Adapting to Changing Consumer Expectations and Behavior

By Charley DeBow

E
verything in life seems to be getting easier for people. If you have a ques-
tion, you just ask Alexa. My wife and I haven’t been to a supermarket to
do regular food shopping in three years. Amazon Fresh, Blue Apron, and
Amazon Pantry allow us to order 95 percent of our food online or by asking
Alexa. CLEAR is my favorite service for airports, and I estimate it saved me more
than $1,000 in change fees alone when I didn’t miss a flight because I could skip the
TSA lines. Convenience just isn’t enough; consumers want value. Don’t be fooled into
thinking they are one and the same.

According to Forrester Research, 77
percent of people say that valuing their
time is the most important thing a com-
pany can do to provide them with good
service. For the people who work in the
parking industry, it is critical to under-
stand these consumer trends because
they have major business implications.

Making Convenience a Priority
Consumers are no longer willing to tol-
erate poor experiences. They want to
get in and out of the parking facility as
quickly as possible without any hassle.
And if you can’t provide that level of ser-
vice, they will probably look for another
parking provider who can.

I fly to Atlanta twice a month. Last
year, Uber/Lyft were banned from pick-
ing up curbside, and now I must walk
to a separate area to meet my ride. The
way to the new pick-up area means I
walk past the taxi stand. In my mind,
this was not a coincidence, and I start-
ed taking taxis again. Taxis have made
up some ground in the battle with Uber/
Lyft, and now in most larger cities have
upgraded their cars and take credit
cards (happily, I might add). You need
to constantly evaluate not only your own
operation as well. Uber is great but does not
provide me enough value at the Atlanta
airport to not just hop in a taxi.

Creating a Positive Experience
If you think about your parking oper-
ation, you have to make sure you are
doing everything you can to create a
positive consumer experience at your
lot. Here are some key questions you
should be asking yourself:

■ Is it easy for consumers to get into my
facility?
■ Is it easy for consumers to find a
parking spot?
■ Do consumers have to
wait in a long line at a
kiosk to pay for
parking?
■ Are consumers able to pay using the
method they prefer: mobile app, cash,
credit cards, etc.?
■ Are consumers able to reserve park-
ing in my lot ahead of time?
■ Are consumers able to contact my
customer service team if there are
issues?

If the answer to many of these
questions is no, you are probably not
providing consumers with a great expe-
rience. Fortunately, there are technology
solutions out there that can help in
these areas.

If you are a parking provider, you
need to think more about the consum-
er. The days of relying on cars simply
showing up to your location are quickly
ending. You are not just selling a parking
spot, you are providing an experience.
And if it’s a good one, consumers will
keep coming back.

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