

Business

It's cheaper; it's cleaner, and its cooler

Company makes a splash with its state-of-the-art water coolers



David and John Flanders refresh customers with their Cooler Waters

It's hard to believe, but there's actually a company that can simultaneously cut an office bill in half, prevent a possible back injury and keep creepy bacteria out of the popular office water supply.

Cooler Waters, founded in 1997, has a high-tech, low maintenance solution to the traditional but necessary office water cooler.

With more than 500 clients throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic and "more than 10,000 people drinking our water every day," according to Cooler Waters' CEO and founder Dave Flanders, the company's simple yet sophisticated method of providing drinking water to the cubicle masses is taking off.

"Not a lot of companies do what we do," The Canton resident added.

The company's line of water coolers – some with the standard bottle on top and now some without – uses the existing water supply in an office or home to pump water through what Dave calls "a three-phase filter system" and supply clean water.

This also means that there are no water bottles to change store or lift. "The system "pushes water through to the cooler and purifies and sanitizes it," Dave said. The reservoir of the traditional water bottle systems, according to Dave, collects debris. "It's like putting clean water into a dirty glass," he said.

Cooler Water systems are sealed, which means the dispenser doesn't collect unhealthy bacteria or sediment. "Wherever you travel around the world, there's filtration at every water source," Dave said. "Here, we take water for granted. Yet, there are still some people who are skeptical of everything except bottled water.

"Our tap water here is regulated. It's being tested at every second of every day. "Think of our coolers as a miniaturized water treatment plant," he added. "The source of water is safe."

Despite the public cautiousness, using tap water from the source is finally starting to catch on, according to Dave's brother John Flanders, a resident of Simsbury who is a co-owner of the company and serves as the customer relations representative. "It was a bit of a struggle at first," John said, "but people are starting to embrace our system now. They're getting used to running their water lines and there's not as much reluctance about the technology.

"They love not having to touch the bottles or pick them up and they love not having to think about the cooler. In the last few years, the system has sold itself."

Some of the company's customers include Bob's Discount Furniture, Trinity College, The Hair Club for Men, Wesleyan University, the Goodwin Hotel and even the Queen Mary 2, the largest cruise ship in the world.

According to Jeanette Hancock, director of business services for Women's Health USA, Inc., the company has used Cooler Waters' system since they started the company in 1997.

"Dave cold called and I thought it was worth trying," she said. "I was tired of bottled water, of dropping the bottles on my toes and watching executives pour water down the front of their shirts."

"Their service is great," she added. "They know how to treat customers."

(Continued)

"We've been with them for so long, it's a friendship. I've been through their marriages, divorces, their kids... "Once, one of our coolers didn't work and we had a new one by the end of the day.

"We have eight units in our office, but we also have them in some of the doctors' offices we manage, and everybody loves it. We're very pleased with the product and the service. I highly recommend them to anyone."

Cooler Waters' success rate with new customers is extremely high, because they offer a program called "Test the Waters."

"All we ask is that you watch our five minute presentation online and let us put our cooler next to your old cooler for thirty days," Dave said. "Everybody who tries it goes with us. Only one to two percent of trial users don't."

Because of the technology, "the average savings on your water cooler bill is 50 to 70 percent on what you were paying before," he added.

"Normally, people will pay an average of \$75 per month. Our average is \$40. "If you run an office, you're always looking for ways to cut costs of services you have. It's a no-brainer, and there's no catch."

New customers have an added perk if they join: every other month of service is free for the first two years.

And maintenance doesn't seem to be a problem, according to the brothers.

"We don't get a lot of service calls," John said.

"No one ever complains," Dave said. "The phone doesn't ring too much. It's almost lonely."

The office, however, isn't lonely when the staff is moving around. The warm environment at Cooler Waters, located in one of the former Collins Axe Factory buildings, has been a bastion of comfort since they moved in there in 2000.

The pet-friendly offices, also staffed by Vixen, Dave's 16-year-old canine, houses a pool table, cable television and comfortable sofas – all surrounded by a view of the Farmington River with rushing waterfalls below and scenic Collinsville as their backdrop.

"We have a very laid back environment in this office," Dave said. "We want our staff to enjoy what they do, and we recognize that everyone here has a life outside of work. We can't fathom not having the freedom to be flexible."

Bell and whistles

Like any company on the rise, Cooler Waters has a lot of new products available, including coffee, in-counter water systems, and even ones that also provide the option of pouring still or sparkling water.

"We'd love to launch that product in spas and resorts," Dave said.

The company has also revamped its web site, www.coolerwaters.com, which now features CW, a water drop "water drop with the 'Risky Business' sunglasses," Dave said.

"He even has his own biography on the site."

Contact Cooler Waters at 860.693.1590 or toll-free at 877.266.5928.

