The Pod features interior lights and a touchless interface for safer delivery | Photo source Minnow

AN INSULATED FOOD DELIVERY POD FOR THE COVID ERA

A Portland company has developed a new way to organise contact-free food delivery for large buildings

Spotted: The coronavirus pandemic has upended the restaurant industry, possibly for the long-term. People are not going out as much, but they are ordering meals in much greater numbers. For those having meals delivered contact-free to their homes is easy – the driver simply knocks on the door and stands back. But what about food delivered to an office or apartment building? This is the problem Minnow hopes to solve.

Minnow has developed the Pod, an insulated, locking pod with a similar design to Amazon’s Lockers. Each pod features several individual lockers, into which the bag is placed, and the customer notified that their food has been delivered. The customer can then open the pod using an app. The pods also include antimicrobial surfaces and an easy-to-clean design.

The pod comes with software that can alert restaurants if a meal has not been picked up, or if it has been in the pod too long and is no longer within the range of food safety. Restaurants are also showing a lot of interest in using the pod for takeaway, or even eat-in orders: the orders could be placed in the pod, for customers to grab their food from without needing to interact with anyone.

According to a survey conducted by the company, 94 per cent of respondents said they would prefer their takeaway order be kept in a secure compartment, rather than sitting on an open shelf. CEO Steven Sperry explains that, “What that tells us is there’s a lot of anxiety around the food pickup experience.” Sperry hopes the Minnow Pod will provide a way to alleviate that anxiety.

It’s clear that delivery and pick up is the new going out, and it is likely to remain so even after the COVID-19 pandemic has abated. As a result, Springwise is seeing an explosion in innovations aimed
at making deliveries and pickups more efficient. These include drone delivery and location tracking tech that optimises curbside pickup to reduce waiting times.

Written By: Lisa Magloff

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15th October 2020
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Takeaway:

Minnow is currently focusing on placing the pods inside restaurants, offices and large-scale residential buildings, but the company also sees a future application for adding similar pods to single-family homes. Pricing is through a subscription model, so there is not a large up-front cost. Minnow recently completed a seed funding round, which raised $2.2 million, including money from Lincoln Property Company, which has buildings in 28 states. Even after the pandemic recedes, the flexibility of being able to pick up your food when you want, is likely to be popular.