



Clearview
Intelligence

making journeys work

Workplace Parking White Paper

Positivity and Productivity: Why effective workplace parking matters

Modern facilities management is a diverse and complex role. Depending on the size of the company or the facility, it can range from cleaning to security to mechanical maintenance and everything in between.

Whilst many of the day to day responsibilities are of a reoccurring nature, there is an increasing need to ensure the surrounding environment is in a suitable condition to facilitate work. This includes the car park.

This white paper takes a look at the modern workplace car park where demand can often outstrip capacity, the potential impact this can have on a workforce, the issues this may cause and how to go about solving them.

The Challenge: You always need more parking than you have

There is an inevitable truth in today's office environment for Facilities Managers. That is one of pressure to improve the workplace for the employees whilst driving down costs and increasing efficiencies. This truth transforms itself into many aspects including the running of the car park.



However, there are many forces at work which means providing a perfect parking solution is not a simple challenge to overcome.

The dense and historic design of city centres coupled with modern planning constraints and construction processes means that the use of outside real estate space attracts premium costs. It is the same for out of town developments where car park space is under ever growing scrutiny over its efficient use.

Added to the cost consideration is the increasing use of cars as the main means of transportation. The number of cars on the UK roads increased from 27.2m in 2000 to an estimated 31.7m in 2016 (1). In 2014, aligned to an improvement in the economy, car traffic had the largest annual increase since the early 2000s with an average of over 425 trips made per person per year. Provisional 2015 estimates suggest that this trend is continuing with 64% of all personal trips made by car, with commuting accounting for around 16% of this figure (2).



The continued heavy use of cars and the need to accommodate them runs alongside the need for business investment in a location with the additional demands placed on local infrastructure, road use and ease of access.

Providing an employee/visitor car park is still an expected and worthwhile benefit to employers and employees alike, but all too often demand for a car park space outstrips the available land and/or allocated parking spaces.

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Offices have evolved from workplace to workspace

and costs have to be justified

The modern day office environment is a constantly evolving mix of physical and virtual solutions. As technology becomes more and more ubiquitous in our personal and business lives the ability to work from any location is driving a change in the way offices are used.

The office is changing from a workplace to a workspace with on-site facilities needing to cope with the increasingly transient nature of the employee.

As mentioned earlier, space costs money, so the less space required for a fixed use, such as a permanent desk, means there is the potential to downsize or re-use the space in other ways.

To cope with these new demands and increasing costs, many companies are now moving away from individually allocated desks or offices to shared workspaces with collaborative areas and hot desking.

Also, as pressure on businesses to perform has increased, departments have to look at where savings can be made and keeping open luxurious but rarely used offices is a thing of the past.

Without efficient management, it can have detrimental effects on both morale and productivity



The cost to a business of providing a single car parking space is typically between £400 to £1,000 per year (3) and car parks have similar attributes to the internal space/cost reasoning, with it being a shared space and costing money to manage even when not in use. So it makes economic sense that Facilities Managers should consider when planning their car parking needs, thinking through who will likely use it, when will they need the space and what planning needs to happen to allow booking or allocation of use.

As a result, modern parking solutions need to be more flexible to cope with the changing employee needs and should be considered as an equally important element of the workspace as without efficient management, it can have detrimental effects on both morale and productivity.

Creating more spaces is not often a practical option

The demand for more car parking spaces is typically at the centre of a Facilities Manager's parking challenge.

The influx of employees into work at the start of the day creates a time focused volume and capacity problem with a risk that employees arrive late into the office due to the difficulty in finding a free space quickly and easily.

This, when coupled with the end of day exodus, can also create the added challenges of traffic congestion on-site, and on the roads around the location. And in many locations, conditions of the employer being granted planning permission for large office complexes increasingly include responsibilities on the employer to ensure adequate measures are in place to assure free traffic flow around the area.

So even if there is capability and the will to build more spaces, it's not necessarily the most economically sensible, environmentally friendly or practical option if it adds to or doesn't solve the associated problems a poorly managed car park can create.

If the decision is to build more spaces, then there will still be the need to consider the best way to manage the car park in its wider context.

More likely, is the scenario that no more spaces can be created and it is contingent on the Facilities Manager to come up with a plan to better manage the existing parking arrangements.

