

Elevating the Customer Experience, Improving Efficiency and Increasing Revenue for Portfolio Parking Facilities Management

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Introduction

Scentre Group owns and operates the pre-eminent shopping centre portfolio in Australia and New Zealand with retail real estate assets under management valued at \$45.7 billion and shopping centre ownership interests valued at \$32.3 billion. With 39 large format shopping centres spread across Australia and New Zealand, Scentre Group manage some of the worlds most visited and operationally intensive parking environments.

In 2015, Scentre Group rebranded its organizational structure renaming the Shopping Centre Management division as the Centre Experience division under the leadership of a newly created role of Director – Customer Experience. This rebranding and management restructure is reflective of a strategic refocus on delivering customer experience excellence across the entire customer journey. With parking representing the first and last real-world impression of the customers journey, Scentre Group's National Car Parking team are aggressively working to remove customer friction and deliver operational excellence.

Scentre Group saw an opportunity to centralize their car park operations to deliver a consistently high customer service experience, improve efficiency and generate additional revenue across their facilities. The creation of this centralized service required close collaboration with a trusted Technology Partner and in 2015, Scentre Group engaged Park Assist to design and implement a world class platform to underpin the creation of a National Operations Centre ("NOC").

The Opportunity

With over 525 million visits per year, Westfield Shopping Centres are often the busiest of shopping precincts in any city. This volume of visitors places significant importance on the smooth operation of their car parks. A single customer enquiry handled inefficiently at a Car Park Exit or Pay Machine can quickly cause a compounded delay for other customers.

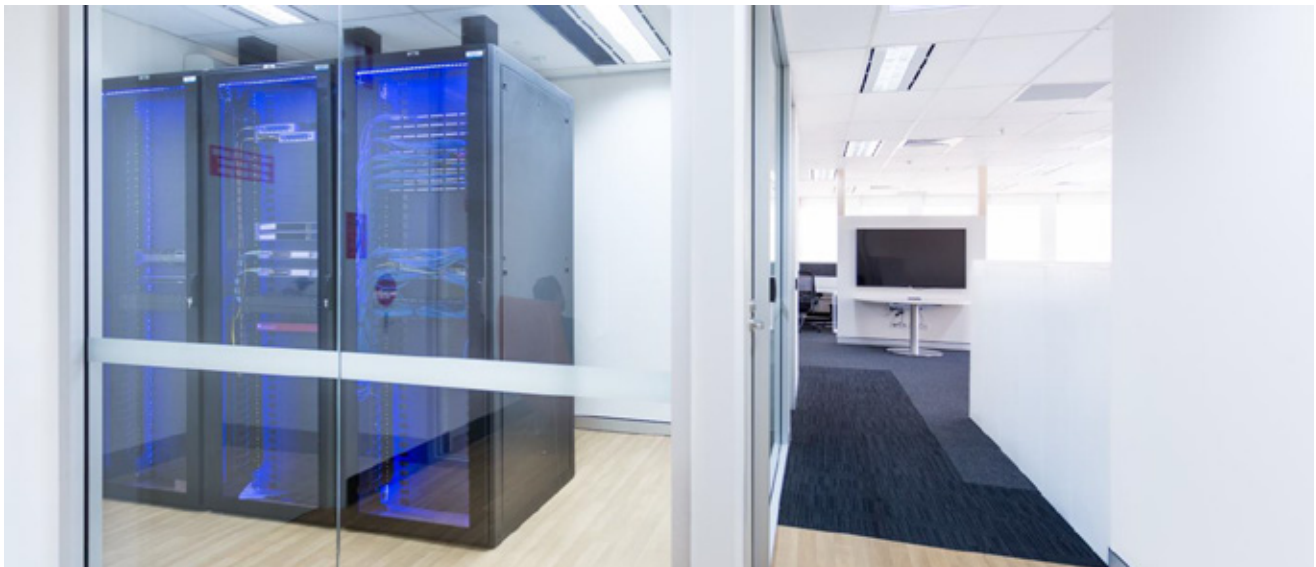
Scentre Group were looking for a way to centralize the handling of exception events, to provide a more responsive, efficient and consistent service resulting in an enhanced customer experience.

