locks

walk-out retail store with easy access to food, beverages and essentials. The store features overhead cameras and intelligent shelf sensors, which combine detection, visual cognition and secure payment integration.

Instant Retail Systems also showcased its Self Service Store in NAMA's Imagination Way. Customers are tracked with cameras while they shop, and shelf sensor technologies monitor the inventory. Items removed from shelves are added to the customer's virtual shopping cart where they can modify and confirm their items prior to payment at the exit.

Smart machines

New smart machines using AI product recognition technology have the potential to replace vending machines in some locations. For example, 365 Retail Markets' Stockwell 2.0 houses refrigerated and ambient products while offering consumers a frictionless micro market experience, and the dual-environment technology allows operators to maximize space with one machine. AI product recognition eliminates product scanning, and Pico Market compatibility enables versatile payment

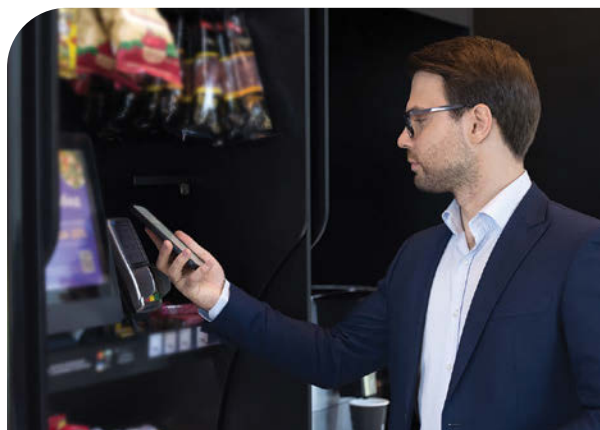


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options including tap-to-pay, 365Pay app and traditional credit card payments.

In the NAMA educational session, "Advancing the Consumer Journey in Foodservice Unattended Retail," Ryan McWhirter, VP of product management with 365 Retail Markets, said his company's core principle is to make using its equipment fast, easy and intuitive for end users. He added that a phone and a kiosk are often seen as competitive, but 365 Retail Markets finds that they can be compatible for checking out at a micro market, and a variety of solutions in breakrooms can be used to meet customer needs.

Bill Moxey, director of strategy and planning at PepsiCo, also a session panelist, added that 70% of consumers want to have a more seamless, instant and convenient experience when they are shopping in the food and beverage space.

NEW LOCATION OPPORTUNITIES

According to data from the recent Automatic Merchandiser State of the Industry Report for Vending and Micro Market, operators shared that more and more of their vending locations are being converted to micro markets due to more office re-openings. In 2022, manufacturing locations increased 7.5% from the previous year, and office locations increased 4.5%. Operators also shared that they are finding more opportunities for micro market locations at hotel and motels, which also jumped in 2022 – as well as a trend for airport locations, which is expected to grow in 2023 and beyond.

CONCLUSION

Whether it is updating vending machines to cashless or implementing a fully locked micro market using artificial intelligence and computer vision, these new technologies are available for operators to meet customer demands for a quick, easy and convenient purchasing experience. ■

**You know they're
stealing from you, but
how do you stop them?**

panoptyc

Over 8,000 micro markets use Panoptyc's loss prevention solution. We utilize ai powered camera systems and theft monitoring technology to uncover, investigate and catch micro market thieves.



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Spike in theft reminds operators to remain diligent about MICRO MARKET SECURITY

While technology is making it easier to track inventory levels and to catch the occasional chronic thief, experts say the formula for success involves deterrence, inventory control, design and communication.

By Bob Tullio, Contributing Editor

MICRO MARKET THEFT HAS BEEN AN ISSUE for operators since the first market went live around 2009, but the sudden surge many operators reported in Q1 of this year remains largely unexplained. Could it be attributed to a post-holiday financial hangover? Resentment about returning to the office after January 1? A response to painful inflation rates? Whatever the reason, thankfully, the problem has apparently subsided for the moment, but the experience served as a strong reminder that operators must remain diligent about micro market security and theft mitigation strategies.

A RETAIL PROBLEM

Like many operators, Tim McAra, senior vice president of Refreshment Services Group at Continental Services in Troy, Michigan, was surprised to see the sudden surge in theft. In the June 13th Automatic Merchandiser and VendingMarketWatch.com webinar, State of the Vending and Micro Market Industry Report, McAra said that theft hit his company hard in January of this year. "I think it was a retail problem because retail stores were also reporting a big spike in theft, and it seemed to just carry into our business."

McAra said that theft almost doubled on them overnight. "We had to get really vigilant. We have loss prevention help, we have cameras, we have all these things that we do, but it got away from us for a minute, and it reminded us that we have to stay on top of these things. It's a lever that makes a market profitable, and if you take your eye off it, it can get away from you," he added.

MODERATE THEFT IN 2022

Data compiled from the 2022 Automatic Merchandiser State of the Industry report indicates that micro market theft was moderate in 2022 and that operators are relying on several methods to control losses from theft, commonly referred to in retail as shrink or shrinkage.

