

Gateway Ticketing Systems

Case Study



Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Significantly Increases Revenue and Security with Galaxy's Admission Control and Self-serve Ticketing Solutions

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium
Location: Tacoma, WA

Key Challenges

- Needed a solution that would prevent revenue loss through admission control
- Wanted secure access to facility using a system that required very little maintenance
- Required a system for visitor accountability
- Wanted to avoid adding more staff for the purpose of admission control
- Needed a way to provide additional ticketing options and enhance guest throughput

Solution

- Install SkiData turnstiles and integrate with Galaxy to provide unattended access and minimal maintenance
- Use handheld scanners at access points to make staff more mobile
- Implement Galaxy Kiosk to reduce staffing costs and increase revenue and customer convenience.

Business Results

- Reduced staffing costs by three FTE's (Full Time Employees)
- 87,000 additional visitors
- 13% increase in gate revenue per capita
- \$253,000 additional revenue

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium located in Tacoma, Washington, has 792 animals and 98 different species on display. The facility, founded in 1905, covers 29 acres of land overlooking Washington State's Puget Sound, and is part of the 700-acre Point Defiance Park. Point Defiance is engaged in the American Zoo and Aquarium Association's (AZA's) Species Survival Plan for the several endangered species.

New Entry Provided Quick and Easy Access But No Admission Control: Revenue Losses Were Adding Up

In fall of 2004 Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium opened a \$5.5 million entry complex which consisted of an entry plaza, café, gift shop and education center. The entry was designed with two objectives in mind; take advantage of the panoramic views of Puget Sound, the Cascade mountain range and Mount Rainier while providing at least six wide, very open points of entry. The entry complex met the facility's first objective, but unfortunately the second objective, once implemented, created substantial challenges for controlling visitor access.

With the opening of their new Asia Forest Sanctuary exhibit in 2004, attendance increased to record levels, by over 20% in one year. The new entry provided quick, easy entry, however during peak periods facility staff were unable to control the crowds moving back and forth through the area. It was evident that they were losing revenue due to visitors avoiding the admissions process. One immediate possibility was to increase staffing; however, that would come at a substantial cost and therefore be an inefficient solution for the long term.

Point Defiance Chose Gateway with an Eye on the Future

Donna Powell, Business & Administrative Services Manager of the Zoological & Environmental Education Division at the facility said, "It quickly became clear to senior management that we needed to add some form of admission control. Unfortunately this would entail tearing up the new entrance. It was a good thing we were thinking ahead when we initially chose Gateway as our ticketing solution provider."

"We originally implemented ticketing, retail, group sales and the resource management modules in March of 2002. We chose Gateway Ticketing at that time because in the short term we wanted one software solution to address these areas, however, long term we wanted to partner with a company that had a progressive approach to improving what the software and hardware could provide to improve visitor services.



Gateway did that for us with the SkiData turnstiles and the handheld scanners,” she said. “When Gateway presented a new admissions control turnstile, Skidata, it was clear that this was the solution that would meet our needs on many levels. It complimented our new entry with a sleek modern look, allowed unattended access, required minimal maintenance (important because I had no dedicated IT staff), it was water-proof (it rains 200 days a year) and it worked with our existing software,” Powell said.

Galaxy, Combined with Cutting Edge Turnstiles and Handheld Scanners Provide Secure, Low Maintenance Access

Turnstiles and handheld scanners are designed to facilitate the admittance of visitors at entry points located throughout a venue. SkiData turnstiles can admit large numbers of visitors without the need to use employee resources, and they can track attendance and ticket usage. Handheld scanners, with scanning capabilities and immediate access to transaction information, provide park personnel with the ability to easily validate admissions at a variety of locations within the park and quickly move guests through admission control points.

The combination of the SkiData turnstiles and Galaxy provides Point Defiance with a system for accurate attendance tracking and an efficient way to process groups with strollers or individuals in wheelchairs. They also installed ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant gates at the entrance. Prior to using these, they used handheld scanners for groups— now everyone scans their own ticket at entry. The facility is using handheld scanners for special events like Zoolights, an animal themed holiday lights display, in order to move pre-paid visitors through the entry more quickly. The scanners are also being used in combination with Galaxy to track ridership on their carousel ride.

Galaxy Kiosks Increase Revenue, Exposure with No Additional Overhead

Point Defiance was looking for a way to reduce labor costs and add an additional option for visitors to pre-purchase their tickets, so they implemented a Galaxy kiosk onsite. The exterior design of the kiosk features images of the Point Defiance brand to enhance brand awareness. “In the near future, we plan to add one or two additional kiosks onsite, and partner with other local attractions to sell tickets at a kiosk located within the Tacoma Convention Center,” Powell said.

Results: System Paid for Itself within the First 100 Days of Launch

The decision to tear up the new entry complex to install Galaxy-powered admission control proved to be a profitable one. Powell reported that Point Defiance had an additional 87,000 visitors and brought in \$253,000 in additional revenue since the go-live date of the new system. “We also utilized the area on the ticket that’s programable in Galaxy to offer a discount to our sister facility Northwest Trek, and we’ve seen the highest redemption rate of any offer in the Park’s history,” she said.



Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium implemented SkiData turnstiles to better control access through the main entry way.



The facility's onsite kiosk features a custom wrap.

“We really needed an admission control system that allowed unattended access, and required minimal maintenance. It also had to be waterproof- it rains 200 days a year here.”

-Donna Powell,
Business & Administrative Services Manager, Zoological & Environmental Education Division