In both scenarios, it is critical that systems are in place to manage and connect employees with spaces quickly and efficiently .



Parking guidance systems such as capacity counting systems in conjunction with Variable Messaging Signs (VMS) and bay monitoring can help in this regard and make your parking more flexible and open up other possibilities to maximise the space available.

These systems can supply the information and data to help you to see patterns and trends appearing in employee activity, which then lend themselves to exploring more flexible working practices such as staggered working hours around a core time or allowing for more shift like working.

In other words, gaining visibility of parking availability ahead of time can help employees plan where to work, which route to take and when to plan on leaving and arriving, such that they can plan their day more effectively.

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The impact of parking on your business

The previous sections have covered a couple of the more obvious space and volume challenges associated with managing a car park, but the impact of a poor parking experience stretches further than just not being able to find a physical space.

Employees rightly expect their employers to consider their wellbeing and to provide ways in which to make their working day pleasant and easier to complete. But if the arrival at the place of work proves to be consistently frustrating and stressful due to the inability to find a parking space, then this negativity can ripple into the workspace.

Employees will come in frustrated, spending ten minutes in the kitchen relaying to their colleagues how annoyed they were circling round the car park yet again for that invisible space. Over time this leads to a lower level of happiness and its these small things that can create ongoing morale problems, and morale problems can damage productivity. And poor productivity damages the bottom line.

In their paper on 'Happiness and Productivity', Andrew J. Oswald, Eugenio Proto, and Daniel Sgroi (4) point out the very real link between the emotional and physical health and well-being of employees and their productivity. Citing many emerging thought leaders such as Google (5) and even some more traditional companies such as Ernst & Young who are now thinking differently on their approach to improving employee happiness.

With a poor parking experience, there is a risk that an employee could wrongly focus on finishing as early as possible so they can beat the leaving rush or where they continue to blame the queue in the car park or the lack of spaces as to why they are late for work every day.

Employees don't want to be late into work, but most do have other things going on outside of work which means leaving the house at a certain time. Having to cater for additional time to park and getting chastised for what they see as the company's failure to provide them with adequate facilities to do their job is not a scenario any employer would wish to encourage.

The car park is typically the first touch point for the employee at the start of their day and the last touch point when they leave at night. Taking the pain out of parking can only lead to a positive impact to the employee's mindset, not forgetting how it demonstrates an attentive and caring view of the business.

There is also corporate sustainability and social responsibility to consider as part of the parking equation.

From a sustainability angle, businesses now are very conscious on their impact on wider society, often employing people who manage their Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy. Parking should form part of that strategy as the congestion caused by people looking for parking or parking on roadsides around a building will have a knock on effect into the local community.

Not only could it mean added difficulty for local residents to travel or park near their homes but, there could be additional air pollution as vehicle emissions become much higher than necessary due to added congestion.

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There are also many cases of problematic parking on residential streets that have caused local communities to implement resident only parking restrictions. Causing this to happen around your business location is not something that any organisation wants to be responsible for.

Whilst quite rightly, we have concentrated so far on the employee's use of a car park, a final point to make about the impression that good and bad car parking can make is one on the visitors, clients or suppliers who need to visit the workplace. The car park is their first impression of the business they are dealing with and, similar to employees, if their experience includes difficulty in finding a space then the impressions of how that business is run could be damaging to the future working relationship.

All of these considerations on how car parking can make a great or negative impact on the business should be part of a Facilities Manager's thoughts when considering how much of a priority providing a well managed car park is to a business.



So what can be done about it?

Creating a positive impression of the company through the provision of an efficient and easy to use parking facility centres on the ability to capture, share and analyse data on the car park usage.

This data can be a mix of live and historic information which helps create a complete picture on the way the car park is used. The data would cover areas such as:

- Who is using the car park
- Utilisation of the spaces
- Amount of time spent in a space
- Times of peak usage
- Times when traffic congestion occurs
- Identification of areas where congestion occurs
- Under-utilisation of spaces
- Misuse of spaces (such as visitor areas).

The way to find out this type of information is to monitor parking through vehicle movements in and out of individual bays, zones or entire car parks.

These solutions can include:

- Vehicle in and out counts at the car park entrances
- Individual bay monitoring
- Count and classify systems on surrounding roads
- ANPR to track and record actual users
 - Staff permit holder
 - Welcoming a visitor to site
- Software to consolidate and present the data collected.

