

Airport Parking: Embracing Technology Advancements

• By Jeff Pinyot

“Good lighting provides both a sense of increased security and enhances the aesthetics of the parking spaces. Europe and Asia understand the value of each parking space and invest in painting not only the interior ceiling but an attractive design on the floor for each parking space. This reinforces to the customer the value of their parking purchase. The garage lighting reflects from the paint colors scheme to create an inviting atmosphere in, of all places, a parking garage! ...

Michele Krakowski, President of Lumin Advisors, an international consultant specializing in Airport Parking

As passengers return to the airways, we are reminded of the value of customer service and what makes an airline truly first class. With the recent unexplained flight cancellations of Spirit and Southwest Airlines and countless delays of the major carriers, travelers just want things back to normal again, and soon. Some airports have been wise to use this down time to upgrade their facilities. Airports across the country are stepping up their parking games. Just like all airlines are not the same, neither is one airport parking the same as the other.

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One certain way to lure clients to your airport parking experience is to provide a safe, secure, and well-marked facility that ensures your parking client that his or her parking experience will result in no delays or uncertainty. The competition for airport parking dollars is huge. Uber, Lyft, and mass transit have eroded the base. Airports need to come up with better solutions and offerings to lure parkers back to their base. How can airports make parking on campus a better solution than the alternatives? With a potential windfall of federal money on the way, it's time to upgrade to the newest technologies.

Today's parking technologies are making airport parking better than ever. Starting off with a great foundation, from a technology point of view, let's first look to lighting before taking off onto other technologies. Don't underestimate the necessity of a parking structure to be well lit in order to draw patrons. An exceptionally lit airport parking structure will always ensure lighting levels in excess of 5 FootCandles on average and even more down the drive lanes and pedestrian walkways. The only light engine of choice being used today in airport parking is LED lighting. All others are simply pretenders when challenging the heavy weight champion, LED. Other lighting types are akin to Connor McGregor talking up a big hype then getting knocked out in the first round. LED is more like Tyson Fury. LED has game, but not all are the same!

Be wary of big talkers and low dollars. Caveat emptor, let the buyer beware! Like an airline that flashes cheap flights, but baits and switches you by “forgetting” to tell you that the price only includes sitting on a plastic Home Depot bucket and there is an upcharge for a seat, a carry-

on bag, and for the love of God, a checked bag.....Cha-Ching! Suddenly, the cost surpasses Southwest Airlines, which gives you two free checked bags today and every day. I can't get the image out of my mind of oxygen masks being dropped down with a slot for dimes (or maybe credit cards). We aren't there yet, but just wait.

An \$85 LED light fixture is not the same as a \$450 light fixture. An \$85 LED fixture reeks of being an offshore import with poor performance and near certain early failure with no supported warranty. Spend the proper amount of money on lighting to make your parking structure in compliance with IESNA lighting standards and ensure long-term success. With the investment you made in your concrete structure, where no shortcuts were ever considered, why would you ever consider compromising on proper lighting (the “Money Maker”), the very thing that illuminates your beautiful structure and without which, makes your asset useless?

Today, you have multiple lighting layout options. The first is using two light fixtures parallel down the drive lanes with each one at the end of the parking spaces, spaced about 20' to 30 feet down the drive path, depending on construction methods of the structure.

This traditional way of lighting was necessitated by poor light engines with poor distribution patterns and unreliable components creating the need for a lot of light fixtures. Today's U.S. manufactured LED light fixtures provide excellent reliability, so there is no need to assume failure anymore.

Also, LED fixtures direct lighting better, so you now have the additional option of using a Type 2 light distribution LED fixture that can be placed one down the center at the same spacing, resulting in up to a 40 percent fewer fixture count than the traditional parallel lighting pattern of yesterday. The key is that you CAN'T use a Type 5 distribution fixture to accomplish this. It must be a Type 2 pattern specifically designed for parking structures. The popular round flat bottom fixtures do not come in a Type 2 pattern, so you need to avoid using those down the center.

Uplighting from the LED fixture is also paramount to making the structure look big and voluminous (also important in a good hairdo), eliminating the Cave-Effect. Using light colored concrete, and even painting the garage, is also critical in making the garage look like a friend rather than a scary enemy.

Excellent lighting is critical to the next technology: Parking Guidance. Here's what Michele Krakowski has to say about Parking Guidance:

"Airports are the most time-sensitive parking market in the world. Airport customers have high anxiety and stress. Parking guidance systems make a significant impact on the customer experience. Guidance systems show customers how to quickly and easily find a parking space. Guidance systems reduce space-hunting recirculation, thereby getting customers inside of the airport sooner, in a better mood, and often make concession purchases with their extra time. Plus, the shortened time to find a space reduces the auto emissions, fuel consumption, and benefits the environment. Another benefit is that guidance systems make 100% space utilization achievable without lowering the customer level of services.

Parking guidance comes in all shapes and sizes, from actual space by space to proximity where a single LED indicator speaks for a group of spaces, normally four to six spaces max. This method has gained huge popularity as it has helped to make a PGS system more affordable. The

major players in this market, Park Assist, Indect, and ECO Parking Technologies, all offer this proximity parking and in a Camera-Based solution. Parking Guidance is becoming very commonplace in Airport Parking and it's becoming expected by parking patrons.

From a financial standpoint, don't forget to shake all the money trees looking for the free money. Many utility providers still have attractive incentives for relighting garages. New lighting alone can pay for itself, but free money only makes it that much more attractive. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 is still in play and as a consultant, a municipal airport can sign over the tax incentives to their consultants for their use.

There are many excellent manufacturers of Lighting and Parking Guidance Systems in our parking industry. Any one of them would gladly consult with you and your team as you explore these technology options. Many of our excellent consultants also are experts in these areas.

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