According to the report, most operators believe their shrink rate is in the 3% to 5% range. Screens showing cancelled orders are the most popular theft deterrent and for good reason. Operators and industry consultants agree that transaction cancellation is the most common micro market

theft technique. The end user selects a product, walks up to a kiosk, goes through the motions of a transaction, and then cancels the transaction and walks away with the product without making a payment.

Regular market inventory, signage designed to deter theft and reliance upon camera systems are also commonly used to mitigate theft. Fortunately for operators, technology is lending a helping hand, as companies like Panoptyc, Cantaloupe and Nayax offer products designed to act



ZigmakCreative / Shutterstock

as a strong deterrent and can lower micro market shrink rates.

AN AI SOLUTION

Bridger Keally, sales director at Panoptyc, was well aware of the spike in theft during Q1 of 2023. He heard about it from clients. “Unfortunately, the shrink rate has gone up significantly this year. We have seen situations where the loss level has been at 25%, 30% or even 50%. At that point, the operator is about ready to just pull the market,” said Keally.

Panoptyc provides a video security system for micro market operators that uses AI to identify anomalies in customer behavior – red flags that are indicative of possible product theft. Company founder Mac Bolak offered some examples of red flags that are picked up by the Panoptyc system.

- When someone walks through the micro market without buying anything.
- When someone walks into the market, picks up a product and does not make a purchase.
- A wide variety of “funny business” that happens near the kiosk.

Most importantly, once the anomalies are identified, Panoptyc provides an analysis of the video and a report for the operator to understand exactly what is happening at the location, including actual evidence of theft. That evidence is important when an operator wants to discuss the matter with their client.

A TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACH

Tony Danna, VP and general manager of the Three Square Market division at Cantaloupe, said that the ability for an operator to easily take an accurate inventory is critical. “With everything we offer between Three Square and Cantaloupe, the operator has the

“

When operators make the mistake of not doing inventory on a regular basis, that is when shrinkage gets out of control.”

–Tony Danna, Three Square Market Division at Cantaloupe

ability to do all of their inventory controls through a mobile app right on site,” Danna said. “Now you can get them to do a very strategic spot check routine, monitoring the theft and the spoilage in the markets on a consistent basis.”

Danna noted that when operators make the mistake of not doing inventory on a regular basis, that is when shrinkage gets out of control. He said the operators who have a huge issue are the ones who finally take inventory after a longer period of time.

At checkout time, Cantaloupe generates an Abandoned Shopping Cart Report. “What our system does is it takes a picture, timestamps it, puts it on the back-end, and then you can review all of those with people’s pictures and the products that were involved in cancelled transactions,” he said. “This report provides useful evidence when an operator needs to communicate with a client about shrinkage levels.”

Pete Carmain, vice president of national accounts at Nayax, said that operators need to focus on getting the most reliable back-end system as possible. Carmain points out that operator error can really distort shrink rates, but with products like Nayax’s MoMa 2.0 mobile app, operators can get off to a great start when they are picking and filling products. “Accurate data is our number-one focus,” he said.

The Nayax Nova Market offers a yellow screen, red screen deterrent

system. “If you have a camera pointed at the market, one of the things that I think is really beneficial is when a transaction is completed and everything is on the up-and-up, so to speak, you’re going to get a yellow screen,” Carmain said. “When you see that yellow screen, you know that was a good transaction. If the transaction itself is cancelled, you’re going to get a red screen. So those can be looked at from the camera, and the operator can go back and look at all those red screens. Did the product walk out? Was the product put back?”

Carmain continued, “It seems almost too simplistic, but really, if you have to go back and look through all of this video, you could be looking at hours and hours of videos trying to find one or two instances. “Now, you’re just looking at a basic color scheme.”

DESIGN, TRAFFIC FLOW AND SHRINKAGE

Steve Orlando, an experienced operator of 10 years who co-founded Fixturlite, a leading supplier of micro market retail displays, equipment and design tools, believes that there is a direct correlation between a well-designed, well-stocked micro market with smooth traffic flow and a lower level of shrinkage. He said an obvious investment by the operator and the location is appreciated by employees. “They want to keep it. They want it to work well because it’s a benefit to

everybody,” Orlando said. “If it’s well-designed and well-merchandised and always looks freshly stocked, there’s a perception that someone’s keeping an eye on that market, whether it’s your fellow employees or via the security cameras that are being monitored.”

Orlando said that traffic flow also has an impact on shrink levels, noting that loss prevention specialists will tell you that congestion at the checkout leads to theft. “Additionally, people are in a hurry. Break times are only so long, lunch breaks are only so long, and if the market isn’t designed well to allow for optimized traffic flow, people are going to get impatient. Perhaps they’ll take something and then intend to come back later and pay for it – but people forget,” Orlando said.

TECHNOLOGY, PRICING AND COMMUNICATION

Steve Closser of Translucent, LLC, a leading micro market consultant, said operators need to do two things to address theft in micro markets, in addition to using technology like LightSpeed that will allow for accurate product picking and inventory. “Use the tools that are available, and if you are picking your orders and sending them out properly, you will find that your shrink level will be reduced.”

