

H2.0: GOING BEYOND HYDRATION

The evolution of bottle fillers and water coolers for today's applications.

By Scott McClelland



Photos courtesy of Sloan.

Bottle fillers and water coolers have come a long way. In today's world, these hydration stations need to serve more than just their basic purpose of providing clean drinking water.

With the rise in environmental concerns and a shift toward sustainable practices, there has been a push for eco-friendly options that are also aesthetically pleasing.

First, there's the sustainability factor. Americans use about 50 billion disposable water bottles per year, wasting more than \$1 billion worth of plastic. That's not to mention that plastics from single-use plastic water bottles never fully decompose but instead are broken down into microplastics, which can end up in our bodies.

There's also a demand for aesthetics and maintenance support. Building professionals are requesting eco-friendly options that are both aesthetically pleasing as well as maintenance-friendly. These aspects were certainly not part of the water coolers of yesteryear.

The solution? New innovations from manufacturers to deliver bottle fillers and water coolers with durable and attractive materials, while also making life easier on maintenance and installation teams.

High design hydration

Traditional bottle fillers and water coolers were built for pure functionality. Installed in public spaces solely to provide access to clean drinking water, they were often clunky, with little thought given to their appearance or user experience.

However, with the increased focus on designing and creating aesthetically pleasing environments across a wide range of markets, bottle fillers and water coolers are required to deliver both form and function.

Manufacturers now develop bottle fillers and water coolers in sleek designs with durable and attractive materials. Finishes such as an everlasting stainless steel or black powder coated galvanized steel can offer a modern aesthetic. These fixtures are designed to blend in seamlessly with their surroundings, whether it's an office building, gym, or school, thus offering a stylish solution to any space.



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Research has also shown that 75% of school-aged children in the United States do not consume the recommended daily allowances for water, so providing children with updated bottle fillers is an important step to encourage hydration.

Easy access maintenance

What traditional bottle fillers and water coolers have historically lacked in aesthetic appeal, they lack even more in ease of maintenance.

In many older models, filters can be difficult to access due to tight spacing. Not only do maintenance teams need to remove the entire front frame from the cooler – they need to squeeze their hand into the fixture in order to twist and remove the filter. This can be a time-consuming process, not to mention painful.

Fortunately, newer models are designed with maintenance in mind, giving staff access and tools to make adjustments with ease. For starters, gaining access to the filter is now much easier. In some models, swing-open cabinets offer easy access to the filter and internal components, while convenient drop-down door assembly in other models provide easy access as well.

Maintenance indicators have also made great strides forward. Many older bottle fillers would display a red light to indicate the filter needed to be replaced. But from a maintenance perspective, if the team didn't replace the filter fast enough, guests would think there's something wrong with the bottle filler and stop using it. Updated models now feature a softer and more subtle ambient white light to indicate filter status while also helping prevent user deterrence.

Additionally, enhanced flexible mounting capabilities are conducive to seamless integration. New versatile bi-level designs allow for height customization during installation, such as standard high-left/low-right height (or vice versa) when bottle fillers and water coolers are installed side by side. This flexible design ensures a perfect fit in most spaces, enhancing usability and integration while meeting ADA requirements.

The importance of changing filters goes far beyond just ease of maintenance—it also extends to the crucial role that clean water plays in human health. Water filters help to deliver safer drinking water by reducing harmful contaminants and impurities, while minimizing PFOA and PFOS, the two most widely used chemicals in the PFAS group.

Proper hydration is a crucial component of a healthy lifestyle. Bottle fillers and water coolers play an important role in this mission. Sloan's new DropSpot Bottle Fillers deliver all these innovations, providing an aesthetically pleasing, easy-to-install, easy-to-maintain solution dispensing filtered clean drinking water for a wide range of applications to enhance safe and healthy hydration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott McClelland is Sloan's vice president marketing and product management. Sloan has been providing innovation in water-saving fixtures for 118 years.