

# Smart self-service food distribution in a Nordic hospital:

How Östersund's Hospital implements Selfly Store's intelligent vending machines





## Executive summary

Östersund's Hospital in Sweden has transformed food accessibility with Selfly Fridges, intelligent vending machines from Selfly Store. These fridges provide 24/7 food options for staff, patients, and visitors, addressing the challenge of limited food availability during off-hours.

The project began with six Selfly Fridges, leading to 1,367 unique consumers and over 6,000 transactions in six months. The success prompted the expansion to twelve units. These fridges offer sandwiches, salads, and food boxes produced by the hospital's cafe and restaurant.

Strategic placement was vital, with fridges located where staff presence was high, ensuring optimal utilization. Daily operations focus on reducing food waste through discounted items nearing expiration. Customized screens and QR codes on the fridges enhance user experience.

Feedback has been positive, with staff and visitors appreciating 24/7 access and reduced food waste. Selfly Fridges have optimized food outlet operations and offer a flexible solution for varying staff schedules. Success underscores the importance of understanding institutional needs and integrating feedback into strategies, emphasizing practicality and empathy for user satisfaction.





# Background to implementing Selfly Fridges at Östersund's Hospital

Östersund's Hospital, located in the region of Jämtland Härjedalen in Sweden, has taken a pioneering step in enhancing the convenience and accessibility of food for its staff, patients, and visitors. By implementing Selfly Store's intelligent fridges, the hospital has addressed several challenges related to food availability, especially during off-hours.

This case story is based on an interview with Carl-Johan Norrbelius, Food Manager in the region of Jämtland Härjedalen, who has been instrumental in this initiative. With a background as a restaurant manager, Carl-Johan is responsible for the café, restaurant, and the Selfly Fridges at the hospital.

Östersund Hospital currently employs around 3,000 individuals. Prior to the introduction of Selfly Store, the hospital already

had a small convenience store (Pressbyrån), a restaurant, and a café.

However, these facilities operated with limited hours, particularly during evenings and weekends. Given the vast size of the hospital, staff, especially those on higher floors, often found it challenging to access these outlets during their short lunch breaks. These challenges underscored the need for a solution like Selfly Store, which offers round-the-clock food accessibility close to where people perform their work.

## Taking the first steps of implementing the Selfly Fridges

The project started with six of Selfly Store's intelligent fridges to test and learn how to operate them, where to place them, and what assortment they should carry.

In six months, the Selfly Fridges have attracted 1,367 unique consumers, including doctors, staff, patients, and visitors, resulting in over 6,000 transactions.

And after the successful six-month evaluation period, the number of fridges has now been increased to twelve units. The food items sold in the fridges are produced by the café and the restaurant, with the café producing sandwiches and salads, while the restaurant focuses on food boxes.







## Strategic placement and utilization of the Selfly Fridges

At Östersund Hospital, the layout is vast. So, placing the intelligent fridge food outlets in the right locations was key. Carl-Johan's team carefully planned where to put the fridges to best serve everyone's needs. Through observation and analysis, they discovered that in areas primarily intended for hospital staff, there should be at least 70 staff members per fridge to ensure optimal utilization and turnover of the food items.

### Initial deployment:

The first phase comprised the deployment of six cabinets in key locations:

#### Hospital Café (2 cabinets):

The café, with its limited operating hours, found a valuable ally in the fridges. They allowed the café to extend its service hours without having the café itself open. With the fridges in place, the café could afford to open later, serving morning meals from the fridges. Over the weekend, when the café remains closed, sandwiches find their way into the cabinets. These are strategically priced to ensure minimal wastage - full price on Friday, 30% off on Saturday, and a whopping 50% off on Sunday. By Monday, the stocks are typically sold out, ensuring freshness and minimizing waste.

#### Surgical Unit Staff Room (1 cabinet):

Given the fast-paced nature of the surgical unit, where long operations are interspersed with brief breaks, there was a clear need for readily available meals. Food boxes, salads, and sandwiches became the go-to choices. An interesting adaptation involved the "Surgical Unit Friday Breakfast" tradition. While the breakfast is still served the traditional way, the Selfly Fridge has been innovatively used for payment. Instead of the usual bank or cash transactions, small chocolate pieces are placed in the fridge, each tagged with "Friday Breakfast" using RFID. Every Friday, around 60 doctors and nurses select their chocolate piece from the fridge, effectively paying for their breakfast in the process.

#### Administrative Building (2 cabinets):

This building is the hub for politicians and those in administrative roles within the healthcare system. They work regular office hours, and lunch boxes and salads are go-to products.

