# CASE STUDY

**Upgrades Improve
Customer Relations**

IPS GROUP ™
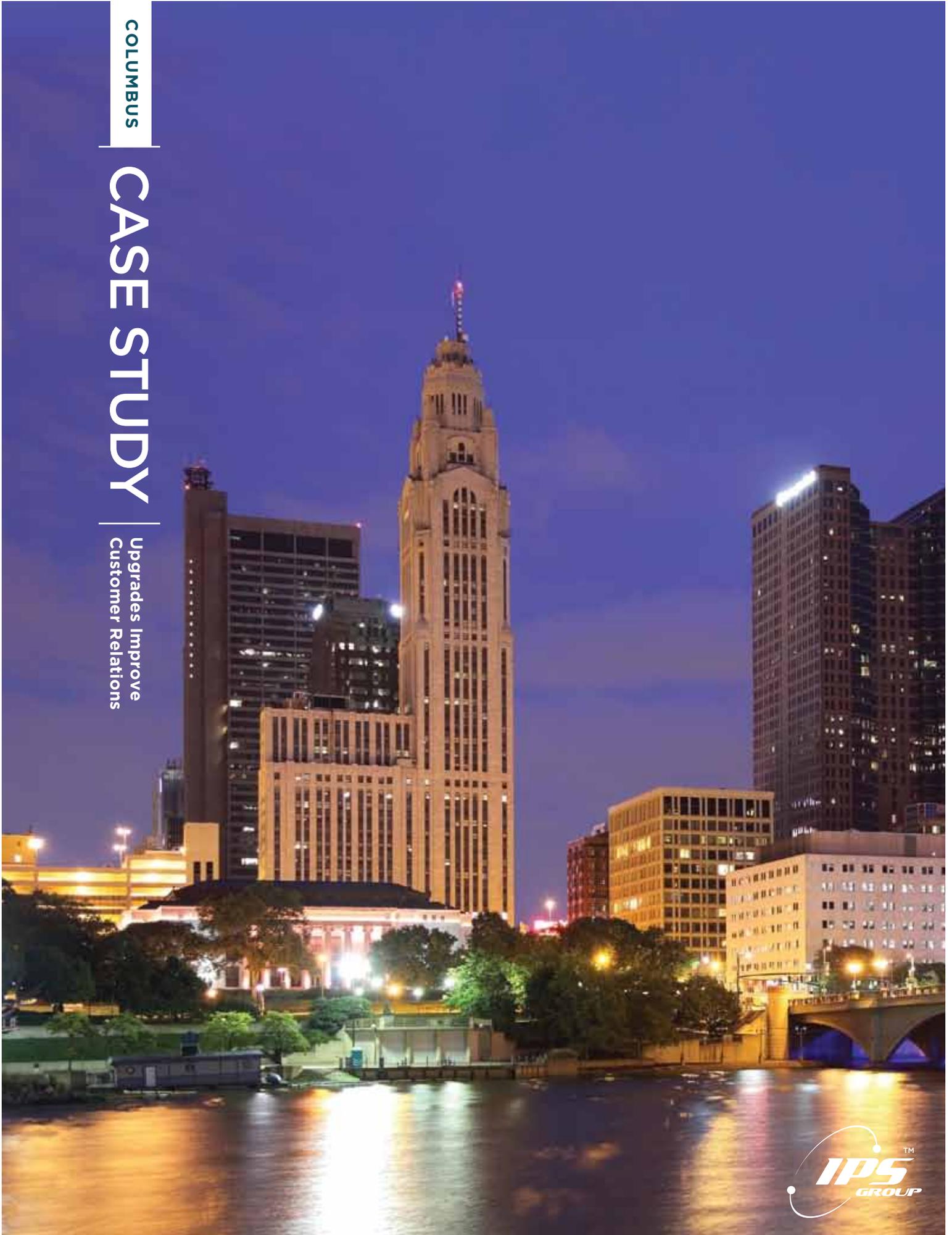
In Columbus, Customer is King

Columbus continues to be synonymous with innovation. Recent initiatives from Mayor Michael B. Coleman, aimed at enhancing customer service while offering mobility alternatives is further defining the City's world class image. Visitors are drawn to downtown Columbus and surrounding historic neighborhoods by an upscale housing movement, professional sports teams, a vibrant arts district, the state's largest university, thriving commerce, world renowned cuisine, along with public transit alternatives.

