

VENDING INTERNATIONAL

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THE FUTURE OF VENDING

- MORE space for products
- MORE environmentally friendly
- MORE economical to run

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Top marks for hands-free dispensing

Specialists in water coolers and drinks dispensers are experiencing a growing demand for contactless dispensing in schools, colleges and universities now that things are back to normal after two years of intermittent COVID closures and restrictions.



In addition, and particularly in this demographic group, environmentally friendly solutions with no single-use plastics that suit larger volume refill bottles are key.

UK business development manager, for Zerica, Gemma Tuxford, says: "Touchless dispensing can be most easily achieved by retrofitting pedals to an existing machine. Substituting standard buttons for touch-free 'hover' buttons is also relatively straightforward on some models.

"Interestingly, in educational settings, using NFC technology could potentially be an inspired option. Many students carry around

NFC cards or similar with them all day not only to gain access into certain buildings, but also to pay for food at the cafeteria. The wallet facility already embedded in these cards could easily be used to deduct payments. Given water is such a basic requirement, certain outlets at certain times of day could even be set to result in zero charge being deducted with the card simply used to initiate dispensing in a contactless way. As basic information such as usage data and personal preferences can be collected on NFC devices, students could use this information to check that they are drinking enough water.

"The most sophisticated machines use an individual's mobile phone to connect directly to the machine via Bluetooth, with payments also authorised and managed via mobile phone. These types of solution would obviously be more suited to teachers and university age students.

"Some of these solutions also dispense juices and even hot drinks. Obviously such machines require more attention on an ongoing basis, however they can offer an excellent way for people to hydrate."

Gemma says: "IoT-enabled machines can be managed from any location and information accessed directly onscreen, via laptop or mobile phone. You can change

target temperature or portion sizes and receive alerts based on real-time usage for filter and CO2 canister replacement. You also get reminders when a flush or periodic maintenance is due with the ability to run a diagnostic and perform a quick servicing check at any time. Technicians connect remotely to carry out non-intrusive, speedy and ecologically-friendly technical interventions.

There are a wide range of coolers for this market sector including foot pedal operated units models with contactless 'hover' buttons and mobile app-enabled solutions.

