

## KEEPING WATCH:

# How Maintenance Software Can Keep Parking To

• *By Gorm Tuxen*



In recent years the parking industry has become incredibly technology-centric, and the performance of the technology upon which parking owners and operators have come to rely has become supremely important. Tools that seemed almost exotic just a few years ago—parking guidance sensors, advanced PARCS equipment, and frictionless parking suites, for instance—are common today. For many owners and operators, the focus has turned from whether to invest in technology to how to keep that technology operating at optimal performance.

That's where maintenance monitoring software comes in. Maintenance monitoring software is designed to monitor parking equipment's performance efficiencies and warn administrators when a piece of equipment isn't operating properly. The software allows streamlining of the preventative system maintenance procedures, allowing problems to be fixed remotely, in many cases before dispatching expensive field service personnel.

By diagnosing repairable problems, the software can also often help owners avoid unnecessary and costly equipment replacement. Finally, it also provides an on-going history of the performance of the hardware over time. It's sort of like having an independent monitor on hand to make sure everything is working properly.

Third party system monitoring uses the principle of Open IP data sharing. However, in addition to sharing operational

data across an API, diagnostics data from multiple hardware systems can also be shared and further analyzed to create a real-time dashboard, to allow for the connected equipment to be monitored and supervised. Equipment failures, wireless system disconnects, battery replacements, paper stock, or revenue collection requirements, to mention a few, can be monitored and prioritized from one central point.

**"Most hardware has some sort of performance measurement built in, but it's advisable to utilize independent monitoring software for a number of reasons."**

Most hardware has some sort of performance measurement built in, but it's advisable to utilize independent monitoring software for a number of reasons. Most importantly, independent monitoring provides unbiased measurement of the hardware's performance. It's designed to monitor factors that are important to the owner or operator, not just the hardware's manufacturer.



## Each Running Smoothly

It operates on the same principal as an independent auditor who monitors the books of an organization. Just as the independent auditor is in place to make sure that appropriate financial policies and procedures are being pursued on a day-to-day basis, maintenance monitoring software makes sure that technological tools are functioning as they should on a day-to-day basis.

Independent maintenance monitoring is particularly useful in today's parking industry because so many parking owners have implemented parking suites comprised of equipment supplied by different manufacturers. While the equipment itself is generally adaptable to work with other types of equipment as part of a suite, the built-in monitoring tools often aren't able to scrutinize the performance of all of the tools that make up the suite. Independent maintenance monitoring software should be able to overcome this challenge, monitoring the performance of all of the tools that comprise the suite, as well as the suite itself.

Independent maintenance technology also provides data normalization. When disparate technologies are used in a suite, the monitoring elements of each piece of hardware provide their own unique and limited data points. Unfortunately, those data points don't always play well with the data points of other technologies in the suite.

As a result, it can be difficult to sort through the various data points and make sense of them. With outside monitoring tools owners and operators are presented a single set of data points designed to make sense of the performance of an individual suite of tools and provide useful information about the performance of those tools, both individually and as parts of the suite.

It's understandable why technology providers sometimes see independent maintenance monitoring software as a threat. No one likes to have their performance judged by outsiders, and technology providers are no different. Often, technology

providers will argue that independent monitoring is unnecessary because the technology itself has a monitoring function.

However, as organizations and individuals in many walks of life have discovered (often the hard way), independent monitoring provides essential unbiased review and scrutiny of roles and performance that often can't be managed well or appropriately internally.

That's why most organizations—both public and private—have some type of independent oversight. That oversight might be financial or organizational, but it's common across the board. There's no reason that technological tools shouldn't be held to the same high standard.

Additionally, technology manufacturers actually derive a benefit from having their equipment monitored independently. In addition to providing performance data to owners and operators, independent maintenance monitoring software also forwards that data to the technology provider.

This data can (and should) be used by the technology provider to improve its tools, making them more reliable and resilient. In the end, this is an important benefit that doesn't cost the manufacturer a cent.

Independent monitoring software is a relatively new concept and there aren't many programs developed specifically for the parking industry. However, there are software packages out there and it's important to find one that focuses on parking. The technology that serves our industry is unique and generic monitoring software shouldn't be entrusted with the job of assuring the performance of that technology.

The cost of parking-centric monitoring software is relatively low and it quickly pays for itself by helping to improve the performance of parking tools and helping them last longer. It's worth the effort to seek out independent monitoring software that has been designed specifically for monitoring parking equipment.

Technology has become an integral part of the parking industry and it represents a significant investment to the vast majority of parking owners. Owners should protect that investment by using maintenance monitoring software to assure that their equipment is operating as it should.

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