Transforming the Flagship City Into a Smart City with Quantela and Kloudspot

Overview

With a population of just under 100,000 people, Erie is the fourth largest city in Pennsylvania. The "Flagship City" is located in the northwest corner of the commonwealth, on the southern shore of its namesake lake, and is home to a diverse community and a thriving tourism and events economy.

Erie sought to reinvigorate several Opportunity Zones by helping its citizens make these areas more viable for economic development, more productive and ultimately more prosperous. The key: offering strong, reliable Wi-Fi connectivity for families and businesses who may not ordinarily have access – giving the city tools to disseminate critical information and monetize related services. The desired outcome: empower and engage the people of Erie, fuel city revenues and reinvest back into the community. The initiative came as the result of a strategic relationship reached between the City of Erie, and lead partner Quantela, a global smart urban infrastructure company.

"Cities worldwide are harnessing the power of technology to reduce traffic congestion, bridge the digital divide, enhance connectivity, promote economic development, fight crime and make local governments more sustainable and resilient," said Erie mayor Joe Schember. "We are excited to partner with Quantela to execute this ambitious project and what it can mean for Erie's growth as a center of innovation."

Quantela has deployed over 40 smart city projects worldwide and is working locally with the Innovation District and Velocity Network (VNET) to provide broadband Wi-Fi access across the target areas in the Opportunity Zones. Quantela is also providing the Quantela 2.0 flagship intelligence platform to deliver actionable insights to the City that would help reduce costs for the delivery of urban services and improve revenue. Now, a Wi-Fi onboarding platform needed to be selected.

KLOUDSPOT INSIGHT

"We want the ability to give customers, whether it's a thriving city or another large complex, the ability to provide high-value engagement and information. Kloudspot and Quantela deliver that."

–Ed Olsen, Vice President of Outcome-Based Funding,

Choosing the platform for growth and greater prosperity

As Vice President of Outcome-Based Funding at Quantela Inc., Ed Olsen has made it his mission to find and fund environmental, social and governance (ESG) projects that can use technology to deliver greater savings and generate revenue. Olsen can offer Quantela's SMART CITY stack of technologies that work together for that very purpose, helping cities create better outcomes for their citizens with self-sustaining initiatives that don't require significant capital outlay and ultimately pay for themselves (and then some). These solutions include smart lighting and parking, Wi-Fi activation, digital signage, and safety and security.

"For most cities facing straining budgets and reduced resources, you need solutions that can help manage and pay for themselves," says Olsen. "You need to be able to provide essential services and support local businesses. And you have to do so at a low entry cost."

Erie, Pennsylvania was an ideal city to take advantage of such solutions. In addition to its 98,000 residents in the city and a total of 400,000 people in the surrounding region, Erie also plays host to at least 30 events a year that collectively attract just as many people to the area. From the arts and outdoor activities on the Great Lakes to sporting events and expeditions through its wine country, Erie was ripe with opportunities for revenue generation.

When Quantela needed to find the right Wi-Fi portal partner, they turned to Kloudspot and its flexible Situational Awareness and Analytics Platform to deliver the 'position-as-a-service' features needed to realize Erie's SMART CITY potential. "Kloudspot's Platform adds additional value to our Quantela 2.0 SMART CITY urban services solution and for the City of Erie," he says.

"With Kloudspot, we can do much more than deliver Wi-Fi services and traditional digital advertising programs. We can localize news and weather, which are both monetizable for ad revenue. We can serve real-time offers from nearby businesses. We can link to the city's website and enable everything from safety alerts to payment for city services such as waste and recycling. All of this will pay back the tech investment and create revenue streams for the city itself."

A smarter, safer, more equitable community

Building on Kloudspot's breakthrough Situational Awareness and Analytics platform, Quantela and Erie successfully soft launched the first phase of its SMART CITY program in July, 2020 with ten access points in the downtown area. Kloudspot's technology is enabling Erie to provide the community essential COVID-19 updates, give access to the city's essential services, and drive sales for local shops and restaurants when they need them most. When people sign into the Wi-Fi, they are greeted with far more than a simple opt-in; they're given a broad experience that enables users to receive highly targeted information and localized offers.