Closser said that operators need to focus on communication with customers. “Don’t make a big deal about it, but just let the client know there is a theft problem. Then ask, ‘What can we do about it? Ask cooperatively, not in an adversarial way,’” he said. Closser

also urges operators to price their products appropriately, building in the cost of shrinkage, rather than spending your time chasing the two percent of dishonest people out there. “Focus on serving the other 98% and make a ton of money,” he said.

Client communication was cited as a critically important strategy by every industry expert, including Panoptyc’s Keally. “With our operators, we stress the importance of having conversations with their customers upfront about how shortages will be dealt with,” Keally said. “It is important to manage the relationship by getting ahead of the problem – having a discussion about the fact that theft is inherent in a micro market and having a plan of action in place that everyone is comfortable with.” ■

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PayRange Provides Innovative Solutions

for the Unattended Retail and Convenience Services Industries, Including Mobile Payment, VMS and Micromarket Solutions, Plus Age and Identity Verification

PayRange Inc., based in Portland, Oregon, is a leading provider of mobile payment solutions for the automated retail industry. Founded in 2013 by Paresh Patel, a serial entrepreneur and veteran of the automated retail industry, the company is known for its innovative technology that makes payments simple and accessible for everyone.

Vending operators can unlock increased revenues by expanding payment options on their existing machines while also adding convenience and loyalty features for their customers. Installing a patented BluKey device, the simple low-cost hardware that plugs into a vending machine using MDB then connects via Bluetooth to the free PayRange app a consumer downloads, has been shown to dramatically increase vending revenues. When integrated with the PayRange vending management software that's designed for efficiency and convenience, operators can transform their vending business. For even more industry-leading options, PayRange offers age and identify verification solutions through their immi platform (pronounced "I'm Me") to enable 21+ commerce. This allows operators to expand into the responsible sale of age-restricted products like alcohol and tobacco and is in use throughout the US and Canada.

Beyond traditional vending, the company provides solutions for a broad range of industries that are characterized as primarily unattended or small-ticket transactions. These include vended laundry where PayRange is in use in more than 10% of the laundromats in the US, plus multi-family locations like apartment buildings, colleges and universities, and hotels. Centralized payment kiosks known as the PayStation, along with dedicated credit card readers named BluCard are also available in the laundry industry. PayRange recently announced an exclusive partnership with Turns App for laundry wash dry fold services, further expanding their services to this market.

PayRange also provides mobile payment solutions for amusement games, car washes, campground and RV site services, EV charging, billiards and more. These often include industry-specific hardware offerings such as a retrofit device for converting mechanically actuated billiards tables to fully electronic mobile payment acceptance. Industry specific app features are also included such as providing the ability for employees in attended laundromats to start machines through the PayRange app without requiring payment.



The reliability, value, and focus on providing innovative solutions that help machine owners better serve their customers, combined with consumers' love for the convenience and ease of use of the app have fueled PayRange to be the fastest growing mobile payments network in the United States.

With more than two dozen patents issued for their innovations, the company continues to expand their technology and services. PayRange is the North American leader in mobile payments for unattended retail, with over 6 million mobile app users, and a network of over 500,000 deployed machines throughout 400 cities and towns in the US and Canada.

Find out more at: www.payrange.com



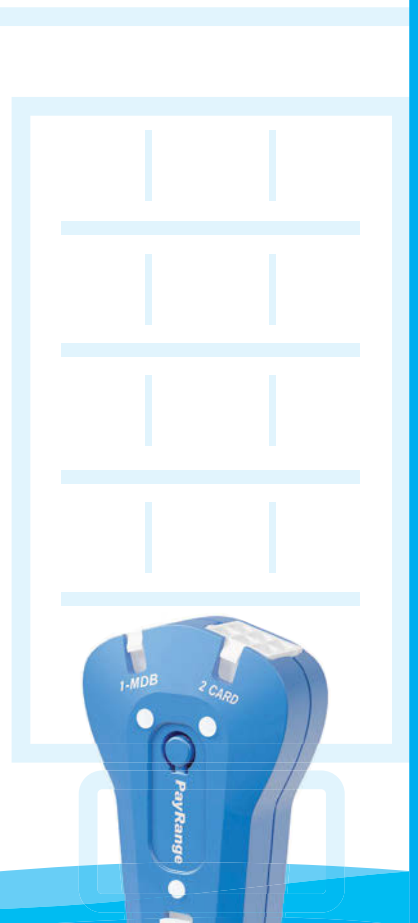


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Fresh and frozen food solutions

FOOD SALES BY CONVENIENCE SERVICES operators are showing another year of improvement, and fresh food in micro markets is gaining more acceptance. Today, clients are increasingly willing to pay more for high-quality foods.

FRESH FOOD SUPPLIERS

One option for operators is to use local commissaries that deliver daily and to explore local partnerships with well-known brands within their area and on the regional scale. To provide quality fresh food, a strong relationship with local food suppliers is important. Equally important is that each location requires careful analysis to determine the right mix.

Operators report that some locations are insistent about the availability of fresh food for their employees and, in some cases, are willing to subsidize the spoilage. Often, support comes from a cooperative relationship between the operator and the client.

