

## COMPETITOR ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON

### COIL MACHINES

#### Limited Dispensing Options

Uses 4, 6 or 8 coils that lay horizontally on Product Trays or Product Chutes as dispensing mechanisms. There are several brands of coil machines, all essentially the same in concept and quality. Dispensing options are limited by the size of the coil and Product Chute.

#### Many medication packets will not dispense correctly to cause frustrated consumers

Items to be dispensed must fall within a narrow size range as stated in instructions for a Coil machine: "The size of the item being vended must larger than the Helix Coil, but smaller than the Product Chute to vend correctly. Never force an oversized item into the Helix Coil or Product Chute, nor attempt to vend an item that is smaller than the Helix Coil as this will create problems and deter customers". There is no further information to help coil machine owners select products that will vend correctly.

#### Inconsistent vending causes extra service work

All products move forward whenever a Helix Coil is turned by the rotation of the attached coin mechanism. Items that are smaller than the Helix Coil fall out to jam the machine while items that are larger than the Helix Coil or Product Chute hang up or get stuck and will not vend consistently if at all. Since medication packets come in so many sizes these problems are common to coil machines and owners must deal with the time and expense of repeated service work.

#### Refill procedure takes the same amount of time as Fast-Aid Center and yields unreliable results

The refill procedure can only be done on site as the coils are fixed inside the machine. Their small size and close spacing to each other create a restrictive working space making the refill procedure awkward. Individual packets must be maneuvered around each coil loop so that the bottom is resting on the Product Tray or Chute but not on the coil itself. The packet is likely to become misshapen and will need to be straightened out being sure to leave the bottom resting on the Product Tray. An incorrectly positioned product will not dispense and even a correctly positioned product can shift into an incorrect position as it is pushed forward by the coil.

### FAST-AID CENTERS

#### Numerous Dispensing Options

Uses one dispensing mechanism to vend items from 4, 6 or 8 vertical dispensing channels. Numerous items are standardized to fit the machines through the use of containers to give owners more dispensing options. All models are essentially the same in concept and quality with the Series I-6 used here for comparison purposes.

#### All medication packets dispense correctly to keep consumers satisfied

Each item to be dispensed is first placed in its own paper sleeve and then into the machine. Smaller to same-size items fit into the sleeve while items are folded first. Since the sleeve always fits the machine all sizes of medication packets and similar items will vend correctly. Sleeves may be used to dispense multiple items as well such as a first aid kit with an antiseptic wipe, first aid cream and band aid. Other Fast-Aid models dispense larger and/or multiple items such as earplugs, hairnets, cough drops, cough drops in combination with OTC medications, etc.

#### Consistent vending eliminates unnecessary service work

The sleeve gives each item enough firmness making it possible to place it in a vertical, three-sided channel where it is held securely in place as it moves downward into position for dispensing. Items cannot fall out of the dispensing channel to jam the machine nor will they hang up or get stuck to cause missed vends. The result is consistent vending eliminating unnecessary service work.

#### Refill procedure takes the same amount of time as Coil Machines and yields reliable results

Sleeves may be filled all-at-once for several fills at a time and place of your own choosing. On-site work is then quick and easy as the refill channel tray lifts completely out and hangs on the front of the machine or sits on a flat surface for easy access. The open front and vertical design of each dispensing channel makes it possible to load several sleeved packets at one time. The sleeved products will not become misshapen while being loaded into the machine and will not shift into an incorrect position as they move downward into position for dispensing. Note that sleeves recycle through a slot on the right hand side of the machine for use over and over again.

## COMPETITOR ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON

### COIL MACHINES

#### Coin mechanisms invite tampering and breakage

Coil machines are designed to operate with multiple coin mechanisms and put economy ahead of quality. No matter what material has been used, coil machine mechanisms are easy to manipulate. Flat objects, quarters glued in place or coffee straws are some of the ways used to free-vend products. Owners of one brand of coil machine report that the coin mechanism handles frequently break off and must be replaced. Some brands require that the entire machine be sent to the factory for coin mechanism adjustment while other brands offer adjustable coin mechanisms. Adjustable coin mechanisms must remain inside the machine while fourteen discs are removed and replaced with a combination of old and new discs. The process isn't easy and one potential customer stated, "Operator's manual very difficult for me to understand, particularly the sections on Changing the Coin Sub-Assembly and Loading the Product".

#### Machine quality and design lead to the expense of repair and replacement

One brand of coil machine issued a bulletin alerting customers that the doors on their machines "could easily be replaced should vandalism occur". It was also stated that a heavy-duty door was "available upon request and at an additional charge". Another manufacturer's manual advises that transporting their machine with the "stand attached or with the product loaded could cause excessive stress on the internal components and on the stand, resulting in damage and voiding your warranty".

### FAST-AID CENTERS

#### Coin mechanism noted for tamper resistance and longevity

Fast-Aid Centers have been designed to operate with one coin mechanism making it possible to utilize a mechanism noted for its quality rather than economy. The all-metal Northwestern coin mechanism is the industry standard when it comes to durability and tamper resistance. Coinage adjustments are made by adding one coin wheel to the mechanism or exchanging one coin mechanism assembly (coin mechanism mounted on plate) for another. The assembly is removed by unfastening four screws and only four more screws need be removed to take the coin mechanism apart if using the coin wheel. Less time and money will be spent with these procedure than will be spent on returning an entire machine to the manufacturer or trying to adjust and "adjustable" coin mechanism. Adding a coin wheel or replacing one coin mechanism assembly with another is easy and will not compromise the integrity of the Northwestern coin mechanism.

#### Machine quality and design save the expense of repair and replacement

Fast-Aid Centers are constructed of heavy-duty 16 and 18-gauge steel and are designed to look good and deter tampering and vandalism. Fast-Aid Centers leave the factory ready for any environment and do not require the purchase of additional heavy-duty parts. Fast-Aid Centers are tough enough to be carefully moved with the stand attached and/or the product loaded without damage to the machine. A customer sums it up with: "I just wanted to send you this note to say THANKS. I have a very large customer in the Textile Industry that has tried every vending machine on the market with no luck. They came to me and asked if I had anything that would hold up to their hostile environment. I told them about your machine and they ordered one. I placed that machine in one of their sixty plants nine months ago. I haven't had to touch this machine except to add product to it". (6/02)