



VENDING FEATURE

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Please attribute any quotes to Chris O'Neill, National Account Manager, RH Hall's Food Solutions Division and Ray Hall, Managing Director, RH Hall.

Where are the key spots to position vending machines within universities?

Location is always a key consideration as this can affect its popularity and profitability. An example of this is where a machine is sited say strategically outside a bar area for late night snacks/hot food vending, maximising the potential for sales at a key time during the day. I've seen this where a machine vends food items which are then taken by students back to their halls to be cooked/heated, proving to be very popular.

Other key spots include areas where students sit to relax and or between the bars and their dorms.

What are the most popular items sold from vending machines?

Even though the pressure is on for healthier vending options, the most popular items that are sold from vending machines are still snacks, such as crisps and confectionery and there is still a strong demand for coffee, but a higher quality vended coffee offering.

Are vending machines just about confectionery, soft drinks and coffee, or do students demand more from vending? Can vending machines offer healthy alternatives?

No, vending machines aren't just about confectionery, soft drinks and coffee, although they are the most popular. Hot Food and hot snacks are definitely starting to be top of the agenda to help extend the vending offering and with good profits being realised from hot food too. If there was another offering students would definitely look at it and this includes the introduction of healthier options too – whether it's vended juices/smoothies, wraps and flatbreads as alternative to usual sandwiches and soups.

The new 365 Soup Server®, available exclusively from RH Hall is the world's first 100% natural soup vending machine that can be self-serve with built in secure payment options.

Formulated by nutritional experts, the nine delicious varieties are all made from 100% natural ingredients to provide great tastes and textures, are GM free with no artificial additives and a shelf-life of 10 months, possible through a unique production process.

The unit is very easy to operate through touch screen menus, with the soup continually ready to serve from the integral 12 litre tank that will hold for a maximum of 12 hours. Operators can set the desired cup size serving between regular and large.

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Food safety is paramount, and each of the ambient 2 litre soup pouches carries unique bar codes containing batch information for tracking and tracing ingredients to ensure conformity to HACCP guidelines, invaluable when used in conjunction with 365 Soup-Server's® electronic reporting facility. The unit has its own self-clean facility built in and requires minimal maintenance.

It's the ideal choice for many different foodservice environments, offering an innovative and unique way of having soup on the menu, 365 days, 24/7. And with the opportunity to self-vend through a variety of payment options being available it can create a great additional revenue in its own right too.

Soup Varieties include:

- Creamy Tomato
- Creamy Chicken
- Creamy Mushroom
- Italian Tomato
- Garden Pea
- Goulash
- Curry with Chicken & Coconut

What innovations are there within vending? Eg. Can students use their ID cards to make purchases?

Technology has moved forward and the requirement is not just for the ordinary drinks and snack machines, but more 'funkier' concepts – including machines with touch screen menu's that can feature nutritional values and product information. Also video streaming, with screens running adverts – vending with 'theatre' as it were where consumers are interacting with the vending experience. Moving forward a frozen food vending system would be excellent, using regeneration, such as the iWave® automated food system.

There are all sorts of ways now to order and pay for vended products, making it easier for consumers – they no longer need to rely on having cash handy. Vending offers Giro Vend, a type of credit card facility that you top up with money for cashless purchases and you can even order products from your mobile phone. ID cards and ordering via mobiles are all now available as cashless systems.

What are your top tips on having a good, profitable vending offer?

Site in a good footfall, monitor popularity of the vending offering and if possible, manage it themselves if they have the resources. If a site wants to purchase a machine and keep the profits themselves then they will need to have a separate maintenance agreement in place whereas if a site hires or rents a machine then the maintenance contract is usually part of the agreement.

Please include any other comments that you feel our readers will be interested in.

The students would welcome interactivity with vending machines, RH Hall has prototype models in our development kitchen for viewing and experimentation.

Please include a definitive website address where readers can go for more info on your company.

www.rhhall.com



- **Comments for further information**

Vending machines are evolving and have become increasingly sophisticated with reporting facilities being able to tell operators the best sellers, when they were sold, stock levels etc. This telemetry is a complete management system for operators to be able to remotely monitor vital machine information, keeping them up to date from anywhere – either on or off campus at any time. These systems enable operators to maximise sales, improve service and reduce operating costs.

- **Innovations:**

RH Hall's expertise goes beyond product supply alone...

Through our innovative solutions we can meet and even anticipate clients' needs perfectly, whether this calls for 'off the shelf' products or bespoke solutions for any operational need, foodservice brand, concept or menu. We frequently adapt standard foodservice equipment, tailoring it technically and cosmetically to suit a client's needs through our own Fabrications business and our 15,000 sq ft manufacturing facility. We also work with key business partners to bring together 'total solutions' that marry together innovative food/menu items, with unique equipment at maximum operating efficiencies, such as with the iWave®.

- **Partnering innovation**

A new vending product developed through working with our vending clients is the **iWave Feedstation**. Produced by our UK factory, this new solution has been incredibly well received by clients. Combining the ultimate accelerated regeneration system, the iWave® with in-built refrigeration and interactive live digital marketing and touch screen displays into a merchandising unit that can host real time promotions, hot food can be provided 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

Customers simply make their choice from the digital display, the menu item is dispensed and then they scan the barcode on the packaging and place the item inside the iWave® to begin the cooking process. It's totally fool-proof and eliminates any need for staff supervision. The system can be built up and programmed as required then added to at any time to cater for all foodservice demands.

For more detailed information or to arrange a demonstration, contact the RH Hall Sales Office on 01296 663 400 or visit www.rhhall.com.

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