HEALTHY MEAL VENDING

Chicago-based Farmer's Fridge offers refrigerated vending machines that dispense salads, wraps and snacks made with high-quality and often local ingredients. Fridges are temperature-controlled and stocked with a variety of meals and snacks. Customers tap the screen to start browsing through the menu, and can click the image to view its description, dietary restrictions, nutritional facts and the full list of ingredients. Once the item has been selected, the customer views the cart and checks out by simply swiping their card. The Fridge will then

vend the meal within seconds. Customers can also recycle empty jars back into the Fridge or toss them in a recycling bin. Recently celebrating its 10-year anniversary, today, Farmer's Fridge has more than 600 of its Fridges in the U.S. in airports, hospitals, office buildings and universities.

Consumer preferences continue to shift toward fresh, frozen and healthier options.

By Molly Rogers,
Managing Editor

FROZEN TREATS SEGMENT

Automatic Merchandiser's recent State of the Industry report showed that ice cream and frozen products increased in 2022 from \$0.3 billion to \$0.6 billion in revenue for combined vended and micro market segments. Mars, a leader in the ice cream category, recently announced its ambition to grow Mars Ice Cream business to \$1 billion by 2030. Mars holds several top-selling products in the U.S. frozen novelty category including Snickers Ice Cream Bars, M&M's Ice Cream Sandwiches, Twix Ice Cream, and Kind Frozen treats. Reaching \$1 billion in sales would place Mars Ice Cream among the company's 12 other billion-dollar brands. According to Fortune Business Insights, the global ice cream market is projected to hit \$104.96 billion by 2029, up from \$73.62 billion.

"At Mars, we see an opportunity to grow our ice cream business not only in North America, but around the globe," Anton Vincent, president at Mars Wrigley North America and head of Mars Ice Cream globally, said in the company announcement. "We're innovating with a focus on product and purpose and expanding our global manufacturing capabilities to ensure we can meet rapidly rising consumer demand."



Design Team:

Graphics That Pop has three full-time graphic designers on staff that produce stunning design presentations quickly. Micro Market and Vending companies are welcome to use these services free of charge. Custom Micro Markets is a great way to get new customers and retain existing locations.

Skilled project managers:

We have three full-time, skilled project managers that will assist you in streamlining the process of design and space requirements.

New ultra-light weight panels:

Only 30 lbs. I know it is unbelievable. GTP strives to develop better products. GTP manufactures its own unique Micro Market panels. The materials used are a corrugated sustainable core with embedded threaded connections, and an exterior plastic clad for extreme durability.

Lock N Load:

This system controls product expiration dates. Products can easily load from the back of the display. Shelving comes with optional product dividers and product pushers that are adjustable in 1-inch increments.

Great LED lighting:

Our new LED strip lighting with a protective lens makes your products look more appealing. The LED strip is removable and easily replaced years down the line.

Pin System:

Our Micro Markets assemble fast and easy with our slide in pin connectors. All Micro Markets come with all the hardware pre-assembled. The panels come off the pallet in order of assembly. Just simply insert the pins. No tools required.

Capacity:

Our shelving, which has a depth of 19 inches, can hold twice as much product as the majority of competing Micro Market displays. If the display holds more products, that means fewer trips to service the Micro Market.

Quality Control:

Every Micro Market is set up and inspected before shipping. We go to great lengths in securely packaging your Micro Markets. Rarely do we receive any shipping damages.

Increasingly, Micro Market operators are switching to the GTP system. They are realizing the importance of long-term durable fixtures, which are easy to install, modify, repair, or move.

GTP is in the process of engineering two new products that we hope will be out this fall.

GTP's Lock N Load system will have an option to have self-closing transparent plastic doors. You will still be able to load products from the back of the display. The new product is for harsh environments such as rodent control and temperature control.

New LED back-lite headers

GTP thanks all our loyal customers. We look forward to more operators making the switch to GTP's Micro Market systems. Once operators try our system, few go back to over-weight, hard to set-up and hard to move particle board displays. They understand the value of our revolutionary Micro Market fixture.

If your employees and customers deserve the best, then you will choose a GTP Micro Market for your next location.





Wells Enterprises also offers a range of frozen treats for the vending and micro market channel with ice cream brands Blue Bunny, Blue Ribbon Classics, Bomb Pop and Halo Top. Wells Enterprises was recently purchased by Ferrero. The acquisition was part of Ferrero's strategic growth ambitions for the ice cream category and Wells' vision for accelerated growth, bringing ice cream and confectionery leaders together, according to the acquisition announcement.

VARIETY IS KEY: PAIRING BETTER-FOR-YOU OPTIONS WITH INDULGENT SWEETS

Mike Fromme, senior vice president, foodservice sales, Flowers Foods, said the company is seeing consumers' desire

for more variety and a strong sense of brand loyalty. Additionally, consumers continue to seek products with recognizable package callouts, such as verified non-GMO, whole grain stamps, and USDA-certified organic.

"The demand for better-for-you items has increased consistently over the last 10 years, but they perform best when merchandised in conjunction with indulgent items," Fromme said. "Ultimately, the goal should be to create an offering that appeals to multiple consumer demographics, thus drawing the maximum number of workplace consumers into the market or breakroom." Flowers Foods



Flowers Foods



offers a vast variety of products in individually wrapped packaging with portion sizes that meet the demand of its convenience services consumers. Its snack cakes and pastries include brand names such as Mrs. Freshley's, Mrs. Freshley's Deluxe, Tastykake, and, most recently, Dave's Killer Bread Snack Bars, to the convenience services channel.

