

INNOVATION ISSUE

“Consumers walked away from vending because it didn’t fit their nutritional needs,” Ihara said. “Be it because of allergies, intolerances or caloric restrictions or fat restrictions, nutritional display gives the consumer the ability to make educated decisions before vending. This brings people back to the vending marketplace.”

Databases that feed touchscreen with nutritional information can be simple or advanced. The VEII’s MIND™ (Make Informed Nutritional Decisions) breaks products into categories to further enhance the user experience.

“A consumer can walk up to a MIND and sort products by categories such as gluten free, peanut free or low fat,” Garson said. “The MIND™ will recognize those categories, and the products are tagged by us so the operators aren’t driving themselves crazy trying to figure out the technology.”

Third party advertising

Touchscreen technology also lends itself to alternate sources of revenue for operators. Touchscreens allow vendors to display advertisement videos and photos on their vending machines. These videos can promote products inside the machine, or third-party content.

Garson has seen vendors successfully use promotional videos, games or even targeted advertising based on a concept called anonymous analytics, where the machine uses a camera to identify the user’s age and gender, and then uses algorithms to try to determine what that person might be interested in purchasing.

“The value of having a camera on the machine is that you know who is using the machine,” Garson said. “We key our ads based on who is in front of the machine. So if it’s a 50 to 60 year old male, we may want to play a trail mix ad rather than an energy drink spot.”

New locks enhance security

Along with consumer and merchandising retrofit technology, advancements are also being made in vending machine security. Bill Denison, CEO at TriTeq Locks, has developed a locking mechanism that deters vending theft and is entirely electronic — no keys required.

The mechanism replaces the existing T-Handle locking mechanisms many snack and beverage vending machines feature. It is operated by a key fob, much like the locking mechanism on new cars and is therefore immune to drilling and picking.

“What we’ve done is completely eliminated the lock plug altogether,” Denison said. “It gives on that benefit of quickly being able to retrofit, and having the added security of the anti-theft qualities.

What really make the locking system worth it is the electronics that go along with it, according to Denison.

“The security that you’re getting today with mechanical keys and lock cylinders is very antiquated,” Denison said. “There are instructions that describe exactly how to attack mechanical lock plugs. So to stay ahead of the curve, is to go with electronic locking systems.”

Denison hopes to tap into the telemetry market as well. He feels mechanical locks are holding back the telemetry process, by not allowing operators to dynamically route their drivers. The example Denison uses is one of route switching.

“Say there’s a banquet taking place on a location for one of your routes and the driver is tied up,” Denison said. “An operator using telemetry will want to re-route other drivers to the first route to ensure that their routes are being serviced. With mechanical locking mechanisms, those drivers may not have keys to the machines on another driver’s route, thus slowing down the process.”

By installing the electronic locks complete with telemetry, route drivers will be able to route their drivers on the go.

Retrofit technology is a worthwhile concept for vending operators to explore. It allows operators to take advantage of current technology without having to completely replace an entire fleet of vending machines, and has long-term revenue and security benefits as well. | ◀



TriTeq announces its new VendIQ line of electronic vending machine locks.

These intelligent locks truly are the smart choice for machine security. As the industry moves toward complete intelligent vending solutions, VendIQ can keep up – while providing maximum protection for your business. These advanced electronic locks provide all the functionality you need now and support your future technology investments:

- ▶ Telemetry-enabled
- ▶ Dynamic routing support
- ▶ Smart keys for remote activation
- ▶ Fully Autotraq-compatible so you can track access events and control key parameters
- ▶ Immune to drilling and picking
- ▶ Direct replacement for locks on the most popular machines



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