



Marketing and Uniform Design

Uniform rental companies provide assistance to customers that goes beyond simply providing new uniforms, picking up dirty uniforms, washing them, and delivering clean ones. They help select styles, fabrics and colors that convey the desired business image to everyone who sees uniformed employees.

The Uniform & Textile Service Association (UTSA) is an international trade organization representing these firms. UTSA recommendations for bringing a marketing and branding perspective to uniform design and development include:

Design on the basis of safety and functionality concerns first. Textile service providers have up-to-date knowledge of the latest textile developments and technologies and how they will perform under various conditions.

Neatness counts -- and it is the first step toward effective marketing with uniforms. An employee wearing a clean, well-fitted, unwrinkled uniform with no missing buttons or ripped emblems will make the best impression on your customers.

Use of color in uniforms -- Parking facilities often have employees wear dark-colored uniforms, or dark slacks and light or white button-down or polo-style shirts. Such uniform designs convey authority and professionalism. Ideally, however, a uniform design will reinforce your company's name and help the customer associate your

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Employees' Attire Can Help Build Your Brand

from Page 29

company with a good parking experience in a safe facility that employs good people.

If your company uses high-impact colors in its logo or other graphics, a uniform rental consultant can help incorporate these colors into attractive uniform designs that will help reinforce your organization's brand image, while maintaining a sense of professionalism.

When incorporating your company logo on uniforms, make certain that all logo colors and graphics are exactly consistent with the colors and designs used on other materials, such as signage, receipts, your Web site, etc. This consistency will help your organization reinforce its image.

Valet Uniforms: From Casual to Elegant

Whether your company prefers to attire valets in the traditional red vest and black slacks or a contemporary polo shirt and dress shorts, considering the same factors important to uniforms worn by lot and garage attendants will enhance valet uniforms. Updating designs to incorporate the latest breathable, wrinkle-resistant fabrics can help keep uniforms looking neat and valets feeling comfortable, even after hours on the job in warm weather.

When your company's uniforms provide comfort and convenience for employees -- and also work effectively to sell your business and lay the groundwork for good customer relations -- you are getting the greatest possible benefit from your investment in them.

Jim Zahrt is Director of Marketing at the Uniform & Textile Service Association. He can be contacted at zahrt@utsa.com. Also, visit www.uniforminfo.com to learn more or to find a UTSA member by location.

PT



PT Blog

JVH comments on Parking News every day at PT Blog – log on at www.parkingtoday.com. Each month, there are at least 40 other comments like these, posted daily.

Shoupistas -- the true agenda

I have touted the "Shoupista" approach to parking over the last year. And will continue to do so. Not because of what I think is its underlying reason for existence, but because I think it uses time-honored and proven principles of the free market to reach its ends.

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal points out that many city planners are attempting to move people back into the central city and "do away" with urban sprawl, which they feel, in their pointy-head approach to the world, is bad. Living in a \$4,000-a-month three-room apartment in

Manhattan is good; living in a \$3,000-a-month three-bedroom house on 6,000 square feet of your personal dirt is bad. The latter breeds pollution, eyesores and -- "shudder" -- other horrible issues. But enough of that.

In the end, the Don Shoup approach to parking will, in his theory, bring people back into the cities, as there will be more room to build less-expensive housing (see January's Parking Today for an example), the evil vehicle that is destroying humanity will drop from the horizon, and we will all live together in urban utopias holding hands and singing "Kumbya."

Well, let's see -- why do people move to the 'burbs? First, it's a better place to raise kids. I don't care what anyone says, kids like to play in their yards. It's safe, it's fun, they can have a dog, and when they skin their knees, it's not on cinders in the playground, it's on grass.

Second, you have a feeling of ownership. Let's face it: When

you live in the city, what do you own? Your TV? Your sofa? Your clothes? The rich live in the country or own apartments or condos in the city. The regular Joe doesn't. The egalitarian approach to deciding just what's best for each of us that is done in our major institutions of higher learning doesn't cut it for me.

So we have a dichotomy. Many people think that living in the city is great, and in fact, many boomers (whose kids are now grown) are moving back into the cities. They are selling their suburban houses to young families who are attempting to raise kids in a safe, green environment and who want to own a piece of the pie.

