

Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden Case Study

Summary

Many things make a zoo a world-class attraction and national icon. Often, they're small things that go unnoticed by guests but contribute positively to customer service. One example is the way in which the park handles its cash. Guests don't notice it, but it helps get them through ticket lines quickly and efficiently. From a park's standpoint, cash control automation reduces costs, increases employee productivity, improves internal security, and enhances control of cash balances.

The Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden is a world-class zoological park. It's also an industry leader in cash control automation. Opened in 1875, the zoo prides itself on excellent customer service and efficient park operation. A key factor in driving efficiencies is streamlining the way the zoo manages its cash. When its existing cash recyclers reached the end of their life cycle, the zoo made the decision to replace them with Tidel smart safes — cost-effective solutions that are not only helping boost the zoo's customer service but also its profits.



Known For Its Conservation Efforts

A National Historic Landmark, the Cincinnati Zoo is known for its animal conservation efforts. An award-winning zoo and a leader in managing critically endangered primates, the zoo features one of the country's largest zoological collections. It has more than 500 animals and 3,000 plant species on exhibit in its 70-acre park. The zoo also hosts numerous animal encounters and special events, such as the PNC Festival of Lights, Hallzooween, and Zoo Brew.

The zoo is Ohio's top family attraction, with more than 1.5 million guests visiting the zoo annually. Guests come from all over Ohio and the surrounding states. An integral part of the public school system, the zoo is also one of southwest Ohio's leading non-formal science educators. More than 300,000 students participate in the zoo's educational programs annually. With so many guests visiting the zoo every year, efficient cash control is a must.

Finding Reliable, Versatile Replacements

The zoo's biggest challenge in replacing its recyclers was finding a reliable solution versatile enough to meet its needs. "We took a serious look at a variety of solutions before choosing Tidel," says Raymond Ulrich, director of purchasing/cash control operations. "We needed reliable systems that allowed our employees to handle funds from start to finish and that also fit in well with our large campus environment. The Tidel systems met all our needs, and then some."

Altogether, the zoo purchased five Tidel systems. It installed two Tidel Series 4e Systems with sidecars and high capacity note dispensers at its main ticketing plaza and a Tidel Series 4 with Tube Vend at each of its three remote locations in the park. The ticketing plaza is the zoo's main operations hub and where all employees begin their day.



Series 4e



High Capacity Note Dispenser



Sidecar



The remote locations support the ticketing plaza. The Tube Vends installed at these locations enabled employees to make deposits and receive change throughout their shifts.

The zoo installed two Series 4e/Tube Vend systems during its offseason in January. It installed the third Tube Vend during its busy season in June. In both cases, installation was quick and seamless. In fact, installing the Tube Vend at the last remote location was completed in about two hours, without disrupting park activities.

Scaling Up with Ease

Going from three employees using the Tidel systems in January to more than 100 using them in June proved to be a seamless process. "Scaling up was easy thanks to Tidel," says Ulrich. "We put all our new employees through a rigorous cash-control training program. When it came to training our people on the Tidel systems, we leveraged the training videos on Tidel's website. The videos helped our employees quickly learn how to operate the Tidel systems. Most finished the training within a couple of days."

The zoo uses a third party system to monitor the Tidel systems in the Cloud, says Ulrich. Only authorized employees can run reports that summarize current activity with the systems. Meanwhile, the cash control team services the cassettes on the Series 4e Systems when necessary, while a third party maintains the systems. "We now have a complete end-to-end process to handle our cash, monitor activity, and provide support whenever we need it," says Ulrich.

Leveraging Tidel's Built-in Features

The zoo favors many of the Tidel's features, especially the mailbox vaults. "Throughout our day-to-day business, we don't deal with many coins," says Ulrich. "So we have a coin dispenser at only one location. Instead, we use Tidel's mailbox vault, which is part of the Series 4 system. Employees can put traveler's checks, damaged money, gift certificates, and loose change in control envelopes and drop them in the vaults. Our cash control team then collects them. This approach saves time for employees and makes for a quick and easy pickup for our cash control team," adds Ulrich.

The zoo is also a big fan of Tidel's adaptability. "The smart safes and tube vends are easy to adapt to our needs," says Ulrich. "These can change depending on what's happening in the park. For example, on a busy night we may elect to close later than others. To boost security, we combine the systems with a proxSafe electronic key management system. This setup helps us track everything and manage our cash needs without using an armored car service."

Making a Difference at the Zoo

Installed less than a year ago, the Tidel systems are making a difference at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden. They provide employees with a faster and safer experience to deal with their daily cash business, boost the zoo's cash control automation, and improve its internal security. More importantly, the systems enhance customer service by cutting down on the time employees must wait for the zoo's cash control team to reach them—a big improvement over how the zoo did things before.

"We'd be hard-pressed to return to our old way of doing things," says Ulrich. "Our ability to function without the Tidel systems was tested recently when we experienced a power outage. Working without Tidel proved difficult. We're so pleased with the Tidel systems that we recommend them to other zoos looking to improve cash control automation," he adds.



In addition, the zoo plans to add another Tidel system when the zoo expands its parking lot in the near future. Installing Tidel in the lot, says Ulrich, would further enhance customer service capabilities and boost operational efficiency.

The Cincinnati Zoo has proven that taking bold steps like adopting Tidel systems is greatly improving its efficiencies and profitability, freeing up resources to continually enhance the customer experience. As a result, the Zoo has strengthened its position of being an award-winning, world-class facility, and recognized industry leader.