

Hoffman Healthy: How Elkay's Smartwell® Beverage System Reduces Costs, Improves Hydration and Promotes Sustainability



THE CHALLENGE

At Hoffman Auto Group – a family-owned auto dealership group based in the greater Hartford, Connecticut area – employee health and customer satisfaction are always top-of-mind. Having been in operation for nearly a century, it is one of the most respected and well-known businesses in the state.

With 10 locations across four Connecticut towns, a network of 550 employees, and hundreds of customers walking through its dealerships every day, Hoffman sought a beverage offering that would both positively impact the shopping experience for customers and promote employee wellness.

THE SOLUTION

In February 2017, Hoffman installed seven of Elkay's innovative Smartwell® units in six of its dealerships. An intuitive beverage delivery system from Elkay®, Smartwell delivers chilled, fresh, filtered water – still or sparkling – in an innovative way by offering customizable flavor options, plus enhancements like vitamin C, electrolytes and caffeine.

Through its unique offerings and focus on clean water delivery, Smartwell is encouraging healthy hydration across Hoffman Auto Group's locations. In fact, Hoffman even took it upon themselves to create "Hoffman Healthy" signage alongside the units, reinforcing its company's own health-driven mission to employees and customers alike.

The response from employees and customers has been overwhelmingly positive. "When I'm walking through our dealerships and I see customers near in the unit, I'll offer them a beverage and point out the flavored water and a variety of options while giving a quick run-down on the machine," said Bill Lauridsen, Hoffman's Audi store manager. "They're excited about it and eager to try."

Thanks to full service connectivity using smart technology, Hoffman staff are alerted when a particular flavor or vitamin enhancement is running low, so Elkay can automatically send replacements as needed. Elkay also has full visibility into traffic, usage and user preferences, so they can anticipate when Hoffman will need a new CO2 tank, or suggest new flavors based on the latest offerings or what's trending in other locations. For example, after seeing that one of Hoffman's Smartwell units was receiving lower usage compared to other locations, the Elkay team provided recommendations to move it to a higher traffic area where it could be more accessible for guests.

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"I have the ability to change the flavors here, but Elkay can monitor the usage and proactively change the settings on our machines to adapt to new flavors, maintenance or other needs," said Lauridsen. "The service has been really good and makes it easier on our staff."

"Smartwell's service capabilities are second to none," said Matt Cremins, Manager of National Accounts at Elkay. "Because Smartwell is a fully connected unit, we can anticipate customer needs before they happen – whether that's replacing CO₂ tanks, restocking flavors or adding new vitamins to the mix."

THE RESULTS

After installing Smartwell, Hoffman saw benefits in multiple categories, improving customer satisfaction, helping the environment and supporting the bottom line.

In fact, Hoffman saw significant cost savings at each of its locations as the units dramatically cut down spending on bulk purchases of bottled water and canned soda.

"One of the reasons we brought Smartwell in was to eliminate the beverages we were purchasing on a regular basis while still providing guests with a variety of beverage options," said Lauridsen. "That was one of our primary goals, and we've succeeded."

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Not only has it saved the dealerships money, but Smartwell offers Hoffman's employees and customers healthy alternatives to sugary soft drinks, at no expense to the user. Access to flavored water with optional enhancements like vitamin C and electrolytes proved to be an unexpected amenity that improved employee and customer satisfaction.

In addition, Smartwell promotes environmental sustainability by reducing the number of single-use plastic bottles and aluminum cans that would otherwise end up in landfills. Since introducing Smartwell, Hoffman has significantly cut back on the amount of waste produced at each of its locations, furthering its mission of being 'Hoffman Healthy' to the environment.

"Everyone's excited about it, because it's something new that they haven't seen before," added Lauridsen. "And, they have the choice of the different flavors and different varieties. [Customers] are excited when they realize what it is, and the feedback has been all positive."

Looking ahead, Hoffman Auto Group plans to expand Smartwell to additional dealerships.