"Most of these products are offered in both fresh and freeze-on-

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arrival varieties,” Fromme said. “Once on shelf, the challenge is to motivate consumers to purchase. The Tastykake brand recently underwent a packaging refresh, which is designed to stand out on shelf through appetite appeal and a strong brand block.”

Its new Dipp’n Sticks recently launched in two trending flavors: lemon blueberry and chocolate. “Dipp’n Sticks keep the iconic donut stick shape, which is ideal for on-the-go enjoyment, but also bring excitement and news to the donut and donut stick categories through unique flavors,” Fromme added.

EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

Equipment manufacturers are keeping up with consumer demands by offering a range of solutions to store fresh and frozen foods. For example, Fastcorp offers both ice cream vending machines as well as ultra-frozen machines for cryogenically frozen products. Fastcorp provides frozen technology used by ice cream manufacturers for their branded machine programs. Configurations are offered with touchscreens, live displays and media players. It also offers versatile machines combining frozen and fresh storage.

Selfly Store, a Finnish company that develops and manufactures self-service technologies, offers a range of intelligent cabinets for storing either ambient, refrigerated or frozen meals and snacks in a range of locations, such as hotels or offices. The cabinets use RFID, sensor, cloud computing and IoT technologies to provide a convenient grab-and-go shopping experience for consumers. Selfly Store’s RFID technology helps keep track of expiration dates and inventory in real time to help avoid food waste.

Also, U-Select-It (USI), a global vending solutions provider based

in Des Moines, Iowa, recently announced the addition of Scan & Go Market to its family of products. Featuring a fast and easy self-check-out experience for consumers, USI’s Scan & Go Market allows operators to stock a variety of in-demand,

high-margin fresh food, beverages and snacks in one solution.


Whether it’s providing fresh foods, frozen treats or flavorful snacks, meeting the needs of the consumer while making operations more efficient can help operators stay competitive. ■

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of sales are after hours
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870
vends per month

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75%
of sales are after hours
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our top performing casino kiosks generate
457
vends per month



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Easy Ice is Here to Solve Your Ice Machine Problem



What if you could stop spending thousands of dollars on buying and managing ice machines without losing your competitive edge?

That's exactly what Easy Ice, the only national provider of ice machine subscriptions, is here to help you do.

While most of their customers are end users—business owners in the restaurant industry and beyond—Easy Ice has recently stepped into the vending world to alleviate operators of their ice machine woes through an innovative, strategic partnership.

Easy Ice offers vending and OCS operators two partnership options: customer referral and direct subscription. You can either:

- a. Send your customers to Easy Ice for their ice machines and dispensers. Get out of the ice business altogether and never spend another dime on ice equipment.
- b. Rent your ice equipment from Easy Ice and enjoy the convenience of included maintenance and repairs. Provide the machines to customers at a marked-up rate for a profit.

It's a choice between conserving capital or making it back with an additional gain.

Passing customers along to Easy Ice is often an operator's preferred choice. While this option doesn't present an opportunity to generate revenue on the ice equipment, it does save operators an enormous amount of money and time. They no longer have to pay for or manage ice equipment, but their customers still get the ice they want, complete with the best equipment and care on the market.

For established operators who want to keep ice a part of their business, Easy Ice offers a buyback program that makes the transition to subscription seamless for both the operator and their customers. Meanwhile, operators due for new ice equipment can strike up a subscription deal with Easy Ice that meets their needs just as easily as any end user could.

"Ice machines are expensive to buy and even more expensive to own," says Bruce Trecek, National Affiliate Program Director at Easy Ice. "In today's uncertain economic environment, it's more challenging

than ever for vending operators to efficiently manage ice machine fleets, due to the resources required. Partnering with Easy Ice offers an ideal alternative."

An Easy Ice subscription includes top-of-the-line equipment from brands like Hoshizaki and Manitowoc, biannual preventive maintenance, all repairs, and customer service 7 days a week. Instead of shelling out thousands of dollars per machine upfront, Easy Ice subscription customers can get the ice they need for an affordable monthly payment that covers maintenance and repairs they would normally have to pay for out-of-pocket.

Easy Ice is the brainchild of John Mahlmeister and Mark Hangen, who recognized the average business owner's ice machine plight: ownership is too costly and inconvenient, but local and regional rental options often fall short. They designed the Easy Ice subscription based on the simple idea that business owners across industries should have a cost-effective, convenient alternative to ice machine ownership no matter where they're located, what size their business is, or what industry they're in. Now, the Easy Ice subscription is the largest ice machine rental solution in America, with over 30,000 customers across 47 states.

When Easy Ice heard about the bad rap ice equipment has in the vending world and why, they knew they could help. The operators they've already partnered with confirm: working with Easy Ice beats ice machine ownership.





