

An aerial photograph of a busy cobblestone street. The street is filled with cars of various colors (black, white, silver, red) and a large number of pedestrians. The perspective is from directly above, showing the intricate pattern of the cobblestones and the flow of traffic and people. The lighting suggests it's daytime, with shadows cast by the vehicles and people.

# Perfecting the Flow of Parking at Large Capacity Events

December, 2021 - By Stan Bochniak

From football games to concerts, large capacity events are back. And that means that venue operators must regain their rhythm when it comes to parking. There are plenty of old and new challenges to address, such as disinfection protocols, ridesharing, and online reservations and payments. Despite the challenges, returning to (somewhat) normal business offers an opportunity to improve the customer experience and streamline operations. Implement these six best practices to perfect the parking experience.

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## **1 Be Prepared for More Drivers**

Germ-wary consumers are choosing to drive themselves to events instead of using public transit and ridesharing. Expect higher volumes of vehicle traffic from customers who aren't used to finding their own parking for these events. Minimize frustration by having personnel on the ground available to answer questions and help with wayfinding. This is especially important for special events that require street closures or detours.

## **2 Use Digital Tools to Reduce Confusion**

The pandemic has accelerated the use of contactless payments, online reservations, and parking apps. Customers expect venues to accommodate their preference for digital interactions, and operators should use that to their advantage. When customers can find and reserve spaces online, they spend less time looking for parking. Wherever possible use mobile apps, email communications, or your website to provide customers with parking instructions so they can be prepared before they arrive at the venue or event.

Many ticket sellers are teaming up with parking aggregators to make parking a part of the ticket-buying process. Customers receive a QR code for their parking credentials along with their ticket for admission to the event, streamlining the parking experience for everyone. Customers get a cashless, hassle-free parking experience. And venue operators can reduce labor hours and the need for having cash on-hand, all while collecting data on how many users are leveraging the contactless feature.



## **3 Accommodating Ridesharing and Transit is Still Important**

Regardless of usage rates for ridesharing and transit, it's still important to provide the same level of safety and quality for every customer. Provide adequate signage and personnel to support wayfinding and control ingress and egress in areas designated for ridesharing and public transportation. You may need to adjust these resources over time as commuter patterns evolve. It's still hard to predict if and when ridesharing and transit will fully return to pre-pandemic levels. Be prepared to monitor utilization so you can adapt operations plans based on changing commuter behaviors.

## **4 Enhance the Appeal of Onsite Parking**

Since many customers are choosing to drive themselves right now, it's a good opportunity to demonstrate the appeal of parking at your venue and keep them coming back. The right mix of amenities and perks, such as frequent parking and preferred parking programs, can make onsite parking more convenient and appealing.

This won't be a challenge at larger venues built to accommodate higher volumes of traffic. Newer venues, particularly those in urban areas, tend to have limited parking availability. Offering amenities is trickier, and you may want to consider only offering onsite parking for those who reserve spaces ahead of time. This approach makes onsite parking more convenient for customers since they can be guided directly to their designated space or parking zone, and they don't have to make an onsite payment.

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### Expand Your Parking Footprint with Peripheral Lots and Garages

To overcome the limitations of limited on-site parking, incorporate nearby lots and garages into your parking footprint. Use parking apps to raise customer awareness of peripheral parking options and deter them from venturing into

nearby neighborhoods and unauthorized parking lots. If you work with a parking vendor who operates nearby lots, they may be able to handle coordination and create a seamless experience for your customers.

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### Maintain Multiple Operations Plans for Various Scenarios

Keeping vehicles and pedestrians moving safely is always a tricky situation, especially since no two events are alike. For example, a concert may attract 50 percent of the capacity that a sporting event draws. It's common to close off some lots or streets to consolidate parking in a central area. To accommodate the varying changes that come with each event, create and maintain multiple plans for different scenarios. The plans should include clear instructions for determining which areas are open to customers at certain events and how you will use signage and personnel to direct customers to the right parking options.



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