I suggest that this isn't at all a bad thing. What is bad, and as Don points out, is that the government at all levels is attempting to push its values on society by "planning" the way people should live and work.

I think that underlying the Shoupista approach is a feeling that if one reduces the number of automobiles, then the urban center will be the only way to go, since if it's not within walking distance, you won't be able to get to it. But you know what? I still don't care, even though I don't necessarily agree with the concept.

Why? Because the approach relies on the free market.

Frankly, if the free market says that people live in cities, then great. And if it says that people want to live in the 'burbs, so be it. What will happen in the free market-Shoupista scenario is that people will do what they want. The market will mean that it will be expensive to drive into the cities, so if they want to be in a city during the day and in the 'burbs at night, they will either pay a lot or take some type of public transportation.

If they don't want to ride the train for an hour, more affordable housing will be available to them in the core areas, and they will live there if they choose. However, if they don't want to do so, they can live in the 'burbs, telecommute or work at the businesses that are moving out of the city into the suburban areas. It's their choice.

Portland, OR, has a "plan" where it has nondevelopment zones surrounding the city to prevent suburbs from forming. The result was that housing costs in the city skyrocketed, and the 'burbs simply moved farther out. People want their 6,000 square feet of dirt. So the result of the great idea in Portland was that only the well-to-do could afford to live in the city, and the commutes of suburbanites became longer -- or the businesses that need workers moved out of the city to where the workers live.

Take a look at the "inland empire" area of Southern California -- a desert around Riverside, San Bernardino and the Temecula Valley. Literally hundreds of thousands of people are moving to this area. And so are businesses -- not just retail, but light manufacturing, biotech, blue- and white-collar companies. Why? Because that's where the workers are. All of this is happening because the free market is working. At the same time, central cities are coming back. I was in Milwaukee the other day, and my host told me that this rust belt city is back in spades. New offices, lofts, tony shops and the like are streaming back into the city. Why? Because boomers are moving back. They have raised their kids and want a different life style. The free market did this, not all

the planning in the world.

The Shoupistas are using the free market to try to reinvigorate the central city and reduce pollution, suburban sprawl and the like. I don't think I care what the result is, although logic says that it will make a huge difference in the look of central city neighborhoods -- all to the good.

What I care about is that it's the market that is going to decide. Left unfettered, the free market will do the right thing. It may take a bit of time, and the first pass might be less than perfect, although in the long term it does a better job than forced regulation and government planning -- every time.

Read Don's book. The first half describes how planning has destroyed the cities. Now we are doing it again.

New Train Station Bringing Parking Crunch to Elburn

Homes around the new Metra station in Elburn, IL, recently received information about a Resident Parking Protection District, designed to safeguard the limited on-street parking available to them.

Free residential parking stickers allow about 100 residents of the village's southeast quadrant to park in the street during the restricted hours of 3 to 9 a.m. Monday through Friday. They got a 2006 permit application and an information sheet with answers to frequently asked questions about the new parking district.

The permit must be renewed annually, and the sticker must be properly affixed to the inside lower left windshield of the vehicle for which it was issued. Information on limited use of visitor permits is also part of the material.

A parking district sticker does not guarantee anyone a space in front of his or her home and does not exempt them from other restrictions, such as parking on snow days, near a fire hydrant or on a sidewalk. The visitor permit cannot be used for Metra commuter purposes, and it must be returned to the police department after a limited use.

Parking Blog Comments:

Elburn, IL, has a problem. The commuter line is going to start stopping there and residents near the station fear that folks will park in the neighborhood, thus blocking them out. So they set up a bureaucracy to issue permits, have people prove where they live, and in the end collect no money.

How 'bout this: Set the fee for parking on those streets at \$1 an hour between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Collect money with an in-car meter. Residents can pick up a permit, rather than a meter. That would keep people in the lots, cut down on parking in the area, generate money to use on streets and lighting and the like. If someone wanted to pay \$10 rather than \$1.75, so be it. Visitors can use a meter that has been given to residents (but which the residents put a few bucks on).

