

## Case Study

No Worries For Secure Website Parked with  
Virtual.Offis



**Virtual.Offis**  
INSTANT INFRASTRUCTURE

Client: Secure Parking  
Industry: Facilities Management  
Location: Over 200 nationwide  
Revenue: \$200 Million +





## Background

When two of Australia's largest parking facility operators merged and began operating under the Secure Parking brand, both relied on having a reliable website environment that was highly secure. The aim is to drive online self-service, attracting payment transactions and providing site managers at over 170 locations with the details needed to compete more aggressively.

A premium business objective for the brand is to create a paperless environment where all transactions are done electronically. The merger with Kings Parking provided a timely opportunity to advance this goal and review the approach to website operations, hosting and technical support services.

To ensure critical customer service initiatives were rolled out rapidly and effectively, Secure Parking determined to outsource the backend operation and security of a brand new, highly functional website environment. They identified Sydney-based Managed Service Provider, Virtual.Offis as providing a strong track record in securing high volume, e-commerce transaction sites.

## The Challenge

Secure Parking maintains a competitive advantage by treating every car park as a separate business with individual needs. Many operators view car parks as a commodity with little differentiation in operation from one site to the next. However, Secure Parking, with its marketing-rich background has developed a fresh approach wherein each site is treated as a retail environment and attention is focused on maximising local marketing and operational opportunities.

Part of the businesses' success is a strong Customer Relationship Management programme, which ensures the business retains hundreds of thousands of loyal customers. With services including Prepaid Vouchers and Secure Advantage Parker cards, Secure Parking remains ahead of the game when it comes to using technology across all aspects of car park management.

The company wanted to offer a more dynamic mode of engagement with customers, providing a self-service environment that would be available 24x7x365 and creating unique offers that could be rolled out immediately to grow online bookings, eliminate the need for paper based marketing, maintain competitive advantage and reward customer loyalty.

As part of the merger, Secure Parking decided to rebrand and launch a new strap line of 'No Parking Worries'. They used this opportunity to redesign the existing website both in terms of look and feel, content and functionality. The brief for the new site was to create an intuitive, easily navigated information portal for customers that would encourage them to book in advance.

Marketing was to be a key focus of the new site as Secure Parking wanted a vehicle to publish articles, provide banner marketing and allow them to sign up promotional partners on a national, state and local level. In a dynamic, highly competitive market, the importance of instant content updating for successful marketing initiatives could not be stressed enough.

As well as serving the general public, the site was also developed to ensure access to information for site owners and operators, providing details of new services, corporate updates and customer service strategies. This would be important for ensuring owners and operators around the country were fully briefed on and able to comply in support of initiatives where needed.

Confident the company would be successful in transiting hundreds of thousands of customer to a self-service environment, it was crucial the site was available without fail and the technical environment in which it was hosted be capable of managing a massive daily load. Offering payment gateways also meant the security of transactions had to be second-to-none.

A scenario review found the existing website was not going to be readily upgraded to cope with the new vision. It was a very basic platform and continuing with it was only possible with timely and expensive customisations.

Brad Burrows, Project Manager for Secure Parking, explains further, “The existing website offered limited business information. Updating content took days to manage and there was very little data mining functionality. The previous hosting provider also did not offer a reliable service.”

## **The Decision**

The brief for the new website was developed to take into consideration the requirements of the business as a whole. A committee was appointed including IT, marketing and operations. A strict tender and vendor selection process for hosting and support services was put in place.

Brad Burrows continues, “Virtual.Offis was the final choice for several reasons. They had a very credible reputation and a client base that were very happy with the service offered. We also felt that there was a good cultural fit and work ethic and we were confident that they would deliver on their promises in being responsive and flexible. They also provided a cost effective solution and demonstrated the ability to support us technically with service level agreements and guarantees of 24/7 monitoring and maintenance.”

## **The Solution Deployment**

The merger created tight timeframes for the project, meaning Virtual.Offis needed to prove its ability to support the deployment, testing and live operation of the site immediately.

The project involved four different businesses partnering to provide an end-to-end solution. The limited timeframe meant that it was essential that there was constant interaction between Virtual.Offis, developers Hothouse and Weblogic and project managers Clear Lead.

The technical solution offered by Virtual.Offis incorporated dedicated IBM BladeCentre technology, switches, CISCO firewalls, redundant Internet paths. Virtual.Offis were able to offer all the services for a monthly fee. Secure Parking also took advantage of the TryB4Ubuy program to install and develop the application, and test the technology before going live and committing to the contract. This partnership approach ensures the web site and infrastructure meets the objectives of the business.

The new platform resolved all previous operational issues and provided the scalability, stability, links to network and backup that the business required both now and into the future. The new server also provided improvements in email services and anti virus scanning.

## **The Outcomes and Benefits**

The major benefit of the solution was that staff in different locations could now update and change content instantly, resulting in a more competitive proposition. In the past, this process would have taken over a week and involved a time-consuming administration process.

The new website has the increased functionality needed to be used as a dynamic and powerful marketing resource for customers and business partners.

Availability, security and reliability of the site and associated services have exceeded expectation under the agreement with Virtual.Offis according to project manager Brad Burrows, who said “The support offered by Virtual.Offis has ensured the site is completely reliable and their expertise in the security of online transaction environments means customers can be confident in using the online booking options.”

Additional benefits stemming from the decision to use Virtual.Offis has been a tighter control on fixed costs and the technical flexibility needed to make updates and upgrades to the site since launch, which have helped evolve the site to stay constantly ahead of the competition.

Future plans may see advanced services including ‘where is’ style step-by-step directions to find car parks.

## About Secure Parking

Owned by ASX listed entity, Ariadne, which amalgamated its wholly owned car-parking business Kings Parking with the Secure Parking business on 1 November 2004, resulting in the formation of the largest car parking business in Australia. Ariadne has an ongoing 50% interest in a joint venture entity S & K Car Park Management Pty Limited ("S & K"), which operates the Kings Parking and Secure Parking brand names.

S & K manages car parking revenues in excess of \$200 million through over 200 car parks on the eastern seaboard of Australia. As a consequence of the merger, S & K has the financial and operating capacity to seek further growth and generate economic benefits derived from critical mass and scale. The merger has brought together a complementary range of operating and management skills, backed by the strong financial and corporate disciplines of a publicly listed company.

S & K is a multi-disciplinary car park service provider, and the industry leader in the areas of customer service, marketing and relationship management with owners and landlords. S & K's philosophy has been to maintain an appropriate balance between increasing revenue and providing the highest levels of customer service. S & K's focus on integrating new technologies and methodologies across all facets of car park management brings its clients and parking customers a seamless and integrated product offering. The company is continually reinventing its core service, as well as identifying and implementing new opportunities to improve customer patronage and financial returns for stakeholders.

This philosophy has resulted in S & K not only being Australia's largest provider of car park management services, but has also allowed the development of deep competencies in the following areas:

- Car park lay-out and design
- Traffic flow management
- Assessment and implementation of advanced car park control equipment and associated technologies
- Provision of car park operational labour on a short or long term basis
- Integration of value-added services into the car parking environment eg. car washing and dry cleaning