#### Medical Center (1 cabinet):

Catering to a diverse group, this fridge is stocked with a variety of items, notably quark and fruit-based products like Yoggi sells well.

Building on the success of the initial deployment of the six fridges, new Selfly Fridges have been introduced in specialized care departments. These include the Cardiology Department, Radiology, and the Maternity Ward. Additionally, recognizing the long waiting times and the need for convenience in the emergency room, a Selfly Fridge has been placed there. This particular fridge has become the top selling cabinet in the hospital, underscoring the importance of strategic placement. Patients and their families, often in for long waits, prefer items they can quickly grab, like sandwiches or yogurts.

Another noteworthy additional fridge is the "Save the Planet" unit on the ground floor, close to the café. This fridge exclusively stocks items nearing their expiry at a consistent 50% discount, aligning with the hospital's commitment to sustainability and waste reduction.



# Daily operations and management of the Selfly Fridges

Operating the refrigerators requires meticulous planning and monitoring. Carl-Johan uses a planning board to keep track of each refrigerator's content and location. He has also introduced a system to move food between different cabinets based on sales data and expected demand. To reduce food waste, discounted prices are offered on food approaching its best-before date. The special "Save the Planet" refrigerator sells only discounted items.

The Selfly Fridges come with integrated screens tailored for both advertising and communication. Carl-Johan has customized the visual and textual content on each cabinet to resonate with the specific audience of its location. Moreover, the screen has been used as a communication channel. For instance, when a billing error arose during the surgical unit's traditional Friday Breakfast, Carl-Johan swiftly addressed

the issue by broadcasting a clarifying message on the fridge's screen, eliminating the need for individual queries.

To make life easier for the fridge users, each Selfly Fridge has been equipped with a QR code. By scanning this code, users can easily access instructions of how to use the fridge and what to do if something goes wrong.

## Product assortment – less is more!

The contents of the fridges have been refined over time through experimentation and feedback. Initially, the fridges were filled based on assumptions, leading to an extensive range of products, especially in beverages.

However, data analytics and user feedback helped narrow down the selection, resulting in a focus on just six primary beverage brands. Many staff

members alternate between bringing their own meals and buying from the fridges, so a vast assortment isn't necessary. Since they don't purchase from the Selfly Fridge daily, there's little risk of them growing tired of the options. Sandwiches have proven to be the most popular, complemented by a mix of fresh foods and items with a longer shelf life, like yogurts. Importantly, candy was excluded from the selection, as other vendors within the hospital already cater to that demand more effectively.



*"We have managed to reduce food waste by 70% in the hospital. And being able to sell food through the Selfly Store fridges has been part of this. For example, we sell out all the food boxes we produce with a short date (portion packaging) through the "Save the planet" cabinet where everything is discounted by 50%."*



# Feedback and value of the Selfly Fridges at the hospital

The introduction of the Selfly Fridges at Östersund Hospital has been met with an overwhelmingly positive response from both staff and visitors. Their 24/7 availability has been a game-changer, especially given the limited operational hours of the hospital's other food outlets. Many view these fridges not just as a convenience but as a reflection of the hospital's dedication to meeting the diverse needs of its community.

A particularly notable aspect of the Selfly Fridges is their role in reducing food waste. By offering discounted items that are nearing their expiration, the hospital has not only minimized waste but also created an unexpected buzz. Staff quickly caught on to the discount schedules and locations, leading to a sort of "hunt" for the best deals. It's not uncommon to see groups gathering around the fridges, eager to snag a good offer, making it a unique blend of sustainability and community engagement.

Furthermore, the cabinets have optimized the operational hours of other food outlets in the hospital, offering a flexible solution to the varying schedules of the staff. The success of the Selfly Fridges underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the unique needs of a large institution like a hospital, and the value of integrating feedback into operational strategies.

6000  
Transactions

1,367  
Unique users

## Concluding insights from Carl-Johan:

For institutions considering the introduction of food fridges, Carl-Johan offers valuable guidance. He emphasizes the importance of strategic placement, tailoring to the specific needs of the target audience in each location. While variety is essential, simplicity in operation and product range is key; there's no need to overextend with too many options. Begin with a foundational approach, assess its effectiveness, and then refine based on real-world data and personal insights. In essence, it's about blending practicality with empathy, ensuring both efficiency and user satisfaction.

– Carl-Johan Norrbelius, Food Manager in the region of Jämtland





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the topic further?

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[www.selflystore.com](https://www.selflystore.com)

firstname.lastname@selflystore.com