They seem to focus only on the people taking the train, but if you read between the lines, I think there is a parking problem already in the area.

Oh well ...

What Do You Know About the Parking Industry?

By Robert Milner

I recently attended the joint conference of the Middle Atlantic Parking Association (MAPA) and the Parking Association of the Virginias (PAV). The keynote speech focused on the parking industry and where it may be headed.

The conference proved to be exceptionally gratifying as my son, Matthew, accompanied me and I was given the opportunity of show-boating my profession to him (although, admittedly, the comparison of my job to his mom's job at NASA is very different). However, grasping my creativity, I explained to him that while Mommy sends things up into space, Daddy sends cars up into parking garages -- pretty cool, huh! Besides, I told him, some customers drive their cars into our garages as if they were astronauts!

Ultimately, the entire experience got me thinking about what do people outside/inside really know about the parking industry? So I decided to do a little research -- you know, the good old question-and-answer kind. Short on time and money, I decided to limit my "unscientific" research with just three individuals: my two sons and myself.

First, a little bit about the interviewees (a.k.a. the victims). My older son, Robby (age 10), is just like his mom -- academics come very easy to him. Although very good at soccer, he works hard at improving his skills. On the flip side, my younger son, Matthew (age 8), is just like his dad -- not necessarily a good thing. He is outgoing, friendly and active, and has great natural athletic abilities. Also, just like his dad, academics do not come easily for him. He must really apply himself to achieve a passing grade. As for me, I have been in the parking industry for more than 18 years, with experience in both the private and now the public sectors. Along the way, I have also obtained a master's degree and my Certified Administrator of Public Parking (CAPP) certification.

Basically, this unscientific research consisted of my putting a few questions to my boys about the subject at hand: parking. The result was more like Bill Cosby's (or Art Linkletter's, depending on your generation -- editor) TV show "Kids Say the Darndest Things." Here are some of the raw questions and answers from our session:

What do you think Daddy does to make money for the family?

Robby: You make more parking areas. Help build parking garages. Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

Matthew: You are the Director of Parking.

Do you know what the parking industry is?

Robby: I have no clue.

Matthew: They collect money.

What do you know about parking cars?

Robby: You have to go into a parking spot and put the car in park.

Matthew: Never park too far in or you will go over that bump and hit the wall.

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Do you think people should have to pay to park their cars?

Robby: Not really, because if you have to park your car somewhere, why would you have to pay to do that?

Matthew: Yes, they should, or Daddy won't get any money.

When you get bigger, do you want to do what Daddy does to make money?

Robby: No, I like other things, kinda like what Mom does a little. She works for NASA and helps build things that go up into space.

Matthew: Yes, I want to be the Director of Parking.

At the joint MAPA/PAV conference, I was asked to fill in for the scheduled keynote speaker (who happened to be under the weather). This caused me to think back over the last 18 years and ponder how I personally became involved with the regional parking associations. Here's how the speech went:

I was just a "wet behind the ears" kind of parking person (I was an area manager running about eight locations spread across Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC), when a parking guru much wiser and a wee bit older suggested I join the Middle Atlantic Parking Association. I said that though I will not name names in this speech, I am sure the initials R.S. will fit this parking guru perfectly.

Anyway, with application in hand, I went to my boss to request his approval. Much to my surprise, my boss informed me that the company wasn't interested in joining this association; furthermore, he could teach me everything there was to know about parking. Upon recounting these words to my parking guru, he suggested I pay the \$50 fee and join anyway. I took his suggestion, paid the \$50 and became a member of MAPA. This suggestion and further guidance from R.S. led to a positive mentoring relationship.

Now, one may ask, does MAPA benefit the customers who park in the University of Maryland, Baltimore garages? Yes, I believe these customers do reap benefits, although not easily recognizable. This is evidenced when we conduct our customer service survey (every two years). Historically, customers rate our cashiers very high; coincidentally, the majority of these individuals have attended MAPA's customer service seminar "Home Grown Customer Service." Hence, the customer has reaped the benefits of MAPA. Besides, where else can one send an employee for \$35 for a highly effective customer service seminar coupled with a hot lunch to boot!