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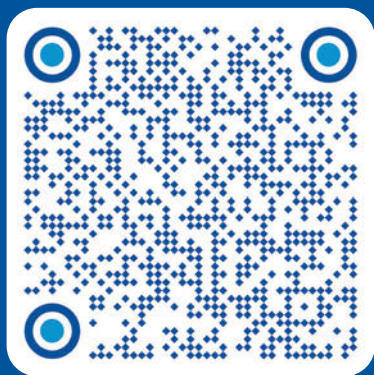
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VENDING WITH VALUES

By Aaron Jed, contributor

The 2023 NAMA Operator of the Year, Patrick Moran, owner of Moran Refreshments, shares his secrets to success.

All images courtesy of Moran Refreshments

NESTLED IN THE ROLLING hills of Tyler, Texas, one company steals the spotlight. Originating from humble beginnings, Moran Refreshments blazed its way to the top of the industry with sheer grit and unstoppable determination.

MORAN REFRESHMENTS IS BORN

Moran Refreshments – a vending, office coffee service and micro market powerhouse – began in Dale Moran’s garage in 1989 when he decided to scratch his entrepreneurial itch. He ate a penalty to cash in on his retirement and purchased a faltering vending company. “I thought it was a crazy idea!” recalled Patrick Moran,

Dale’s son and current owner of Moran Refreshments.

Patrick reflected on his upbringing, noting that vending machines were far removed from the world he and his father knew. “In our family growing up, we didn’t have any extra coins,” he said. “So, if we were to put a coin in a jukebox or a pinball game, or any other type of coin-operated machinery, that would just be unheard of. The idea that he would go into that business was really shocking to me.”

Despite his reservations, Patrick agreed to join his father for a trial run. The 24-year-old resigned from his job and temporarily left his wife in Oklahoma for a cot in his father’s utility room. After a month of interstate trips and assessing the potential of the

business, Patrick’s wife quit her job to join her husband in Tyler. They were all in on Moran Refreshments.

Moran Refreshments acquired 47 snack machines, many of which could be classified as historical artifacts today. “Not a single machine accepted dollar bills,” Patrick recalled. “We had several pull-knob machines that didn’t even require electricity. You put the coins in and you pulled the knob and the little flap dropped inside.”

Even three decades ago, the machines were considered outdated, so the father-son duo had to get creative to make them work with the times. “For many of our machines, the highest price they would go to is 35 cents,” Patrick explained. “In 1990, we were selling candy for 50 cents. So we priced it at 25 cents and loaded every other slot with a piece of candy. You would put in a quarter, pull the lever, put in the second quarter, and pull the lever to get your candy bar. That’s how we figured out how to make things work when we had hardly any money or equipment.” Patrick still keeps one of the company’s first machines in the office breakroom today in homage to those early days.

DOING IT THEMSELVES

In the early years, Moran Refreshments only purchased used equipment on a one-off basis. With an arsenal of old machines from varying manufacturers – and before the age of Google – Patrick and Dale needed to learn to do all of their own repairs. “In this business, you have to know a little electricity, a little refrigeration and a little programming,” Patrick said. “At first, we would call the tech from whatever manufacturer it was, and they guided us through the repair. Eventually, my dad and I started learning to repair the machines on our own. We were entirely self-taught.”

Despite an incredible mechanical aptitude, Patrick still faced problems that were outside of his abilities.

When one of his customers called about a faulty coin mech, Patrick stopped running his route and jumped into action. “I took the coin mech out, drove two-and-a-half hours to the repair place in Dallas, and put it on their desk,” Patrick said. “Once they fixed it, I drove two-and-a-half hours back to the location, put it in the machine, and then went back to the truck and finished my route.”

After 27 years of being the primary mechanic for Moran Refreshments, Patrick is finally able to step back from repairs, with three knowledgeable techs taking the reins, but the vending veteran is also always available when his employees need to turn to him for his expertise.

“Just the other day, I was with one of my techs to advise him on repairing an old drink machine,” he said. “It was one that I had worked on years ago and knew all about, so I met him down there and showed him the ins and outs. I’m still the number-one call for tech advice when they get stuck.”

LOW FUNDS, HIGH SPEED

On a shoestring budget, Moran Refreshments needed to differentiate itself. The two-man company compensated for its lack of resources with relentlessly fast service. “My father and I ran the route every day because we were the only employees of the company,” Patrick said. “We had a stipulation between us that we would respond to a service call within two hours. When a service call came in, we stopped whatever we were doing, went to the service call, and then we came back and resumed the route.”

Patrick and Dale’s uncompromising work ethic and dedication to their customers began paying off. The company began to grow, despite never hiring a salesperson. “We have never had somebody on the street selling our business,” Patrick said. “Our business has grown organically by word of mouth. Any time our customers had a



OPERATION PROFILE

Moran Refreshments

Website:
moranrefreshments.com

Founded: January 1989

Headquarters: Tyler, Texas

Number of routes: 11

Number of acquisitions: 3

Number of vending machines:
700

Number of micro markets: 37

Tech/equipment providers:
365 Retail Markets, Crane,
Dixie Narco, Royal, Vendo,
Wittern

Distributors: Vistar, Southwest
Coca Cola, Tyler Beverages
(Dr Pepper), Pepsi

need, we met the need. We did all of our business dealings ethically and properly. That’s how we established ourselves.”