One of the most successful and popular enhancements to the City's parking and transportation program has been the introduction of credit card-enabled smart parking meters from IPS Group. The City of Columbus piloted multi-space pay stations from September – December 2007, but users found the kiosks confusing and inconvenient. Following a trial of IPS single-space meters, the City opted to deploy approximately 5,000 meters throughout the downtown business district and surrounding areas. Since deploying the new meters credit card usage accounts for 40% of all meter transactions, and revenue has increased 32% overall and 13% over the previous year as a result of a simplified rate structure, enhanced payment options and longer enforcement hours. Downtown businesses and visitors welcomed the new meters as they reduced the number of customers asking for change and created a more convenient parking experience for downtown patrons.

As a further testament to the City's dedication to offering a convenient experience for all motorists, the City lowered its 91 wheelchair accessible IPS meters throughout Columbus. The meter poles are cut so that users in a wheelchair can see the top of the meter display screen and comfortably use the keypad, providing an easier interaction with the meter.

Instant Data

Each smart parking meter is wirelessly networked to a state-of-the-art web-based Data Management System (DMS) which provides the City with real-time financial, technical and occupancy data from a desktop, laptop or handheld mobile device. This management tool has had a dramatic impact on meter uptime. Prior to the introduction of the IPS meters, a faulty meter would remain out of order until a customer called in to report the meter as faulty or city staff noticed the fault. Now, the City provides their repair staff with cell phones and any meter fault triggers an alert in the DMS which sends a text message to field staff of the time, location and type of fault. Meter downtime has decreased and the electronic record of the time and location of the meter fault also aids in citation resolution. Parking Violations Bureau staff is able to verify if there was a meter fault at the time of the citation which has helped to improve customer relations between motorists and parking enforcement.

The new meters and the DMS have also improved auditing capabilities. With the old coin-only meters, it took days for the supervisor to physically visit each meter in the City's nearly 5,000 meter fleet to download the audit information via a handheld device. Today, the audit information is accessible instantaneously via laptop, desktop or handheld device, eliminating the need to physically interface with the meter. Enforcement staff have also benefitted from the meters' upgraded features, in particular the blinking LED lights which indicate paid, expired or meter out of order status. Parking Enforcement Officers can simply look down a row of meters and assess if any of the meters are in violation, instead of having to read each individual meter's display to evaluate payment status.

Alternative Transportation

In addition to the City's move to upgrade parking throughout the city, Columbus is looking at the bigger picture as populations grow in its urban center. As part of a bold initiative to encourage alternative forms of transportation, the City introduced its first bike sharing system, COGO, in July which provides bike rentals for just $6 a day. Customers simply swipe their credit card and return the bike at any of the 30 COGO stations around the City.

The City has installed two electric vehicle charging stations that stand side-by-side with solar powered smart parking meters. In addition, the City plans to pilot its first car-sharing service program with Car2Go, where customers can rent a smart vehicle and return it to any on-street parking spot. Columbus is at the cutting edge of providing mobility options, and according to Mark Springer, Security Manager of the Parking Violations Bureau, "customer convenience is the driving factor".

Highlights

- **32%** increase in revenue since installing smart parking meters
- **40%** credit card usage
- Enhanced level of customer service
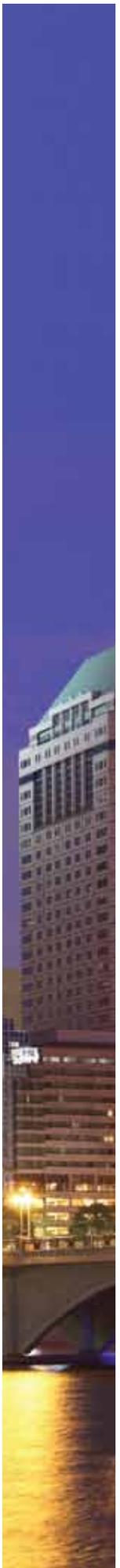
Looking to the Future

Due to the success of the meters, Columbus is in the final phase of upgrading nearly 5,000 meters to the fifth generation IPS meter, the M5 by the end of 2014. The M5 features a larger display and a mechanical keypad, which the City feels is particularly well suited to Ohio's cold winters and will provide an even greater experience for customer.

In Columbus, where customer service is the cornerstone of their innovative new approach to parking and transportation overall, the continued partnership between IPS and the City of Columbus has enabled the City to offer enhanced payment options, receive instant audit and technical information and meet their ultimate objective of providing world-class customer service to the citizens of Columbus.

About IPS Group, Inc.

San Diego-based IPS Group, Inc. is a design, engineering and manufacturing company focused on low power wireless telecommunications and parking technologies. IPS is proud to manufacture in California and has been delivering world-class solutions to the telecommunications and parking industries for over 19 years. The company is best known for their patented credit card enabled, solar powered single-space parking meter and web-based management system.

For more information about IPS Group's dynamic parking solution, please visit our website www.ipsgroupinc.com

Call for an on-site demo: **858.404.0607** | Toll Free: **877.630.6638**