Did I hear someone say "just the facts, please"? OK, the fact is that I was a member of the MAPA board for more than 11 years, and for each of those years, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and appreciated the opportunity to grow with the industry. More important, the fact is that MAPA benefits our customers and employees, as well as myself, because we (the university) get involved. Being involved means being active, and being active means being alert. There is a cliché that says, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Same holds true for any organiza-

tion. Simply paying the dues might get your name in the book; however, if you want your name in the book of "knowledge," then you have to get involved.

So, in closing, I leave you with this tidbit of information. Recently, our campus opened up our 10 building Bio-Tech Park, which includes one garage already open and two more in the future. Invitations were sent to well over 900 VIPs to attend an elaborate program. However, none of the 900 invitations were sent to our parking office. But, lo and behold, attached to the gala event program was a list of six important names and cellphone numbers, should any emergency/problem arise. You'll never guess whose name and phone number were included in the "Lucky Six" (as we affectionately called them). You guessed right: my name and cellphone number. See, we really ARE among the most important people -- it's just that other people haven't caught on yet!

Keep in mind that our industry is what we make of it, and do we really want to settle for the likes of statements that have come across in Parking Department reports: "Overall, feedback about parking services was positive, which is very complimentary about a service that patrons are forced to pay for."

"Not I," said the parking man. I know we can do better.

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Circle #13 on Reader Service Card

'How To Collect of What You

Many municipalities and universities are under more fiscal pressure than ever before, being asked to produce greater results with fewer resources. This means that you need every revenue dollar you can generate. While there continues to be a lot of debate on whether parking tickets are issued to promote parking turnover and punish those who interrupt safe traffic flow, the bottom line is that they have become a vital revenue source for many organizations.

Parking tickets provide funding for all types of public projects, and their revenues help to drive down resident taxes and fees. But whatever the reasoning behind your ticketing efforts, if your enforcement officers are going to take the time to

the use of handheld ticket writers has been shown to dramatically improve overall collection results

write tickets, you certainly want them paid by the violator. This article will discuss some of the ways to collect more of what you are owed on the parking tickets that are being written.

The first step is to analyze the success of your current operation. Many organizations misinterpret their parking violation collection rates by basing their evaluation on revenue. However, for true accuracy, collection results should be based on paid tickets. Therefore, the easiest and most accurate formula for calculating your organization's collection results is to take your total tickets written (minus tickets that are voided or dismissed) compared to what are still open and unpaid. Note that partial payments should not count as a closed/ paid ticket. Consider the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned} &110,000 \text{ tickets written} \\ &-10,000 \text{ tickets voided/ dismissed} \\ &=100,000 \text{ "good tickets"} \end{aligned}$$

If 4,000 of your 100,000 "good tickets" are open/unpaid, your collection rate is 96%.

Collect More You Are Owed'

By Bill Geraghty

After determining the success rate of your current operation, the second step is to review the measures that can be taken to improve parking ticket collection results. For example, the use of handheld ticket writers has been shown to dramatically improve overall collection results over traditional handwritten tickets. Information is captured accurately in the field, and back-end data entry errors are eliminated when the ticket is transferred electronically to your ticket database.

Also, depending on where you order your tickets from, the paper quality of the handheld tickets tends to be highly resistant to inclement weather, as well as to extreme cold and heat. Traditional handwritten tickets have a tendency to become destroyed by the elements, making them difficult for the violator to pay, resulting in lost revenue.

Of all of the measures that can be taken to improve overall collection results, none is more important to the ultimate successful disposition of each parking ticket than nationwide Department of Motor Vehicle registration retrievals. Each registered owner retrieval should come directly from each state's respective DMV agency to ensure that you are gathering the most up-to-date, accurate information. Also, taking advantage of your home state's registration suspension program can be an extremely successful contributor to overall collection results.

It puts teeth in the collection process by preventing violators from renewing their vehicle registrations until their tickets are paid. Unfortunately, not every state has such a program, and program details vary from state to state. However, if your state has this process in place and you are not utilizing it, you are missing out on a very valuable collection tool.

