

Snack and coffee breaks powered by IoT at vending and coffee machines

- **Business needs** – A reliable provider for connectivity to provide highly secure remote near-real time machine monitoring and management for coffee and vending operators. Secure connectivity ensures quick and safe payments, remote management, near real-time monitoring, and route planning
- **Networking solution** – AT&T IoT solutions enhance efficiency and sustainability with remote machine management and near-real time monitoring solutions; they also facilitate secure mobile payments
- **Business value** – A way to avoid unnecessary visits, optimize business costs and make data-based decisions for business growth
- **Industry focus** – Business intelligence, telemetry, and payments
- **Size** – Customer base in more than 90 countries

About Vendon, LLC

Vendon, LLC provides advanced global IoT, telemetry, and payment products for vending and coffee businesses. It offers reliable, easy-to-use solutions for real-time machine monitoring and remote management. The world's largest food and beverage brands and thousands of smaller companies across the globe depend daily on Vendon for remote management of their machines and for revenue growth.

The situation

Vendon wanted to increase access to cashless payment solutions and enable vendors to remotely manage and analyze machine performance (such as sales data, consumer behavior and preferences, and inventory) to avoid machine downtime. Vendon solutions allow efficient and smart data-based business decisions all the while enhancing sustainability and saving resources.

Solution

The AT&T IoT Global SIM enhances Vendon's value to its customers. The highly secure connectivity it delivers to vending and coffee machines powers not only diverse contactless payment options, but as well as a secure way of transferring telemetry data like sales information. These include contactless debit and credit cards, near-field communication (NFC) mobile, smart devices, and closed-loop methods. The connectivity also enables Vendon and its customers to know which machines need to be restocked or repaired. This helps to optimize drivers' delivery routes, preventing unnecessary trips, saving time and mileage, supporting more sustainable operations.

Valuable insights for clients

Vendon provides global IoT, telemetry, and payment solutions for vending and coffee businesses. Its business intelligence and telemetry solutions allow thousands of companies remote, real-time management of their machines.

The company's IoT and telemetry platform consists of two main components. The first is the IoT device vBox2, and the second is Vendon Cloud.

vBox2 transmits machine data to the secure Vendon Cloud over cellular networks in real-time. The Vendon Cloud contains custom-configured dashboards, detailed reports and analytics, route planning, monitoring, and remote management tools.

Together these two components provide Vendon clients with powerful reporting and business analytics tools. They give clients valuable insights into their

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consumers' behavior, consumption patterns, and machine and product performance.

Janis Jukna, Vendon Head of Sales, credits AT&T Business with enabling these client benefits and supporting Vendon's global growth. “AT&T has helped us to get to those 90+ countries,” he said. “Having a good relationship with AT&T Business from the technical and commercial side has had the largest impact for us.”

“It's important to be confident that our device will work with no connectivity issues if we send it to a remote island in the Caribbean,” Jukna said. “AT&T Business has really great tools so we can check to see what kind of connectivity we will have.” The relationship also provides peace of mind for Vendon customers. “AT&T is a well-known brand, which gives us more credibility.”

A one-stop shop for customers

After more than a decade of delivering global IoT and telemetry services, the Vendon team decided to expand into the payment marketplace. “The industry is moving away from cash sales,” Jukna said. “We wanted to provide a full cashless payment solution to our customers. Besides, the pandemic gave us a great

opportunity to do so. We were able to deliver a solution within a year which is quite a fantastic pace for a project of such complexity.”

The company envisioned a payment system that would enable its clients’ vending and coffee machines to accept a wide range of contactless payments. “We wanted to become a one-stop shop for our customers to both manage their machine fleets and ensure that their end consumers can pay in various ways,” he said.

Vendon Marketing Manager Ieva Saliņa added that the company strives for enabling the most efficient route planning. In addition to the already established telemetry solutions that provide advanced analysis and management of machines, with Route Planning solution, Vendon improves delivery and product stock efficiency. Thanks to the granular information about each machine’s inventory, clients can determine when it’s time to restock the machine and with which products, and to control the task planning to carry out technical maintenance of the machines.

“We have a great relationship with AT&T Business, so from a technological perspective we have more or less everything we need to enter new markets.”

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Carrying more inventory in terms of products and tools for technical maintenance would require larger trucks, and drivers would have to visit every location to check the machines’ inventory. “If a client has 1,000 vending machines and needs to maintain stock for all of them, that’s expensive,” Salina said. “And it’s a lot of driving around, which is not environmentally sustainable.” With telemetry, all information is always at hand – the exact product amount in each machine as well as alerts about any technical issues, allowing employees to visit it, when necessary, with the right tools. Besides, the money flow can be controlled much better by ordering the product stock that is kept in the warehouse – with telemetry no funds are frozen in excessive amounts of goods that are waiting to be delivered to the machines.

