

University of Central Florida

“We have streamlined the collections process and reduced person-hours spent going from machine to machine.”

Andrew O'Mara,
Technology Manager,
Department of
Public Safety and Police,
University of Central Florida

Advanced Multi-Space Parking Technology Boosts Operational Efficiency and Helps Achieve PCI Compliance

The University of Central Florida (UCF) replaced outdated pay stations with Digital Payment Technologies' (DPT) multi-space pay stations in its parking garages and surface lots. Leveraging the flexibility of the DPT pay stations' power management, communications, and payment options, UCF was able to achieve substantial cost savings in its parking operations.

Why DPT?

Service to Consumers:
Flexibility and convenience
for a superior parking
experience

Enhanced Operational
Efficiency: Lower
maintenance costs and
improved enforcement
processes boost
productivity

Maximized Revenues:
Wider payment options,
flexible rate structures, and
minimized lost revenue help
to balance budgets

ROI: Increased revenues
and lower operating costs
boost ROI

The University of Central Florida (UCF) was a growing campus with goals to improve its parking operations. Unfortunately, its outdated pay stations were obsolete. The student population stretched the aging pay stations beyond their limited functional capacity, and its parking management accounting practices were antiquated and cumbersome. It became necessary for UCF to take the technological leap to modernize its fleet of parking pay stations to save costs within its parking operations and to meet the growing demands of its parking public. To that end, UCF needed a pay station that was technologically advanced, secure, and intuitive to use; a pay station and back-end software that combined the flexibility of optimum power management, communications, and multiple payment options in one all-encompassing unit.

UCF Parking Challenges

Increasing Parking Demands Due to a Growing Campus

UCF is the second largest university campus in America by number of students. It is home to more than 56,000 students. Between 1998 and 2005, UCF saw a spike in student numbers from 26,000 to nearly 43,000¹ by fall count. This 63 percent jump stretched UCF's parking operations, which served 13,711 parking spaces, including five parking garages, and 39 surface lots, beyond its abilities to offer streamlined parking operations. The old pay stations, installed since 1998, could not keep pace with the demands of a rising student population. More students, more pay stations, which meant burdened maintenance and collections staff struggling to keep pace with growing operational needs.

Streamlining Accounting Practices and Ensuring Compliance

Accounting practices and procedures needed to be overhauled to quickly and easily reconcile transactions. Moreover, credit card acceptance at the old pay stations fell short of meeting Payment Card Industry (PCI) standards. A revamp in security, hardware, and backend management software propelled UCF to cast its net wide in search of a superior parking solution.

Finding The Right Parking Solution

Participation in top trade shows offered the university a glimpse into the most sophisticated parking technology on display. To cement its decision to further revitalize its parking operations, UCF, in 2006, put out a Request for Information (RFI) for a proposed parking solution that focused on:

- Flexibility in power management and communications options for parking garages and surface lots.
- A wide range of convenient payment options.
- A comprehensive backend system that supported sophisticated remote configuration, maintenance alerts, and reporting.
- A demonstrated ability to continue improving the product over time by delivering “next generation” hardware and software capabilities.

¹ UCF University Enrolment and Application Statistics

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Andrew O'Mara,
Technology Manager,
UCF Department of
Public Safety and Police

Selecting Digital Payment Technologies (DPT)

UCF selected the DPT solution for a number of reasons. Most importantly, UCF wanted to reduce operational costs using a flexible, secure product that steered it towards the DPT pay stations. The combination of optimal power management and the right communications mix offered UCF a winning formula. For garage parking, UCF could take advantage of the AC power already entrenched in the garages. And for the on-street installations, UCF opted to go with solar power. Twinned with mobile broadband communications, UCF did not need to dig to install electrical or data connections.

From a backend management perspective, DPT's open architecture platform, the Enterprise Management System (EMS), proved advantageous over competitive brands that were proprietary and inextensible in nature. EMS also offers real-time maintenance and repair alerts via e-mail, over-the-air configuration, and real-time reporting, further reducing operational costs. A 30-day trial by UCF using two DPT pay stations on-site effectively showcased the pay stations' excellent power management and real-time functionalities, and confirmed the value proposition that DPT's pay stations brought to the university. The trial provided valuable insight into the capabilities and the expectations of operational use. The next step was to commission the DPT pay stations for installation over a three-year period thereby completing the university's evolution to modern, sophisticated parking technology.

In 2006, UCF placed an initial order for 30 DPT SHELBY pay stations, the majority of which were installed in a new 1,640 space parking garage; the remainder were placed in high volume areas replacing the outdated pay stations. Over the next four years, the university added a further 30 SHELBY and 20 LUKE pay stations, bringing its new pay station acquisition total to the current 80 installed throughout campus. The pay stations are a mix of AC and solar power, wired and mobile broadband communications. They are configured for Pay-and-Display/Pay-by-Space operation, and to accept coins, bills, and credit cards.

Key Learning Points

As UCF found, when transitioning from the old to the new, there are numerous obstacles to overcome. However, DPT's parking management solution and expertise cut into the challenges seamlessly and provided UCF with an easy integration. Key to the successful deployment was experience gained from each milestone reached. By phasing its installations, UCF's parking management team was able to ramp up operations quickly. During Phase 1, the team provided data and power requirements ahead of installation and relied on DPT to configure the pay stations and to train UCF parking staff to use the new technology. By the time Phases 2 and 3 rolled, UCF had become adept at completing installation in-house and fine-tuning configurations on its own, while DPT took on a supportive role.

Return On Investment (ROI) Realized

The deployment of DPT's parking pay stations translated to one year in which UCF recouped all purchase and maintenance costs associated with its new pay station acquisition. “There are many tangibles and intangibles that have resulted in lowering operating costs and higher revenues,” says UCF Department of Public Safety and Police

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Kris Singh,
Parking Director,
University of Central Florida

technology manager, Andrew O’Mara. “One of the objectives was to reduce time spent for collections and reconciliation. With such features as EMS and real-time credit card processing, efficiency improved significantly; this produced lower costs in operation.” Some of the benefits realized by UCF from its deployment of DPT pay stations included:

- A reduction in credit card settlement time, from three days to one.
- A reduction in collection times from an arduous all day process to periodically checking online the status of each cash storage device and determining pick-up locations.
- A reduction in time to configure rates and settings, from an entire workday to 15 minutes.
- A reduction in time for accounting reconciliation, from five hours a week to one hour each week, which freed up valuable hours for other important functions.
- A reduction in operating costs, resulting in less wear and tear on collections vehicles and fewer parts to support fewer pay stations.
- Real-time credit card processing, as opposed to manually downloading card information from each pay station, which reduces processing fees and eliminates exposure to bad debt.
- Proactive monitoring and alarming thereby streamlining maintenance and repair operations.

“By all accounts, I believe implementing this system has been most beneficial to the University in every way, both from the users’ standpoint, and that of the administration,” concludes UCF Parking Director, Kris Singh.