The goals of this centralized service included:

1. Provide a consistently high Customer Service experience across all of their car parks, whilst maintaining a local feel.
2. Implement a more economical service delivery model through centralization.
3. Provide better support for onsite Scentre Group staff, freeing them up to focus on higher value interactions with customers.
4. Capture all the reasons for customer friction to enable sophisticated data analytics to inform strategic thinking and initiatives.
5. Extend the hours of coverage provided to customers for premium customer service.

Over the years, Scentre Group have invested in various site based parking technologies, all of which are operated in a siloed manner. Therefore, the technical and operational challenges primarily consisted of;

1. Reliably connecting these disparate systems together.
2. Integrating these systems in a coherent and consistent manner.
3. Embedding Scentre Group's operational business logic and workflows into a centralised command and control application.
4. Delivering an intuitive user interface for the control room operators to provide responsive, efficient and quality customer service.



Solution Design

Following an evaluation and scoping exercise, Scentre Group engaged Park Assist to design a FlinQ solution to meet their requirements. Developed by Flexposure, [FlinQ](#) is a unified technology platform which provides flexible integration capabilities with third party systems whilst delivering an intuitive command-style interface for control room operators.

At the time, Gary Neff, CEO of Park Assist said "Scentre Group chose the FlinQ Solution as an opportunity to leverage centralized resources to better support onsite operations. We are extremely proud to offer our partnership, and our in-depth industry knowledge for this innovative and complex project with this prestigious and progressive organization."

With project sponsorship from Scentre Group's National Car Parking Team, Park Assist ran a comprehensive design process with involvement from numerous stakeholders. This engagement identified Scentre Group's operational, technical and business intelligence requirements and designed a tailored solution to achieve them.

With years of practical experience leveraging technology to manage and optimise Car Parks across the globe, Park Assist had a deep operational appreciation for the outcomes Scentre Group required. This informed the approach and ultimately ensured the strategic, commercial and operational goals of the project drove all technology decisions.

As a member of the TKH Group, Park Assist brought the combined capabilities and expertise of sister companies Flexposure and Commend to the solution design process. In addition, Park Assist partnered locally with MOQ Digital to design a Virtual Private Cloud (VPC) to host the solution. This collaborative approach with its Technology Partners laid the bedrock for the final design; a cloud hosted FlinQ Solution, leveraging Commend's Intercom backbone and providing seamless integration with third party Video Management Systems (VMS) and Parking Access & Revenue Control Systems (PARCs).

Whilst the technology solution was being designed, Scentre Group acquired, designed and fitted out a world-class facility in Australia to house their newly established National Operations Centre (NOC). From multiple layers of infrastructure redundancy and proven business continuity strategies, through to the ergonomically designed control room, this facility provides the ideal environment for the delivery of continuous operations and quality customer service. Designed with future expansion in mind, this facility provides Scentre Group with the infrastructure and space required to support their current and future centralized operational requirements.

Execution

In early 2016 the implementation phase commenced. Park Assist led a multi-discipline project team, which included representatives from Scentre Group National Car Parking and IT teams.

Scentre Group focused on fitting out the National Operations Centre and preparing the initial sites for integration, whilst Park Assist and its Partners commenced building the VPC and provisioning the Platforms and Applications.

Detailed planning, combined with a highly capable project team culminated in all milestones being achieved on or before their respective deadlines.

Following integration of the first car park and successful disaster recovery testing, Scentre Group's National Operations Centre was officially launched on the 12th of April 2016. The project then shifted gears to focus on integrating the remaining Scentre Group sites, whilst Park Assist commenced providing support, maintenance and change management services to preserve application health and platform stability.

Ultimately, the project was smoothly delivered on time and on budget with minimal disruption to the operation of Scentre Group's business and car parks.

Results:

This project delivered a state of the art National Operations Centre for Scentre group, which as at June 2017, services over 120,000 customer calls per month from 16 connected sites (and counting).



The customer service improvements generated by Scentre Group's FlinQ Solution are not only material, they're also measurable:

- An average **60% reduction in time spent waiting by the customer**, resulting in an **annual saving of over 149 days of customer wait time**.
- An **additional 52 hours of premium customer service coverage per week**, equating to a **64% uplift**.
- On broad base modelling, the solution with all of its benefits has achieved a **net neutral cost outcome for the business**.

From a technology standpoint, the FlinQ Solution has been:

- Reliable and robust, delivering **99.995% availability** this year.
- Efficiently scalable, handling **over 3.5m events per day** from connected sub-systems, without requiring any resource expansion.

