From Chaos to Efficiency: USC's Parking Transformation

CASE STUDY

AT A GLANCE

David Donovan recounts his experience leading his department to success after they were tasked with managing an off-campus parking garage, and finding Parker Technology as a solution to some of the problems that arose as a result.

$14,000/ MONTH SAVED

< 12 SECONDS

AVERAGE WAIT TIME

THE CHALLENGE

No one wanted to take parking help calls at USC, even when a 24/7 call center was on campus.

THE SOLUTION

Parker Technology fit in perfectly with USC's new system, Frogparking.

LOCATION

Los Angeles, California

INDUSTRY

University / College

PRODUCT USED

PARKER 24/7

Parker Technology

FROM CHAOS TO EFFICIENCY: USC VILLAGE'S PARKING TRANSFORMATION STORY

The University of Southern California (USC) is known for many things – their iconic Tommy Trojan and Traveler mascots, their notable alumni including Neil Armstrong, George Lucas, and Will Ferrell, as well as their motto, "Palmam qui meruit ferat."

Translated to English, the motto of USC is "Let whoever earns the palm bear it," with most interpreting this as 'achievement should be rewarded,' and that there is a "keen desire to do even more tomorrow no matter how much we have accomplished today."

David Donovan, an Associate Director with USC Transportation and the center of this article, embodied this motto to help improve the parking experience on campus while maintaining department goals of revenue and customer experience.

> "We're the division that nobody thinks about, and yet, every single visitor, student, faculty member and staff member interacts with one or more Auxiliary Services units every single day. And Transportation is often the first encounter they have arriving at campus,"
>
> -David Donovan, Associate Director at USC

Parker Technology

As parking on campus progressed and became highly profitable, David recounted his experience leading his department to success after they were tasked with managing an off-campus parking garage, and finding Parker Technology as a solution to some of the problems that arose as a result.

IN THIS CASE STUDY, WE'LL SHOW HOW:

- The University Village Garage went from $300,000 to over $430,000 in revenue YOY in its first six months of operation
- Parker Technology helped solve a major revenue leak of $14,000/month
- The installation of Frogparking and Parker Technology took a garage with "really poor customer experience" to a garage that "is completely hands-off and runs itself"

THE BEGINNING OF THE UNIVERSITY VILLAGE PROJECT

The University Village is a mixed-use residential/retail property that began in 2014, and after three years of construction, the property opened in 2017. It was a $750,000,000 project, the largest undertaken by the University of Southern California, and one of the largest in the entire city of Los Angeles. Over 2,500 USC students live on this 15-acre property.

The University Village has one underground garage with 460 spaces, reserved for customers of the retail tenants, with resident and employee parking located down the street at a separate facility.

Parker Technology

PROBLEMS ARISE

"Because the USC Village is owned by USC Real Estate Development & Leasing, we've had to run everything past them, and do not have the autonomy to replace systems we want to replace, or that aren't working," Donovan recalls.

Since the processes and technology at the USC Village garage differed from the on-campus parking program the Transportation department had successfully built, a handful of issues began to surface over time at the off-campus parking facility.

"For the first few years, everything was fine; the equipment was all brand new. Nothing's going to break on day one. But once things did start breaking down, we just had a really poor customer experience," Donovan recounts.

PLUGGING THE REVENUE LEAKS

With self-sufficiency being top-of-mind for USC Transportation, significant revenue leaks coming from the USC Village Garage quickly become evident.

> **We ended up incurring a lot of additional expenses - we had somebody standing at the equipment, for sixteen hours a day, every single day for seven years. In addition to the tremendous expense, we were experiencing revenue leaks that we weren't even aware existed,"**
>
> **-David Donovan, Associate Director at USC Transportation**

Parker Technology

When a customer service rep went on break and wasn't physically standing in the lane, the garage would be put into 'egress mode' and the gates would stay up, simply so people trying to leave wouldn't be stuck if they encountered an issue. A third-party staffing company staffed the garage, so the result of the leaks – how much revenue was simply driving away - was hard to track down.

As a result, four problems occurred before the implementation of Frogparking and Parker Technology.

THE FOUR PAIN POINTS OF THE USC VILLAGE GARAGE
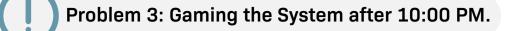
Problem 1: No one wanted to take calls.

"The original system came with an intercom for customer service issues, but nobody wanted responsibility for it. Transportation isn't a 24/7 operation, and I don't want to get calls in the middle of the night from people. What am I going to do? We were just really stuck," Donovan says.

Problem 2: Staffing breaks led to free parking.

Six times a day, as the gate staff took untraceable breaks at random times, the system would be placed into free egress mode.

" It was unquantifiable, we had no idea how much revenue was being lost, but we couldn't trap people in the garage just because a CSR was on break."

(!) Problem 3: Gaming the System after 10:00 PM.