BIG BREAK

While the growth of Moran Refreshments was steady, it felt a bit slow for the then 20-something-

year-old second-generation operator. “I was more impatient as a young man,” Patrick laughed. “I wanted to see bigger and better. My dad would tell me, ‘You need to be grateful for the little guy. Don’t take the small accounts for granted. Right now, every little penny matters.’”

The company’s big break came in 1996 when the operators won a 10-year contract with the largest school district in Tyler. While the enormous influx of business was exciting, it also posed a daunting task for the ultra-lean team. Moran Refreshments had just hired its third employee but took on servicing 47 more machines.

“During that period of time, we worked around the clock, through the night,” Patrick recalled. “We had to run the routes and we had to prepare the machines. We just kept working until somewhere around two or three in the morning, went to Ihop, had breakfast, went home, took a shower, and worked all day the next day.”

Years of accruing sweat equity eventually paid off. Today, Moran Refreshments is housed in a 17,000-square-foot facility with 24 employees. The company operates 11 routes servicing 200 accounts across 10 counties.



The Moran Refreshments markets and vending team.



Jenny Satterwhite picks orders in the warehouse.



Michael Gearheart picks drinks in the warehouse.



Patrick's son, Andrew, works in the warehouse while in college.



Ric Crowder services a micro market.

SMALL COMPANIES WITH BIG PROMISE

In 2006, Moran Refreshments purchased a local vending company. When seeking acquisitions, Patrick is extremely selective to ensure high value. "Oftentimes, people would call us to sell us their business," Patrick said. "We would find that most of the equipment had been purchased through a 'blue sky' promise – 'work five hours a week

and make \$3,000!' Usually, they bought lackluster equipment, and we weren't interested in that. We were looking for equipment that allowed us to quickly take over and start operating."

Patrick reflected on why some companies, even with top-of-the-line equipment, end up failing. "You know how to end up with \$1,000 in vending? Start out with five," Patrick joked. "People get into the industry with high

hopes but can't figure out a way to repair their own equipment or fix their truck. Many of the operators are great people with great intentions, but they either didn't have the business acumen, the tenacity, or the mechanical ability to do what was necessary. In this industry, you need to be a jack of all trades."

Moran Refreshments added fuel to its growth when it became a Canteen franchise in 2007. The company was

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able to supplement its regional expertise and presence with global resources and knowledge. “My Canteen resources have been invaluable,” Patrick said. “We are able to offer a world-class service packaged in a family-owned business. It’s a perfect fit.”

STAYING STRONG THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

Like most of the world, Patrick thought that the pandemic would blow over in a matter of months. When the PPP loans kicked in, he promised his employees that they would be covered through the summer, and things would return to normal for the upcoming school year. “It’s almost laughable to think about that now,” he reflected.

Despite the suffocating restrictions, Moran Refreshments persevered throughout COVID without a single layoff. In fact, Patrick gave all of his employees bonuses at the end of the year.

“It wasn’t because we didn’t suffer significant sales losses,” Patrick said. “We did. But our employees are so important to us that I assured them that they will be the last to feel it. For us, the financial impact was secondary to the wellbeing of everybody who worked for us.”

Backed against the wall, Patrick displayed his complete dedication and loyalty to his employees. In return, his employees have stuck around. “We hired Ric in 2001,” Patrick said. “Cliff came in 2006. Bob came in 2008. They are all still with me today. That’s a good track record. As we grew, the people who came stayed for the most part. Our employees know that they are valued.”

UNLIKELY HEROES

Just as life seemed to be returning to normal, Texans were dealt another brutal blow. “Snowmageddon,” the infamous storm, shut down the Lone Star State’s electric grid and wreaked havoc on its infrastructure.

“One of our largest clients had a good portion of their facility collapse under the weight of the snow and ice,”

Patrick recalled. “Most facilities we serviced were closed for an entire week. When we came back from that week, one of our biggest clients had their roof collapse, and they were closed for several weeks after that. We had supposedly survived the COVID thing through

2020, and then when this happened, we said, ‘Well, this is interesting!’”

When the University of Texas at Tyler – one of Moran Refreshments’ accounts – lost water in its dormitories, Patrick once again set his self interests aside and jumped into action.



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"My contact at the university emailed me to see if there was any way we could bring them water because they had a dorm full of students without running water," he said. "There was ice on the roads, temperatures were sub-zero. My son and I both drive four-wheel-drive pickup trucks. At 9 o'clock at night, we drove the 45 minutes through the ice and snow to our warehouse, loaded up our pickups with bottled water, and met them to give to those students."

Patrick doesn't view this deed as an act of heroism, but rather a natural extension of the company's core ethos. "We're not just a snack or beverage provider," he proclaimed. "We want to add value to wherever we are, in any way we can."

IF YOU CAN WORK, YOU GOT A JOB

When Patrick is hiring, he places one qualification above all else: a great work ethic. "If you can't work, you won't last," he said. "If you know how to work hard, come aboard!"

Once that simple prerequisite is met, Patrick goes above and beyond to position his employees for success. Caleb, an 18-year-old warehouse employee for Moran Refreshments, is deaf. Patrick affirms that Caleb's lack of hearing is no detriment to the tremendous value he brings to the business. "One of the primary motivations to adding LightSpeed [warehouse pick-to-light system] was so I could bring my nephew Caleb in to work," he said. "With LightSpeed, Caleb can do everything in the warehouse. All the picking, packing, cleanup, back stocking, everything. Caleb is an instrumental part of our team."

