

Parking Guidance in a New Light!

• By Jeff Pinyot



I'm a huge fan of "Shark Tank." Often, my 14-year-old entrepreneurial son, Justin, and I will watch the TV show together. I'll never forget what one of the "sharks," Mark Cuban, said in an episode when he was considering a major investment in a company out of Pittsburgh. It claimed a better and more cost effective product than Mother Nature's peat moss called Pittmoss (Cuban ended up investing \$1.5 million).

Cuban said this: "I'll invest in anything that is a market disruptor."

What he meant was quite simple: If the product has the ability to change a proven industry's current ways, its conventional wisdom, it's worth taking a gamble on.

One cannot argue that there is a huge mounting interest in the integration of parking guidance into garages today. We've seen the patterns, haven't we? What goes on in Europe shows up in the States a few years later. Parking

guidance is taking Europe by storm. Owners, municipalities, operators are all demanding – and even legislating – parking guidance into their carparks.

While parking guidance certainly adds value to a garage, the lure to the potential parker and to the overall carnival parking experience, it can be difficult to evaluate the actual value it brings to a garage in revenue generation.

There is no argument that it brings value to a parking facility. If I get to choose between parking in a garage on one side of the street that has a parking guidance system installed and one on the other side that doesn't, I'd choose the one with guidance 100% of the time. That's real value and real revenue.

But, would I pay more? Time will tell.

Subjective value can be difficult to quantify, but it is *real* value, for sure.

What could make parking guidance a market disruptor,

Continued on page 32

PARKING GUIDANCE IN A NEW LIGHT (from page 30)

you ask? Simple. Find a way to reduce the cost and make it affordable to more clients. How? By integrating the LED position indicators and cameras into a lighting fixture – *which you need anyway in a parking garage* – would be a good start.

Also, what if we can find a mechanism to pay for the parking guidance system (PGS)? Would that help change and disrupt the market?

Because a lighting change to new low-energy LED lighting from high-energy-consuming HID (high-intensity discharge) lighting can save as much as 70% in energy consumption, now energy savings and maintenance savings from the lighting change can actually help pay for, and justify moving ahead with the “integral parking guidance system.” Not so with a traditional guidance system that is not incorporated into the lighting solution. Imagine a parking guidance system with a quantifiable ROI (return on investment).

Not only is there an ROI for a system that is integrated into the lighting fixture, but the solution also qualifies for the lucrative utility lighting incentives, and falls inside the depreciation schedule of lighting systems because it is simply an option to the standard light fixture.

An integral PGS also can participate in the EPA Act 179D (H.R. 3507) tax reform bill in the U.S. House of Representatives, where it seeks a permanent place in the tax code. What does that mean? It means real money in your pocket that a traditional parking guidance system cannot give you.

A parking garage equipped with a PGS can certainly hang a “green initiative” moniker on it. Vehicles park fast, efficiently, no circling or trolling, as I like to call it.

We have a client who, when entering his garage, it takes about 15 minutes to park a car, with the line of hourlies snaking the up-ramp looking for a place to park.

At any level, you can choose to opt out of going to a higher floor by crossing over to the exit lanes. That has proven time and again to be too risky for the patrons; that’s why the line of cars waits in a que on the up-ramp.

If someone takes the risk and ventures to the exit path, and they can’t find a spot, they have to go past Go and not even get to collect \$200. They have to exit the garage and do it all over again.

In our discussions with this lighting client, we suggested that the hospital allow us to incorporate the integral PGS into the lighting fixtures, so that it could advise patrons of available spots on the exit path to speed up the parking. That information changes the parking experience dramatically.

A medical patient who used to have to turtle his way up to Level 7 to park is now finding, in quick time, an open spot on, say, Level 2 on the exit down-ramp. Now you have a patient who enters the hospital quickly and calmly (from a lower floor), instead of frustrated and angry. That’s customer service! And that’s selling every space!

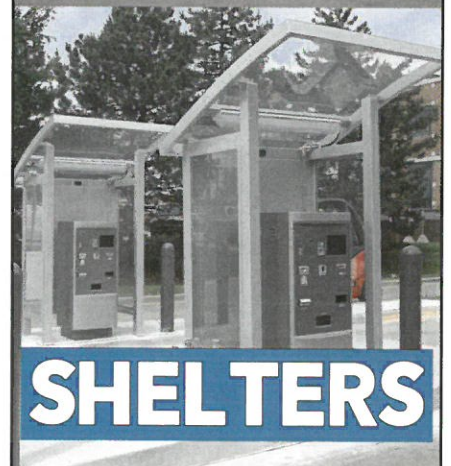
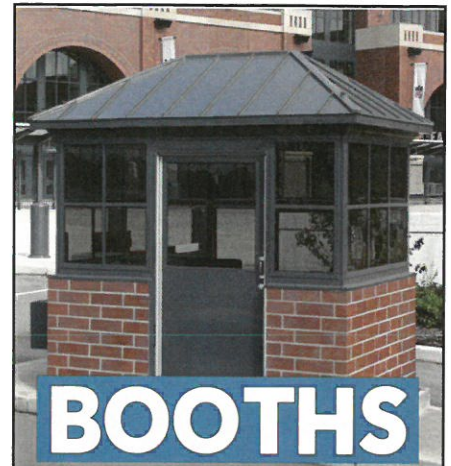
Another market disruptor of the integrated parking guidance system is simply this: control of the lights. Traditional parking guidance systems aren’t necessarily designed to control the functionality of the lighting fixtures.

Not so with an integrated PGS! The “smart” fixtures go from low to high output based on people movement and vehicular movement seen from the on-board cameras. Even top-end lighting levels can now be reduced to illuminate to a fixed foot-candle level, which adds the potential for increased energy savings.

The integrated parking guidance solution also allows a “panic button” feature that incorporates adjusting lighting levels, along with audible features (alarms and messaging) to ward off would-be trouble and alert the authorities.

With installed pricing ranging from \$200 to \$750 per space for a traditional PGS, it can still feel a bit like the Wild West – the choices are endless. By *integrating* the PGS into the light fixture, the game changes.

Gone is the costly spend for a PGS, and gone is the complex trail of conduit holding power and control wiring. Gone are the individual stalactite Christmas tree lights above every single space proclaiming Facebook-type status as “In a relationship or Not in a relationship (with a car).”



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By integrating parking guidance into the lighting system and using a fully wireless mesh connected system (no conduit required for power or control wiring), the *integrated* parking guidance solution is what Mark Cuban looks for—a true market disruptor.

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