The third major problem occurred when the third-party staffing agency left for the day. After 10:00 PM, without staffing, the garage was again placed into "free parking" mode, and parkers quickly began to take advantage.

"Students and other guests figured out really quickly, I could be here all day, I could park in the garage, and wait until 10:00 PM for free parking."

This revenue leak led to around $12,000/month in revenue lost.

(!) Problem 4: Being the "Good Guy."

To enhance the customer experience, the staffing agency had the authority and ability to let individuals out if they were experiencing an issue, and because staff wanted to be overly helpful, "that unfortunately was abused," Donovan stated.

"If parkers were having a tough day or may just have been regulars and knew the lane agent, they were allowed to park for free, and we had no idea this was even happening."

After experiencing these problems and more in the USC Village garage, USC knew they needed to find the right technology mix to solve these revenue leaks and improve the customer experience.

After installing Frogparking with License Plate Recognition (LPR) and a cloud-based payment system, many of the original technology issues began to dissipate, but after being allowed to park for free or finding parking loopholes for over six years, some customers still needed parking assistance.

Parker Technology

THE JOURNEY TO PARKER TECHNOLOGY

"The entire point of having LPR, the automated system with cloud-based payment options and everything else that the Frogparking system features, is that you don't need somebody there anymore, but we still did need to solve that customer service component. What if somebody has a problem? So, I reached out to Ryan Givens, CAPP, with Parker Technology, and loved the product.

You [Parker Technology] solved a problem for us that we had never been able to solve internally – who gets that call? Where's the call go when somebody presses the button? We've been incredibly grateful," Donovan said.

After installing Parker Technology, some of the customer problems were still unavoidable, even with the robustness of Frogparking.

"Out of all the calls that are still being placed daily, half of them are language issues. Some of them are from older individuals that don't have technology skills and just need to talk to someone. A couple of the calls are for people who don't have a license plate. There are legitimate reasons that people are still pressing these buttons.

-David Donovan, Associate Director at USC Transportation

THE RESULTS

"Obviously [Parker Technology] helps the customers, and everything is really flowing smoothly. It's great."

Today, Parker Technology has assisted with over 6,000 calls.

REVENUE TRANSFORMATION

- Rapid Change and Growth: In the first six months of 2023, the USC Village Garage generated $300,000 in revenue. The same period in 2024, it's over $430,000.

- Cost Savings: The cost savings of staffing a person in a lane was about $14,000 a month.

CALL PROCESS TRANSFORMATION

- Wait Time: average wait time for call to be answered is 12 seconds

- Quickly Handled: on average, calls are handled in just over a minute (79 seconds to be exact)

- Over a thousand parkers have been able to complete the new payment process as a result of Parker Technology

Parker Technology

Beyond the numbers, the Parker Technology team has worked to build a partnership with Donovan and the USC team. "Your entire team have been so supportive. USC has been around for 150 years and we are brand new to this kind of technology and being on the receiving end of this level of service," shared Donovan.

And now, with Parker Technology following David's exact business rules with unbiased call center representatives, the USC team can relax knowing that their calls are handled the way they're intended. "It's been great to be able to hand our business rules over to a professional team like Parker Technology with all your experience and knowledge, implementing our business rules on our behalf for a reasonable cost versus having somebody standing in a lane."

Ultimately, the implementation of Frogparking at the USC Village Garage, combined with Parker Technology, sets standards for a positive user experience for customers and for the USC team.

"Frogparking enjoys working collaboratively with Parker Technology, and the University of Southern California, to enhance parking operations at USC Village. The recent installation of a fully automated Frogparking PARCS, using cutting-edge technology, has proven to resolve USC's parking challenges.

Revenue leakage is down to 0%, operational savings are close to $200,000 per annum, with a 150% increase in gross revenue within a month of installation. Boasting an impressive 70-day payback period, this system epitomizes how new technology is revolutionizing the way parking can be managed and producing spectacular results."

Frogparking

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As the new installation of Frogparking and Parker Technology continues its service, Donovan placed trust in the Parker Technology team.

"You guys have been fantastic to work with and it's so much more cost efficient to have really a professional team of dedicated people. My industry is moving cars around. Your industry is answering customer service calls based on what the customer needs."

-David Donovan, Associate Director at USC

As the USC team closes the chapter on years of technology and revenue woes in the USC Village Garage, he also recounts the difference in his level of involvement.

" Since the conversion to this LPR based system, and Parker Technology, it's been hands off, the whole garage is running itself, which is what you want as a parking operator. I can focus on other projects and whatever the next thing is. And having something that I don't have to worry about has been lifesaving for us."

Ultimately, parkers are now entering and exiting garages quickly, with any customer questions easily answered through the Parker Technology solution, and the USC team can finally relax.

"It's been very good for my peace of mind and allowing me to focus on other projects with your system in place and Frogparking system in place that really provide peace of mind for me as a client and for our customers as well."

Parker Technology

Driving a better parking experience.

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