Having this information to hand means decisions can be made on how best to manage or change the use of the car park. For example, the data could show that with better signposting of the number of current available spaces and where they can be found through VMS, or using ANPR to control where staff are permitted to park, employees can be directed far quicker to available spaces, reducing congestion around peak times.

It may be that the data identifies the need to allow for more flexible working in terms of start and finish times, allowing employees the ability to arrive 15 or 30 minutes earlier or later in the day. Or it may identify the need to introduce incentives to car share or allow for pre-booking of spaces for visitors to reduce the misuse of spaces.

There are plenty of parking solution companies that claim to be able to solve car parking challenges. Indeed, there is a very large industry built around parking enforcement, but less so around creating positive car parking solutions for corporate businesses.

Companies may have good individual products or excellent ideas around what to do. However not all can provide a consolidated solution that can cover all requirements.

So when considering who to bring in and what you may need to create a solution, a good Facilities Manager will approach the subject in much the same way as they would when outsourcing other on-site requirements.

Questions to ask a potential parking solutions partner would be:

- What examples of previous work and experience can be shown?
- Is there the chance to go and see previous solutions in action?
- What benefits should be expected from a potential solution?
- Can you provide a demonstration of how the software helps to manage the car parks more efficiently?
- Are you willing to undertake an on-site visit to fully understand the specifics of the challenges faced?
- Can you give a clear understanding of background and competency in delivering and supporting these solutions?
- Are you able to provide the training, ongoing maintenance and back up in case things go wrong?
- What installation and ongoing SLAs can be put in place to cover the work?

Exploring the above subjects with a potential supplier will give you a very good idea if they are competent and able to do what they claim to be able to do.

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But hang on a minute, where's the business case?

It's worth recognising that these kind of solutions are not about generating direct revenue for the business. So there is potentially the need to counter the argument that this kind of expense is a luxury and why would anyone be interested in changing the parking operation.

The important thing is to be able to recognise and associate tangible benefits to the solutions put in place, which could include:

- Happier employees
- Faster parking equals more productivity
- Less overall congestion
- Better first impressions of the company by employees and visitors
- An increase in employee satisfaction levels
- Overall a professional and helpful reflection on the business

It is no use investing in a new parking solution, and making changes to the way the car park operates without the ability to recognise the subsequent improvements, otherwise all the investment and time could be for nothing. Which means it requires a certain amount of measurement and analysis.

Ideas on measurement can be quite specific to each company but could include:

Can the business identify the amount of time wasted by an employee each day when looking for a parking space? This time could be converted into an average salary cost and aggregated across a year time based on the number of employees. An increase in time at the desk would mean a clear increase in productivity.

Another way to measure would be to use an employee survey coupled with retention rates. Gain input on the current happiness and satisfaction levels, identifying if parking is one of the issues, and combine this with the average leaver rates before changing the car parking with the aim of increasing the overall retention rate over the course of the next year.

Or is it possible to measure how much congestion occurs on surrounding roads at peak times? Recording the volume of traffic in terms of car numbers and average journey times means this could be looked at over a short period of time before and after changes are made to the car park to see if reductions happen.

Summary

Car use in the UK is increasing, with every journey beginning and ending with parking the car so the demands for efficient and easy parking is not going to go away no matter what location a business operates from.

The impact on a business of a good or poor parking experience can be significant, not only on employee's productivity but also on the impression made to visitors and clients.

There are car parking solutions available to help improve the parking experience but the Facilities Manager needs to be clear on what they want to achieve and be able to measure the improvements coming from any solution.

We are Clearview Intelligence

We provide end-to-end systems for parking intelligence, to suit all sorts of operators and facilities.

Car parking capacity is a valuable asset, even more so when it's being used efficiently. Intelligence gleaned from our monitoring systems allows car park managers to make strategic decisions to make the facility function more effectively.

Our workplace parking solutions provide full visibility on the use of the car park. The combination of our vehicle count systems, parking bay sensors and variable messaging signs means users can be guided directly to the nearest available space. Allowing them to get on with their day with one less thing to worry about.

Journeys work better when parking is simple.

References

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- (4) <https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/eproto/workingpapers/happinessproductivity.pdf>
- (5) <https://www.cleverism.com/google-way-motivating-employees/>

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