



An Automated Solution to Parking Perils

By Christian Hermansen



PARKING IS A NECESSARY EVIL IN THE PUBLIC'S MIND. It's something we all do before going shopping, hanging out with friends, or catching a game. It's the experience before the experience.

As someone who has recently joined the parking-sphere, I see parking as something where you either have a neutral experience or a below-average one. Consumers rarely perceive a top-notch parking experience.

This lines up with the feedback I hear from friends, family, and members of the general public. People forget the times where everything worked perfectly but remember the bad experiences when it all went wrong. Circling for ages and not being able to find a space, getting confused by not knowing where to drive, and the resulting congestion are all reasons for a negative parking experience.

Parking is also (normally) the first impression a customer gets of the place he or she has just arrived. Everyone knows how important the first impression is in any interaction! It sets the tone for the experience. Making it easy, stress-free, and frictionless means your customer is content when he or she walks in the door ready to engage with your offering rather than lamenting over the bad experience in your parking lot.

Many large providers and operators of parking, particularly shopping centers, airports, and cities, are acknowledging this and are taking steps to ensure the



best neutral (or even net positive) experience possible for users of their parking. If only there was some way of automatically displaying occupancy and guiding people to available parking spaces.

Case Study: Irvine Spectrum Center

The Irvine Company has worked for five years to make parking easier for visitors to the massive Southern California shopping center the Irvine Spectrum Center. It started with the outdoor parking area and then moved to the indoor spaces, with a number of custom requirements catered for along the way.

When the company sought to install another indoor solution at the new Block 800 parking garage on the south side of the site, it took into consideration lessons learned from its established Irvine Center

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parking areas. Being a new garage, a key component of this project was to keep that minimal, slick, and premium look and feel with the parking guidance installation.

Since implementing the initial parking guidance project at the Irvine Spectrum Center, a new method of detecting vehicles, using an eye-safe, class-one laser sensor mounted in the middle of the driving aisle instead of an older, Bluetooth sensor, had been developed. Users say it offers detection accuracy but also greater reliability from eliminating batteries, having no hardware on the often harsh road surface, and a lower cost of install.

But with a new sensor in the equation, the integration done in the past with the site's existing strip-lighting and LED guidance lights needed a redesign to incorporate new components.

Retrofitting

With a large, internal team of product and hardware engineers, along with a dose of can-do attitude, the vendor was able to produce a new fixture to seamlessly attach to the end of lighting enclosures.

There are some other significant benefits to integrating parking guidance technology with existing lighting infrastructure. For example, integrating with the existing infrastructure at the parking lot meant an extremely low-impact installation. Installers were able to use an existing power supply and wire power into the same power supply as the lights, reducing costly cabling or the need for specialized power points.

Anecdotal evidence on the ground suggests the parking guidance is working. Speaking to parking users on a recent site visit, I was told they thought the garage looked smart, new, premium, and clean. Users also told us they enjoyed the easy journey and fast parking and compared the experience they'd just had with an experience in a garage without parking guidance. Customers often cited those "red and green lights and the signs" as the reason for that.

An easier parking experience gets you off on the right foot with your customers. Reduce the time to park, reduce congestion, reduce circulation time and increase your customer's experience. ♦



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