

The Case for Cell Phone-Charging Kiosks

What they are, who needs them and how to profit from this new self-service application.

Just a few short years ago, a cell phone was just that: a cell phone. If you had one (and not everyone did), you used it to make calls and not much more. With such limited use, battery power generally was not an issue. Every few days you plugged in the phone and kept an eye on the bars in the interim.

Now, however, phones have such diverse functionality that actually talking on them is a secondary use for some people. Smartphones, as the new generation of mobile devices are called, can host thousands of applications, each of them another drain on the battery, especially where connecting to the Internet via a 3G network and taking photographs are concerned. The latest generation of iPhone has some users complaining that a full charge won't last an entire day. Throw in watching videos, taking videos and listening to MP3s, and invariably a user will be shut down when his charging cord is miles away at the home or office.

Just as the ATM provided a new and unique solution for people on the go to acquire cash, the cell phone-charging kiosk will help them stay connected.

Fortunately for those users, a new kiosk is being deployed that can offer rapid phone charging for little or no money, and for business operators looking to increase foot traffic, generating extra revenue or both, the kiosks are beginning to hit the U.S. market after a strong emergence in Asia. Typically comprising at least a set of connectors for various phone types and a monitor, the kiosks also can include touch capability, a payment mechanism and connectivity for the processing of transactions, remote management and the download of new content for the monitors.

Just as the ATM provided a new and unique solution for people on the go to acquire cash virtually anywhere they went, any time of day, the cell phone-charging kiosk is poised to help ensure the mobile communication of voice and data is rarely hampered by inopportune battery deaths.

KioskMarketplace
KIOSK NEWS, TRENDS & COMMENTARY

By Phil Johnson
Contributing writer,
KioskMarketplace.com

Sponsored by
Nūvō
Technologies...

Potential deployments

Operators of many kinds of business can benefit from deploying cell phone-charging kiosks. A few include:

Hotels. A cell phone-charging kiosk in a hotel dramatically increases guest convenience. Having a cell phone-charging kiosk could save the hotel considerable potential embarrassment by avoiding the infamous “brown-box” syndrome.

“If you go to a hotel, and you forgot your charger, you go down to the front desk,” said Ryan Doak, a managing partner for Nuvo Technologies, a company formed to bring charging kiosks to North America. “And the desk clerk is going to pull out a big brown box from behind the counter and offer to let you sort through it. As a hotel, how does that make you look? Your guest is paying, say, \$300 for a room tonight, and you offer the guest a brown box?”

Convention centers. At a convention center, charging kiosks can be located in the event lobby.

Charging kiosks placed at individual display booths in the convention itself can represent a huge draw to the booth sponsors — a charging kiosk acts as a magnet, pulling convention attendees to the display booth.

Airports. Flyers often encounter unexpected delays coupled with the need to reschedule meetings or other connections. So not only is the battery going longer between charges, it frequently is being asked to support more activity. Trip interruptions are difficult enough without being severed from cell service.

Hospitals. It is not every day that someone is called to a hospital emergency, but when it does happen, there is likely no more critical time to have a working cell phone. Relatives need to be contacted, and many types of arrangements need to be made. A cell phone-charging kiosk in the emergency room may eliminate a headache at a time when it is wanted least.

Bars and clubs. Younger demographics that frequent nightspots are notorious for living on their cell phones. Often, the night gets late, and when trying to find the next party, texting friends across the room or calling for a ride home, finding that the phone has lost power can be a massive killjoy.

The charges may not be complete, but they are rapid. “We don’t say a



Cell phone-charging kiosks are gaining appeal with travelers and other users who frequently need power boosts on the go. For deployers, the potential for ROI is significant.

cell phone will get a 100-percent charge at our kiosk, because most likely it won't," Doak said. "Some claim that their kiosk will charge a phone 100 percent in 10 minutes, but that's impossible — it would blow up the phone. We can generally promise at least a 30- to 50-percent charge in 15 minutes, but there are lots of variables that go into that, such as the age of the phone."

The business case

In addition to helping cell phone users, the kiosks can benefit deployers in three significant ways:

Foot traffic. Off-premises deployers of ATMs have known this for years: A self-service device that provides a unique, valuable offering will draw users to itself. Convenience stores and even some bars and restaurants will place signs in their windows announcing the on-site presence of an ATM. The result: Passers-by who need cash are potentially enticed in, where statistics say they are likely to do additional business.

For-fee service. Some deployers charge for the service, equipping their machines with payment acceptors and metering time accordingly.

Messaging. Given that charging takes several minutes, the customer is essentially captive by the kiosk long enough to be exposed to meaningful marketing messages.

"Among the major decisions to be made when placing a cell phone-charging kiosk is what messaging or advertising to include," said Scott Calhoun, also with Nuvo Technologies. "Any RSS feed, weather, sports scores, stock-market quotes, news headlines — even a total custom application — can be highly economically imported to the LCD screen through the Internet."

Significant profit potential lies in the opportunity for the kiosk owner or renter to sell advertising or other messaging on both the kiosk's LCD screen and static lower panel. Because of that profit, it may be wise to offer the device charging for free, in order to attract more customers to the kiosk.

"Digital signage can help businesses display dynamic multimedia messages to their customers by the use of a simple LCD screen," said Doak. "With the capability to divide the LCD screen into multiple sections, you can provide customers a variety of content that can define a corporate brand. In our opinion, the fundamental problem with content

that focuses exclusively on advertising is the risk of becoming ubiquitous, mundane and eventually becoming a monotonous fixture.”

About the sponsor: Nuvo Technologies LLC, headquartered in Baltimore, Md., is bringing mobile charging capabilities to the United States. Offering cell phone-charging kiosks, LCD screens for digital information displays and digital signage software, Nuvo Technologies is at the cutting edge of self-service technology. The company provides support from making the initial purchase to installation and beyond, and also has a creative services team that can help create exceptional content.