While Patrick loves keeping good people around for a long time, he also pushes his employees to grow, even if it means leaving Moran Refreshments. Mikey, a former employee, had both of his legs amputated due to a heart attack. "He came in for an interview, and he said that he had no legs," Patrick said. "I asked him, 'Well, can you work? I don't care if you have no legs.'" Mikey successfully worked for several years on the warehouse floor.

One day, Patrick met with Mikey to discuss his long-term goals. Patrick asked him, "What do you want to do?"

You can't work in a warehouse your entire life." When Mikey revealed that he wanted to go to school for dental hygiene, Patrick modified Mikey's schedule so he would be able to attend classes while continuing to work. "Mikey left us about a year ago now," Patrick said. "But he left us with a blessing. He worked for us for three years and left in a much better place than when he came."

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Moran Refreshments doesn't just stock machines and refill coffee. The company kickstarted a series of innovative programs to provide a truly unique, educational and fun refreshments experience. For instance, Moran Refreshments offers "tokens" that can be used for free products from vending machines and micro markets. From achievement awards to birthday celebrations, tokens are a fun gift for employees to indulge at no cost.

For clients who wish to promote healthy lifestyles for their employees, Moran Refreshments offers its Balanced for Life program. It's designed to educate consumers about the elements of a balanced diet and the importance of physical activity.

Moran Refreshments also partners with various vendors to offer vibrant, customizable designs for vending equipment. Whether it's a logo, brand or simply a fun design, the unique service transforms machines to best fit any company or event.

TAKING ON CAPITOL HILL

Patrick's workday rarely ends after leaving the office. When he isn't hustling to feed the growth of Moran Refreshments, the operator suits up to uplift the vending industry on a macro scale. His political activism began in 2004 when the State of Texas was reviewing legislation that would threaten vending machines in public schools. "At the time, about 50% of our revenue was in public school sales," Patrick said, "So I took immediate interest."

In his signature action-oriented fashion, Patrick found the policy's hearing date, drove to Austin, and testified



Moran Refreshments' technician team: Joe Delgado, Andrew Cowles and Bruce Smith.



Rocky Tomlin, Ric Crowder, Bob Williams and Cliff Woodward have all been with Moran Refreshments for over a decade.

against the bill proposed by the Texas Department of Agriculture. Shortly thereafter, he joined the Texas Merchandising Vending Association, serving as the association's president from 2011 to 2012. His political presence only blossomed from there. From participating in the annual NAMA Fly-In in Washington, D.C., to forming personal relationships with senators and policymakers, the longtime operator works tirelessly to shape legislation that affects the industry.

Patrick believes that industry representatives like himself are essential for ensuring well-informed legislation. "Sometimes, they will propose policies that are illogical or downright impossible," Patrick said. "Now that I've built relationships with elected officials, they can turn to me to come up with solutions that make sense."



Elijah Schmunk provisions a Pico.



Patrick and Dale Moran were partners for 27 years.

Today, Patrick is advocating for SNAP/EBT acceptance for vending machines and micro markets, removing sales taxes on vended goods, and lowering the age barrier to enter the trucking industry.

INDUSTRY TRENDS

Patrick sees that as businesses make a push for workers to return to the office, vending plays a crucial role. However, basic snacks and old machines aren't going to cut it. "One of the ways of getting employees back in the building is with

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Patrick and Jane Moran meet with legislative members at the 2021 NAMA Fly-In on Capitol Hill.

great amenities and offerings,” he said. “People want fresh, high-quality foods, ease of purchase and great technology.”

As inflation continues to eat away at companies’ margins and peoples’ spending power, Patrick believes that price increases are an unsustainable solution. “In the short term, customers understand you have to raise prices. But you can’t end up with a \$5 candy bar, right?”

To avoid implementing never-ending price hikes, Moran Refreshments is leveraging advanced technology, such as LightSpeed Automation, to optimize operational efficiency and maximize its bottom line. Patrick foresees the industry capitalizing on artificial intelligence to further improve operations.

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When Patrick received the call notifying him that he had been nominated, he was in shock. “I thought it was unbelievable,” Patrick said. “I held the previous winners in such a high regard. I really appreciated the honor.” He was delighted to bring his entire family – who witnessed the journey of Moran Refreshments – to receive the award.

Only one person was missing in Atlanta that day: Dale Moran, Patrick’s father, business partner and best friend. “My father was the greatest man I ever knew,” Patrick reflected. “Even though we were a generation apart, we built the business together for 27 years, side-by-side, almost as brothers. That was an incredibly special experience, and I’m very grateful for it.”

The company is on its third generation of Morans, with all four of Patrick’s children having played roles in the business. Currently, Patrick’s younger son works for the company as he finishes college.

Moving forward, Moran Refreshments has no plans of slowing down. “I’m not going to tell my team that they shouldn’t be excited to be in the position we’re in,” Patrick said. “But we need to remember what got us here. This company was built on honorable business practices and work ethic. That is just how we operate. We’re on the move.” ■

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