



A fine parking system

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Mats Wikström,
Svea Inkasso

FACTS

Customer: One of Sweden’s largest car park operators

Challenge: Making the system for parking fines more effective, and trying to reduce the number of penalties that are queried.

Solution: DP&P solution combined with camera developed by Smartnote, with software from XMS Penvision and digital paper from Strålfors. Parking fines processed and sent to the office almost immediately

Benefits: Higher compliance among drivers, ease of use for the parking wardens, increased safety for parking wardens.

Getting information – quickly

Nobody likes getting a parking penalty, and the first reaction of many people when they get a fine is to ring the parking company to query the ticket.

The problem is that the parking company staff who answer the phones often have no information about the individual drivers’ parking offences. If the parking attendant is still on his or her rounds, the information about the fine won’t be on the system until much later.

Now, a system using Anoto functionality means that parking companies can immediately give drivers quick and accurate information about their parking offences, and the possibilities of appealing the fine.

Looks like a normal ticket

The Parknote system, developed by Swedish company Smartnote, uses digital paper and pens with Anoto functionality together with mobile phones with inbuilt cameras and software developed by XMS Penvision.

The digital penalty notices are produced by the printing company Strålfors. Each notice

has a unique digital pattern linked to its serial number.

Parknote went live in May 2005 in Sweden, and customers include one of Sweden’s largest car park operators, which uses the system at all its sites.

Parking wardens using Parknote write out what look like normal parking penalty notices to wrongly parked cars, but their writing is recorded in a digital pen.

When they tick the ‘send’ box at the bottom of the penalty notice, it is sent via the mobile phone network to the parking company. The warden can also send photographs of the car, to demonstrate how it was wrongly parked.

Back at the parking company’s office, clerks receive the photos and an electronic image of the penalty notice seconds after the warden has sent them. When a driver then calls to complain, the clerks are well-prepared to answer questions. If the driver says, for example, that he had paid and placed the receipt on the dash, the clerk can instantly summon pictures to check his account.

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Halving the number of cancelled fines

"It's something of a sport to try to get one over on parking companies," says Mats Wikström at Svea Inkasso, which provides payment services to a number of parking companies in Sweden, and which has been a key partner to Smartnote in developing the system.

He says that the Parknote system brings down the cost of handling complaints, and reduces the number of complaints that are upheld.

"Too often it's the word of the driver against the word of the parking warden, but this system changes all that."

"We have halved the number of fines that are cancelled."

The quality of evidence provided by the system also reduces the number of cases that reach court, thereby providing a saving for society.

Another advantage of Parknote is the increased personal safety it provides for parking wardens. It is quite common for drivers to try to grab attendants' ticket books and try to rip up the ticket. This becomes pointless when the ticket is already processed and in the system.

"It kills all argument," says Wikström.

Expansion plans

The alternatives to Parknote are systems using PDAs, but Anders Barnå, chief executive of Smartnote, says his company's solution is cheaper than a PDA-based system, and has other advantages.

"The wardens have fewer gadgets to carry around with them, and because it is just camera, paper and pen, they can start using it with very little training."

Barnå says the company already plans to launch in the rest of Scandinavia, and has its eye on markets further afield.

"In the future, we would also like to go out into the rest of Europe," he adds.

Partner:

Smartnote
www.smartnote.se
(in Swedish)

Svea Inkasso
www.sveaekonomi.se
Credit rating and payment services