After accurate DMV information is captured, the next step is to perform effective and persistent delinquent noticing. Your notices should be tracked and go out at regular frequencies. Onerous language should be used as needed, informing the violator of all consequences for unpaid tickets. Also, notices should reflect the most up-to-date information on all of the violator's open parking tickets, and there should be detailed payment instructions for the violator to follow.

Finally, by offering violators as many payment

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'How to collect more of what you are owed'

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options as possible, the more likely they will be to pay their tickets. Convenience for violators will increase their compliance. By offering the ability to pay parking tickets through the Internet or by phone with a credit card, violators will not be restricted by cash flow problems, or if they are unable to get to your payment office or even to the post office to mail their payment. Furthermore, particularly in a university setting where delinquent notices may be sent home to parents who are the registered owners of their child's vehicles, the parents will appreciate the convenience of resolving unpaid tickets remotely.

These examples are just a few of the many ways your organization can optimize parking ticket revenues. If the resources to deploy these actions within your organization are limited, consider the use of an outsourcing specialist. Working together, they can help your organization meet your fiscal goals.

Bill Geraghty is with Complus Data Innovations. He can be reached at billg@complusdata.com.

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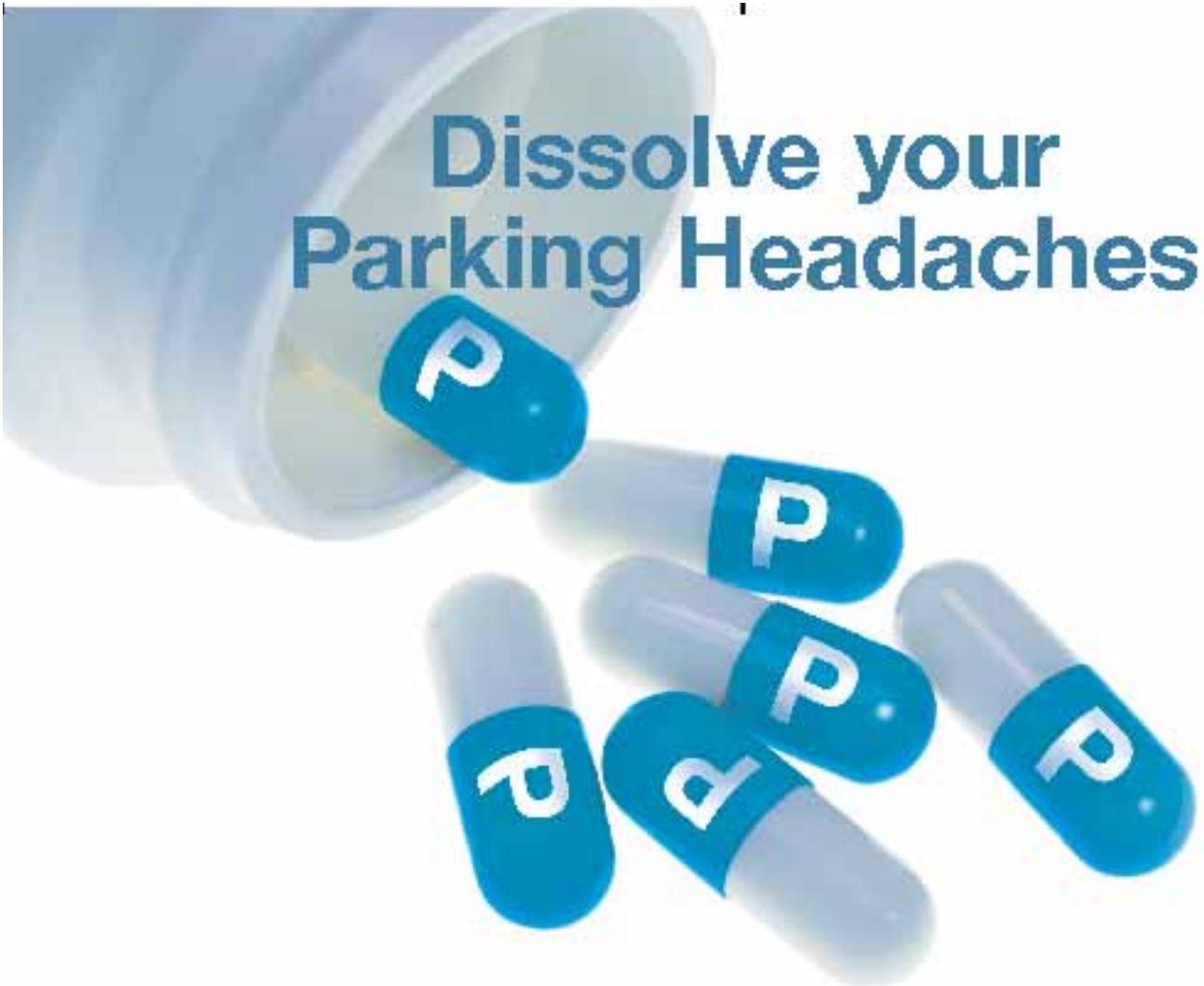
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In 2006, a New Parking Formula?

