

## **Buck & Hickman provides an innovative new vending solution**

Buck & Hickman, a leading supplier of tools, maintenance and health and safety products, has expanded its range of secure vending solutions for industrial stock management with the launch of RoboCrib. It uses Cribmaster inventory management software to control and record stock usage.

The larger RoboCrib 2000 can hold up to 2574 items yet only occupies a small footprint of just over five foot square and is seven foot high. The smaller 1000 model can hold and dispense up to 1050 items. The machines can also act as slaves so that they can work in combination with other devices as a single larger installation.

RoboCrib contains a series of carousels, twelve for the 2000 model. Carousels are made up of up to fifteen stacked circular trays, each can then be subdivided into pies or bins. Larger products can be managed stocked by simply removing one or more of the trays from the stack.

An individual can gain access by using a swipe card or by typing in their PIN on a touchscreen. Typically they would then enter information about their cost centre, workstation, project or work order before selecting the item they require using the screen. This item then moves into position before one or more of the fifteen doors unlocks and opens.

Using Cribmaster technology RoboCrib is programmed so that staff can have multiple or limited access to stock. Line managers can change these access permissions by using a special interface. When an item is removed the Cribmaster software updates the remaining inventory. It can also reorder stock online via a direct connection to Buck & Hickman or through an existing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. In addition, the system can manage shared tooling or serialised items by reporting on who is using the stock and if it has been returned. Low stock warnings can be sent by SMS text message or by email.

Cribmaster can control any combination of automatic locks or vending solutions. It is also adaptable, easy to upgrade and can produce more than 170 standard reports. These reports can show stock usage at several different levels, for example by individual user, product, departments, production cell or job number.

Other vending solutions available from Buck & Hickman range from medium to high security access. The most basic option controls access to a cabinet or cabinet drawer using an electronic lock. Higher security options, like RoboCrib, restrict users to single product access. Other high security vending solutions either control the opening of a drawer or single door or use a helix system where the item drops into a bucket - much like a conventional food vending machine.

Standard industrial storage units can be used for these solutions or the intelligent locking controller and Cribmaster software can be retrofitted onto existing cabinets.

Buck & Hickman's, Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) Manager Patrick Broster, said:

"We have successfully used Cribmaster inventory control software in VMI solutions for over a decade. Integrating the system into vending machines means we can mix and match the most appropriate solution for industrial stock management. For low value fast moving items we may recommend simple lineside cabinets with stock managed and replenished using a barcode driven kan ban system. Alternatively, controlling access to higher value and desirable items using vending technology can yield significant benefits for our customers."

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