Secure and reliable connectivity

To introduce enhanced payment options and deliver valuable logistics insights to its clients, Vendon needed secure and reliable connectivity. “Connectivity is extremely important. Our clients need real-time data about stock levels and items’ sell-by dates,” Jukna said. “If they don’t have reliable connectivity, there’s no point in the solution.”

Having an ongoing relationship with AT&T Business made it easy for Vendon to ask for suggestions. AT&T Business recommended using the AT&T IoT Global SIM, which provides highly secure connectivity in more than 200 countries and territories. The IoT solution easily delivers connectivity to customers’ vending machines. It also powers various contactless, mobile, and closed-loop payment solutions, including cash, credit, and debit card purchases.

Valuable consumer insights

Vendon is able to offer its customers various enhanced features that are mainly supported by one hardware device and are easily managed in a single online platform. “Vendors use a telemetry device vBox2 for communication with the machine,” Jukna said. “Upon connecting the device to the machine, all real-time data is collected and transmitted to Vendon Cloud, a single platform for using all provided solutions as well as analyzing machine data and receiving technical alerts.”

To enable contactless payments, a small contactless reader is required that is compatible with the vBox2, and provides multiple payment methods. “Vendon Cloud also enables remote management of voiding a transaction or returning money to a customer,” Jukna said. Onboarding is much easier, and the vendors don’t have multiple systems to mess with. Just one Vendon Cloud system.

AT&T IoT connectivity transports data about the coffee and vending machines to Vendon’s cloud computing application service, providing its customers with valuable insights about consumer behavior and machine and product performance.

“There’s one standard fee for data usage,” Jukna said. “We put in the AT&T IoT Global SIM card and ship the device around the world. It’s great because we don’t have to think about whether the device will be in Jamaica or the U.S. or South Africa. We know AT&T Business has roaming agreements in place, so it’s seamless.”

Supporting a greener planet

AT&T also helps Vendon and its customers optimize delivery routes to save time and miles. “One of the largest benefits that vending and coffee machine operators get from Vendon telemetry is that they can see what’s going on with their machines remotely,” Jukna said. “They know exactly how many products and how much cash they have in each machine. That gives them the information to make decisions about which machines to visit and why.”

Salina noted that knowing which locations need products or service makes it easier for drivers to plan each day’s trips. “They know when they will visit each machine, so they can pack the truck in the right order, to save time and money,” she said. “They also know what needs to be done at each location, so they can bring the tools they need, so it’s much more efficient.”

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Vendon also makes it easier for customers to track problems that consumers have with individual machines and learn when repairs or cleaning services are required.

The company expects the solution to greatly improve its clients' operations. "Increasing inventory management efficiency enables clients to adjust pricing on products that are approaching their freshness expiration date," Salina said. "They can change the prices remotely to sell the item quicker and avoid food waste to support a greener planet."

Knowledge and support

Jukna said Vendon appreciates the knowledge and support that AT&T Business brings to the table. "AT&T Business expertise is extremely important for us," he said. "It helps us advise our customers about the most suitable device based on the network available at their locations. Afterwards we do the type of approval or certifications procedure. As the certifications are quite a time-consuming and costly process, we want to make sure our customers will be able to use our devices for a significant period of time in the market."



AT&T Business also helps Vendon officials keep abreast of local regulations. "We don't have resources to do all the research or keep up to date with everything that's happening in telecommunications," Jukna said. "AT&T expertise and global presence really help us."

Jukna added that he does not hesitate to recommend AT&T Business products and services to peers. "AT&T is a trusted brand, which helps us in the eyes of our customers."

Continuing innovation and expansion

Vendon continues to find ways to innovate and make life better for its customers and their consumers. "We must constantly listen to the market and think about new ways to serve our customers," Jukna said.

The Vendon team is continuously working on new initiatives and looks forward to developing innovative abilities for their customers. "We use AT&T Business's help in offering new kinds of service to our customers," he said. "We are working on a new device that would offer additional functionalities to our customers. This definitely means more data usage. We'll have a stellar partner in AT&T Business, so that we can be competitive in the market."

Vendon expects the AT&T Business solutions to support its continuing global expansion. "The U.S. is definitely an untapped market for us, and there's huge potential," Jukna said. "We have a great relationship with AT&T Business, so from a technological perspective we have more or less everything we need to enter new markets."