By Joseph P. Sculli

In the November and December 2005 editions of *Parking Today*, two articles covered how the potential output of parking or transportation programs could be measured through the following five-step approach:

1. Obtain stakeholders' opinions on program performance.
2. Conduct first-hand observations of your operations.
3. Analyze program data, and if necessary, develop the means to collect other key data.
4. Conduct field activity surveys (highly related to Step 3).
5. Assess the true effectiveness of the supporting infrastructure (e.g., organizational design, labor agreements, overarching governance).

The two previous articles suggested specific actions to implement the first two steps. In Step One, feedback is sought from outside constituents on program strengths and weaknesses so the organization can capitalize on the former and improve the latter. In Step Two, the manager personally experiences all of the "good, bad and ugly" of the organization's own service quality as a customer would, to identify needed improvements. This article outlines how you can apply the highly related Steps Three and Four.

Step Three: *Analyze Program Data, and If Necessary, Develop the Means to Collect Other Key Data*

1. Review past audit reports and studies to establish a baseline for your performance measures.
2. Examine the present complement of performance measurement forms and reports to assess what is and isn't being measured (if it's not being measured, it's not being managed).
3. Recalling your program's strengths and weaknesses identified through Steps One and Two, conduct research on what the industry and your peers consider as effective measurements, and develop a list of the key indicators that your organization will monitor.
4. Selected indicators might include on-time performance rates, board and alight counts, parking occupancy and turnover rates, number and types of customer complaints, violation rates by type of parking regulation, employee absentee-vacancy rates, sick-leave use, capture rate assessments, origin-destination studies, etc.
5. While the above list could be infinite, select the critical measures that need to be tracked immediately and faithfully. But plan on adding other indicators that eventually will be tracked to fine-tune your program's performance.
6. Unless you're running a "mom and pop store" operation and collecting revenue in a cigar box – and you happen to be the owner and lone worker – dedicate at least one employee position to program analysis (see next item).
7. Of course, the number of analysts required depends on program age and scope – younger and larger, more help needed. Established programs and those with smaller areas to cover may need fewer analysts. Though rules of thumb

for analyst staffing were once prevalent, it's a needs-based assessment that should be made today.

8. Display your data trends with performance charts, tables, comparisons with benchmarks, etc. – but for ticket-writing operations, use caution: The total number of tickets is neither the only nor the main indicator you want to track. It is the consequence of other performance indicators and various components of productivity that should be tracked anyway (which is a whole other article).

9. Subject your performance data to geographical analysis on macro and micro levels (central business district quadrants or campus "neighborhoods" versus underlying enforcement beats, meter collection routes and transit route service areas, for example).

10. Applying some form of a geographical information systems (GIS) analysis tool is an absolute must – be it a simple acetate overlay of a map with manually written performance results or a sophisticated GIS relational database.

11. Discuss the information with supervisors and line personnel to focus improvement actions on the factors that shape service quality and performance efficiency and effectiveness.

12. Establish an expectation, as well as the management processes, for establishing a cycle of collecting, reporting, interpreting and acting on the performance data. If you have the nerve to dive into the deep end of the performance indicator pool, don't just tread water after you rise to the surface. Swim out and use the information to convert that to different manager, supervisor and employee behaviors. So schedule working meetings focused on the data, and develop action plans and "after-action" reviews among the organization's working groups.

