

HOW TO MAKE HEALTHY PRODUCTS PROFITABLE

Vending customer – “You need to put more healthy items in this machine!”

Vending operator – “The healthy foods don’t sell, why should I put them in the machine just to let them go bad and then throw them away?”

This little give and take goes on thousands of times everyday at thousands of locations across the country. The first question I have is what exactly is “healthy food”? Is it low fat? Low carb? Low cal? Low sodium? Is it some magical combination? The prevailing thought today is the minimum standard of 35-10-35 is what is needed to be healthy. What exactly is 35-10-35? Simply, one serving of the packaged item cannot have more than 35% of the calories be from fat, no more than 10% of the calories can be from saturated fat, and no more than 35% of the total weight can be sugar. Does this make the food “healthy” or does it mean it isn’t too “unhealthy”? Either way, there are lots of foods that you probably already sell that meet these requirements.

Please allow me to take a little sidetrack for a moment; I will bring it all together shortly. NAMA teamed up with Harris Interactive to conduct a rather extensive poll of vending machine users and non-users alike; the results were very interesting. As the old saying goes “perception is 90% of reality;” what this means to the vending industry is that people believe things that are not true because that is what they have always known. Here are a few of the interesting findings from the Harris poll about the vending industry/vending machines.

- 27% of the people polled never use vending machines.
- 57% said they always or often pay attention to the nutritional content of items they buy.
- 23% said if they could read the “Nutrition Facts label” on foods in vending machines they would be more likely to use vending machines.
- 80% said they are not aware of the vending industry offering healthy snacks.
 - 78% of vending USERS were not aware of the healthy snacks offered in vending machines.
 - 87% of NON-USERS were not aware of the healthy snacks offered in vending machines.
- 37% of the non-users of vending machines said the reason they do not use vending machines is there are no healthy foods in the machines.
- 68% said they browse the machine before they make their purchase.
- 75% of users and 35% of non-users would be more likely to use a vending machine if it had a guaranteed delivery system like “Golden Eye” or “Sure Vend”.
- 85% of those surveyed were not even aware the guaranteed delivery technology existed.

“How does this help me” you ask? Let’s recap:

Your customers and potential customers pay attention to nutritional information, they read the Nutrition Fact label, they would be more willing to buy from your vending machine if they knew it had healthy food in it and they look over the whole machine before they buy. Just those facts alone are gold for you. If you could increase your sales without having to get any new locations what would that be worth to you? Let’s assume that this poll is a good representation of your locations and 27% of the people at your location never use your vending machine; supposing your location has 100 people, that means you have 27 potential new customers, already there, you don’t need to get a new location or buy any extra equipment. How do you get those customers to buy from you? Here is where I tie into the first paragraph - you are already selling several items that fall under the 35-10-35 healthy standard. You don’t even need to change your product mix, you just have to get the word out to that 27% and let them know you sell healthy food and they need to know which items they are. Here is one idea we have put into use and it has been a big success with our customers.

1. We used the existing "point of sale" window on the front of the machine to advertise we sell healthy foods. This little sign tells them we sell healthy foods and explains what 35-10-35 is.
2. We made up little nutrition labels for those healthy products and attached them to the shelf above the product.



Friday's Skins - Cheddar/Bacon

Calories	130	Cal. from Fat	30
servings per pack	1	% Daily Value	
Total Fat	3g		4%
	Sat. Fat 1g		5%
	Trans Fat 0g		
Total Carbs.	24g		8%
	Fiber 1g		5%
	Sugars 1g		
Protein	1g		

The sign in the Point of Sale window makes people aware we sell healthy food out of the machine and the labels tell them which ones they are and give the customer the information they are looking for. There are a few other steps you can take to go even further by adding a few more healthy items to your machine; items people like to eat that they may not know are healthy foods. Who would have guessed that *TGI Friday's Cheddar & Bacon Potato Skins* would qualify as healthy? What is the total cost of this? The paper and ink cost less than \$0.05 for the Point of Sale sign and less than \$0.01 per label, the labor was about 30 seconds per label (once I had the template set up in Excel, which is available for free on our website www.weymouthdist.com) total cost for the Point of Sale sign and 8 labels? Less than \$0.20 per machine; you will recoup that \$0.20 on your first sale and you will have just increased your potential customers by 27% and possibly prompted greater sales from the people that currently buy from your machine.

One last thing, if you have some type of guaranteed delivery system on your machines make sure your customers are aware of it. 85% of the population doesn't know this technology exists; 75% of your current customers and 35% of the people that do not use vending machines said they would buy more if the machines had this technology. It is on your machine, you paid for it, and customers want it; find a way to let the users of your machines know it is there and raise their confidence level in you, your machines and your business again, at no extra cost to you.