



## Healthier Options in Vending Case Study – Site A

Site A is a large Tasmanian state owned organisation, based on the CBD fringe of Hobart. The company has several worksites around the state, with this site serving as the main administrative centre. Approximately 180 employees have daily access to the site. The majority of employees are white-collar professional and administrative staff. In late 2010, two other sites will be amalgamated into this site, bringing the total staff onsite to 240.

The organisation is a motivated employer, providing several health and wellbeing incentives for its staff. For example, regular presentations on health-related areas of interest are provided, and support for participation in events such as the Point to Pinnacle, City to Casino and Bike Week are encouraged. A new on-site gym is also currently under construction.

The food service facilities at the site are extensive, with a fully equipped kitchen available for all staff. The kitchen includes access to a fridge, oven, grill, hotplates, toasted sandwich maker and microwave. There are plans for the future to have the kitchen staffed at lunchtime, supplying additional catering options. The nearest shop or alternate food outlet is approximately a 15-20 minute walk one-way. Free fruit is available in the kitchen, provided by the organisation.

The kitchen area also hosts a vending machine, stocked by a staff member on-site (i.e. no vending machine supplier is involved). The vending machine is a combination drinks and snacks machine, with four (4) drink slots, ten (10) small slots (suitable for chocolate bars or other types of bars) and eight (8) large slots (suitable for chips, cookies, etc). The slots are not adjustable. The machine is provided as a service for staff and is positioned to recover costs, as opposed to raise revenue.

Site A were happy to be involved in a trial of healthier vending options, and agreed to participate in a three (3) month trial. The trial began in early April 2010 and concluded in late June 2010.

A pre-trial survey was distributed to all staff via the site intranet service. However, a very poor response rate was received (<5%). It was felt that the contents of the vending machine were a very low priority for most staff.

Of the surveys returned, comments were very mixed:

*“Having healthier options would encourage more [company name]ers to eat better foods.”*

*“We are grown adults, we do not need [company name] to dictate our eating habits. It’s also very debateable whether the proposed “healthy” choices are particularly healthy anyway.”*

Given the poor response rate, a post-trial survey was not implemented.

At the start of the trial, the following product mix was available:

- 91% red products (20 slots, holding a mixture of chocolate bars, chips, cookies and soft drinks)
- 9% amber products (2 slots, holding 1 x Diet Coke and 1 x roasted/salted nut mix)

Using the results of the survey, plus the known availability of products at the time, a shopping trip was conducted with the staff member facilitating the vending machine stock and the project officer. The following products were purchased:

- John West Tuna to Go
- Uncle Tobys Le Snak
- Uncle Tobys Fruit Fix

All of these foods were rated as amber using the nutrient criteria. It was decided that the current amber products were to remain available.

It was decided that, due to the extensive nature of the onsite kitchen facilities, combined with the nature of the regular working hours of staff at the site, products such as single serve microwaveable meals and/or breakfast cereals would not be suitable.

During the course of the trial, two additional amber products were trialled. These were Continental Cup-a-Soups, and Sprite Zero.

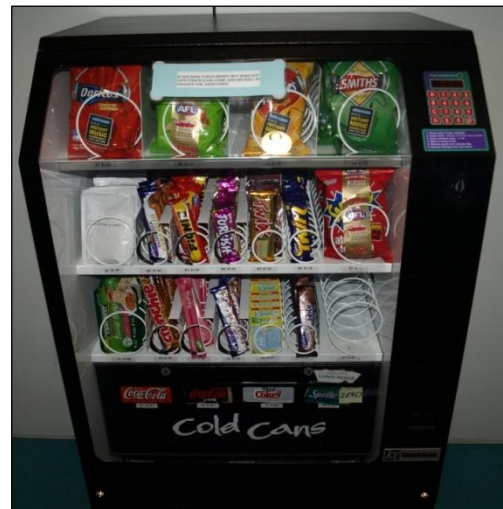
At the conclusion of the trial period, the following product mix was available:

- 68% red products (15 slots, holding a mixture of chocolate bars, chips and soft drinks)
- 27% amber products (6 slots, holding one each of the following products; Diet Coke, Zero Sprite, Tuna to Go, Le Snak, Fruit Fix, Cup-a-Soup)
- 5% empty slots (1 slot, usually containing a nut mix)

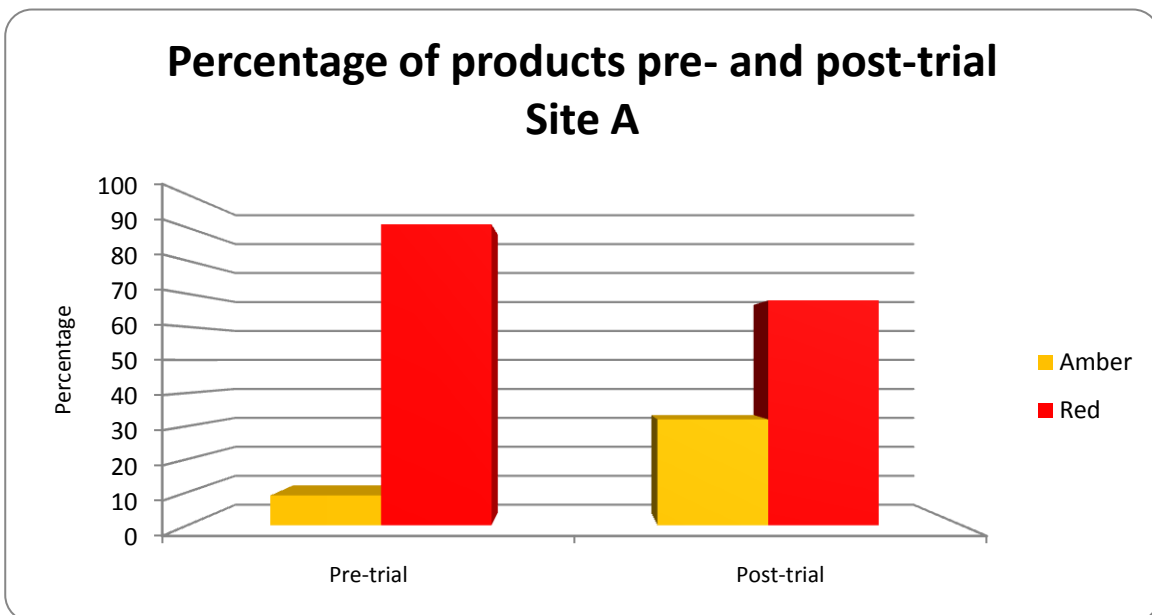
The following graph shows the changes in food categories pre- and post-trial. To reflect normal conditions, the empty slot in the post-trial situation has been converted to an amber product.



Pre-trial vending machine



Post-trial vending machine



Site A has seen a reduction in available red categorised products, and a corresponding increase in amber products. Over the course of the trial, the following sales were achieved:

- 52 units of John West Tuna to Go
- 15 units of fruit and nut bags
- 6 units Uncle Tobys Fruit Fix
- Unknown units of Uncle Tobys Le Snak and Continental Cup-a-Soup

The Fruit Fix products were a poor seller, probably due to the availability of free fruit in the kitchen.

At the conclusion of the trial, the staff member responsible for the stock was happy to continue stocking healthier items, especially the tuna, fruit and nut bags and Le Snak.

Without a post-trial survey, it is somewhat difficult to arrive at conclusions as to the success or otherwise of the trial. Ultimately, if the site operator is happy to continue with the healthier options that are selling well, this is a good result.

It is expected that as new products continue to be sourced, these will be brought to the attention of the site operator and hopefully trialled in the future.

This case study highlights the importance of having a motivated and committed workplace on board in enabling the changeover to healthier options. It also highlights the difficulties in sourcing alternative and suitable products in the snack food range.