Step Four: *Conduct Field Activity Surveys*

1. With staff, develop a list of potential survey methods, sites and times for peak and off-peak periods and locations. It's worth repeating the suggested indicators mentioned in Step Three, Item 4, which include, but are not limited to:

- a. on-time performance rates;
- b. board and alight counts;
- c. parking occupancy and turnover rates;
- d. violation rates by type of parking regulation;
- e. capture rate assessments;
- f. origin-destination studies;
- g. running time checks for buses; and
- h. driving time checks for automobiles, to name a few.

2. Develop frequency schedules and sampling rates for the surveys – from one or two survey "events" weekly to larger efforts involving more surveyors monthly, quarterly, annually, etc.

3. Develop an inventory of survey forms, and establish administrative controls over distributed and completed forms to positively track them during the survey phases, such as survey assignment, work-in-progress, quality assurance checks, and processing/analysis.

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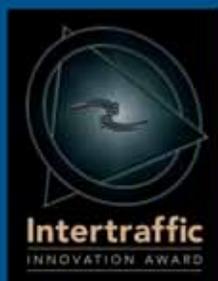
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4. Select and train survey team leaders and complete the list of methods, locations, survey periods and sampling rates. Examples might include quarterly on-time performance checks of every transit route; monthly violation capture rate surveys on 25 percent of the enforcement beats, etc.

5. Develop a schedule for the surveys (days of week, times of day, number of repeated surveys, etc.), but leave room for supervisors and analysts to conduct ad-hoc surveys as dictated by data observations, public complaints, etc.

6. Develop survey staffing requirements based on the survey plan. Based on the surveys and time periods involved, you may need temporary employees and/or student workers to supplement analytical staff for large-scale surveys.

7. Coordinate written survey procedures with respect to governing legislation, performance criteria, and any supplemental operating guidelines and standards. For example, if your operating policy is not to cite a rush-hour parking violation until five minutes after the starting time posted, the surveyor also should wait for that same enforcement "window" to elapse before recording an un-ticketed violation.

8. Consider obtaining electronic or scanable data collection forms and related equipment (personal data assis-

tants or scanning software or hardware) to gain efficiency over manual record processing and data tabulation.

9. Prepare surveyor maps and routes, preferably by using GIS software.

10. Provide surveyor training on applying enforcement guidelines, using manual and/or scanable data collection forms and/or PDAs, controlling and quality-checking the forms, etc.

11. Provide training and establish procedures for survey supervisors regarding control of survey forms, for monitoring and assisting surveyors in the field, for managing end-of-day procedures for form and equipment returns, and for tracking survey progress against the plan.

12. Personally lead the initial elements of the survey data collection process in the field, and periodically visit supervisors and field data collectors.

13. Assign staff to process the survey media and to generate products for analysis using maps, tables, charts, etc. Development of a relational database for analyzing the survey data and producing reports is ideal, as it can eliminate repetitious tasks for subsequent surveys, although spreadsheet analysis of survey information can also be effective, especially for ad-hoc, small-scale surveys.

14. Compare parking indicators with past performance and industry norms. For large survey undertakings, document findings and develop recommendations (as warranted) in a report.

15. Survey results can be used as performance feedback for all members of the organization and to re-focus work efforts.

Conclusion - Four Steps Down, One to Go

Establishing a process whereby performance information is consistently gathered, interpreted, reported and acted upon will help ensure service quality. It also will provide objective evidence of how well your organization is achieving its mission. In the next (and last) installment of this series, we'll review how to determine how well your program objectives are being supported by the parking and transportation infrastructure, and we'll finally assemble the "formula" for assessing the qualitative output of your organization.

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SF Launches Pilot System

San Francisco is piloting a parking management system for cities, providing real-time information about on-street parking use and availability. The system will allow cities to manage on-street parking as effectively as they currently manage fully equipped parking garages, with accurate time counts and flexible payment options.

The system, supplied by Streetline, uses sensors to monitor parking on-street spaces and can tell instantly whether they are vacant or in use. Occupancy data can be easily integrated with pay stations and workforce management systems. Installation is fast, simple and inexpensive, and requires no wiring on the street.

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