Quantela, leveraging Kloudspot's platform, created Erie's Smart Business Initiative which gives businesses the opportunity to offer promotions that are time- and place-based. Olsen describes a lunchtime offer scenario:

"Say you log in around noon. You might be greeted with a message saying that right across the street is a two-for-one lunch deal. It's all based on the time of day and the location of the user. Our combined SMART CITY solutions serves up relevant, real-time opportunities weighted by where you are and what time of day it is."

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, the SMART CITY deployment couldn't have been more timely, as the system is used to disseminate critical updates about COVID-19 related policies for Erie. Over time, in use with the city's camera and sensor technologies, the solution will also empower Erie's crisis management teams to more effectively monitor, collaborate, educate, contain and predict the spread of the virus.

"Cities that have invested in smart technologies are in a much better position to not only plan and make decisions during the current pandemic, but also to be prepared for the next big scenario," says Olsen. "Investing in having good safety and security in place, to have sensors that can monitor your public environments in more productive ways, is key to better outcomes. The challenge cities too often have is that when they need tech the most, there aren't the budgets to react. Quantela, together with Kloudspot, have the ability to help Erie react now, and get out and front of future challenges."

Flexible technology, responsive partnership

Kloudspot's flexible solutions will be key to Erie's success. The platform's open architecture makes it easy to integrate with other technologies in the SMART CITY stack, but also makes it easy to leverage alongside a city's existing infrastructure. What's more, it's easy to operationalize and manage for oft-stretched city IT teams.

"Cities need something you don't have to set up every morning!" asserts Olsen. "They often have less money and fewer resources to work with than an enterprise might. We have to be able to optimize the operational side for their success – which is where Quantela and Kloudspot's robust, but intuitive dashboards win the day."

Agility from Kloudspot's people has also been instrumental, Olsen believes. "It's the whole Kloudspot package: great tech and a very savvy team, from the executive leadership down to the developers. Other companies can take too long to react to customers' needs. We can't have that. We need to be able to react to customer needs that many times require quick changes and customizations. With Kloudspot, I can call with an idea and we are able to brainstorm, adjust, react, and have the right people in place. They're terrific to work with."

He adds, "This is not 'your dad's onboarding platform.' We want the ability to give customers, whether it's a thriving city or another large complex, the ability to provide high-value engagement and information. Kloudspot delivers that."

Making an impact now and tomorrow

Erie's SMART CITY program soft launched in July, 2020 and will continue to roll out to 170 access points across the city. Despite no large-scale promotion, the deployment has already demonstrated tremendous impact, including users regularly staying logged in online as long as 45 minutes.

On the back of its early success, Quantela and the City of Erie plan to begin a large-scale campaign to promote the Wi-Fi portal and its small business initiatives. At the same time, they are in talks with several large, cornerstone local sponsors from large local companies to the national iHeartRadio network.

Ed Olsen sees the success and momentum to date with Quantela and Kloudspot as a sign of not only future positive outcomes for Erie, but other mid-tier cities nationwide.

"Erie is a model Smart City," Olsen contends. "They're helping us change the dynamic of how cities communicate with citizens, provide connectivity to Opportunity Zones, and evolve this experience for greater, two-way communication and engagement with citizens. Quantela and Kloudspot are helping to make that all possible."

About Kloudspot

Founded in 2016, the Kloudspot Situational Awareness and Intelligence platform uses data collected from Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, environmental sensors and connected cameras, married with AI, to convert physical actions and movements of people and devices into digitally treatable data. Organizations can then leverage actionable insights to deliver compelling digital engagements to enhance a variety of experiences for their constituents across health and safety, lifestyle, and workspace and education.

For further details or to schedule a demo write to

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