

Ice & Water Dispensers... Provide More To Customers

by **Michael A. Rice**, Product Marketing Manager, Follett Corporation



Every business is looking for ways to provide more value to its customers in today's challenging times. The Office Coffee and Water Service business is no different.

Operators are upgrading coffee programs to provide higher quality offerings. Concern for social responsibility has operators developing "fair trade" programs and discouraging bottled water and its environmental impact. Operators are now more attentive to customers' interest in safety and sanitation. A good way is to provide an upscale office coffee and water program, that helps clients become more socially responsible, improves safety and sanitation and introduces ice and water dispensers.

Ice – a valued amenity

Most people in this country like ice. People also like to chew ice when their drinks are finished. Several studies have revealed that over 50% of the population enjoys chewing ice.

Ice can solve the problem of running out of chilled water at break times. Most coolers only have limited capacity to chill water and, often, the first couple of people with 32 or 48 ounce containers will use up all the available chilled water. With ice, your clients can provide a limitless amount of ice cold water, even at peak periods.

Sale of iced coffees, iced teas, flavor packets, soft drinks, energy drinks, and other beverages all benefit from the availability of ice.

The issues with traditional ice machines

Traditionally, ice has been available in offices from either the refrigerator or an icemaker that is installed under a counter. Many OCS operators who have experience with these types of ice machines say they have not been good. The typical undercounter ice-



maker is either an installation challenge, a maintenance issue or a drain problem.

Clients also complain of cross contamination from unsanitary coworkers who scoop their cups through the ice bin or who may store their lunch or other food in the ice storage area.

Ice and water dispensers – a new paradigm for office ice

Ice and water dispensers provide the opportunity for clients to switch from expensive and environmentally harmful bottled water while avoiding the pitfalls of traditional icemakers. Today's ice and water dispensers are:

- Sanitary with hands-free dispense activation by lever, button or infrared sensing
- Easy to install and maintain by placing on a counter or stand with easy drain connections
- Efficient, using less water and energy than traditional cube machines.

Go "Green" – save money, too

Ice and water dispensers drastically reduce the costs to provide water and the environmental footprint of bottled water. For a 100 person office, a single ice and water dispenser can eliminate either

hundreds of 5 gallon water bottles or about 25,000 single serve bottles per year – and save up to \$5,000 annually.

A dispenser for all applications

Most ice and water manufacturers carry a complete line of dispensers that can be sized to store up to 100 pounds of ice and make up to 25 pounds per hour. This will satisfy a population of over 300 employees. Dispensers can be placed on a counter, a floor stand, or even on a wall. They can be provided with their own filtration systems or use a common source of filtered water.

"Chewable" ice – the icing on the drink

Most ice and water dispensers have icemakers that produce a softer form of ice called extruded or "chewable" ice. Studies have shown that 2/3 of the population, and up to 90% in some areas, prefer chewable, extruded ice to a traditional cube ice. Even *The Wall Street Journal* ran a front page article on the growing popularity of chewable ice last year.

So, if you are looking for a new way to delight your clients in 2009, consider turning their coffee and office water program into a coffee, office water, and ice program.