The FlinQ Solution equips Operators with real-time information, enabling them to make more informed decisions and provide local, situationally aware advice to customers. Two prime examples of this include:

- On answering a customer call, the Operator is instantly presented with a map of the Car Park highlighting the callers position (and relevant Points of Interest), live video feed(s) from the callers location and information regarding the site, device and customer (via an integration with Scentre Group's Operational Wiki).
- Operators maintain a record of customers who have been issued Lost Tickets via FlinQ. Where a Lost Ticket event occurs, Operators can quickly look up the customers License Plate and identify any recent interactions with the NOC. This enables Operators to distinguish between genuine lost ticket cases and repeat offenders, enabling them to take the appropriate course of action.

The unified FlinQ experience provides a consistent and intuitive interface for the Operators, removing noise and inefficiencies associated with operating multiple sub-systems from various suppliers and significantly reducing staff training overheads.



FlinQ captures accurate data associated to all aspects of the call handling process. This has given Scentre Group the ability to analyse and understand the underlying reasons for customer assistance calls. These insights are used to mitigate these from occurring altogether (for example, rectifying faulty equipment, customer education campaigns and increased signage and wayfinding). This translates to a more frictionless experience for their Customers and a reduction in demand on the NOC.

The National Operations Centre has enabled Scentre Group to redistribute their labour force in a more productive way. In shifting some of the local centres' staff duties to the National Operations Centre, Scentre Group has:

- freed up local staff to engage in higher value face-to-face customer interactions; and
- provided better remote support for local staff to maintain and operate the car park.

"Park Assist (PA) have been an excellent business partner on this project. The FlinQ software solution is extremely flexible and nimble. Critical to the success of the project was PA's recommendation to break up the project into design and then execution. The disciplined and comprehensive upfront design process – lead by PA and supplemented by the outsource partners – meant there was no expectation gap between the parties and reduced much of the risk around project execution. Not only is the FlinQ solution nimble, but PA themselves demonstrated flexibility throughout the project delivery cycle as the sequencing of site integration works changed. There is little to nothing we would do differently on this Project had we had our time over again – Park Assist have been a proactive and faithful partner."

Mat Clee, Sr. Business Manager of Scentre Group's National Parking, 2017

What's Next?

Today, Scentre Group are benefitting from many tangible operational benefits from their FlinQ Solution (some of which are outlined above). However, this solution was specifically designed with the future needs of the business in mind.

Scentre Group envisage that their National Operations Centre will continue to grow and evolve as new parking experiences are brought to market.

The foundational infrastructure can easily and cost efficiently scale to support increased demand from new use cases. New integrations with backend customer databases and third party systems will underpin the delivery of innovative new services and capabilities.

FlinQ will underpin the continued evolution of Scentre Group's operational capabilities. These will continue to expand as more sensing and control systems are integrated into their FlinQ Solution (for example, Parking Guidance Systems, BMS, Access Control etc). This enables the NOC to "keep their finger on the pulse" of their car parks and in realtime, be automatically alerted to exception states which the Operators can then address. For example, an unusually high traffic pattern is detected and the NOC is alerted. Operators reroute car park traffic flows by changing Dynamic Signage and/or deploying attendants.

Continued analysis of the rich and comprehensive data set created and captured by FlinQ will continue to yield insights pertaining to their customer's car parking experience. This will continue to support the National Car Parking team's decision making process and national strategy.

Fundamentally, Scentre Group are in a strong strategic position to provide their centre teams and customers with greater support and new service offerings in a rapid, agile and scalable manner.

Summary:

The Park Assist provided FlinQ Solution underpins Scentre Group's National Operations Centre, which is a key strategic initiative designed to deliver exceptional customer service. Based on the substantial success of this project, Scentre Group are well positioned to continue to innovate their parking offerings and customer service capabilities over the long term.

Jeremy Lewis is the General Manager for APAC for Park Assist Pty Limited. Pioneers of camera-based parking guidance and systems with embedded business intelligence, Park Assist continues to enhance its award-winning and now patented technology through leading-edge product innovations and robust API-driven solutions. With field-proven installations in 28 countries and counting, across a diverse set of industry verticals, the company serves many of the world's premier property developers, asset owners and car park operators.

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