

Why Automation Is The Way Of The Future



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When I started Red Dot Storage, the business plan was pretty simple: acquire self-storage facilities and utilize automation and related technology to maximize value. From airport kiosk check-ins to in-app purchases, the automation phenomenon certainly isn't new. It's been used in other industries for years, so applying this technology to the self-storage industry seemed logical.

While automation is starting to gain traction in the self-storage industry, for now, operators that utilize this type of technology are the exception, not the norm. The traditional manned model still dominates the industry, and owners have been slow to adopt automation technology. It seems many self-storage owners continue to question if they should use this technology and how to implement it within their operation. In my opinion, it is better to understand what automation is and why it makes sense.

Many assume it's my intention to rid the business of people, but that is certainly not the case. The purpose of automation and technology is to amplify people within our organization, not eliminate them. By removing mundane tasks through automation, our customer support team can focus on high-level strategic initiatives that enhance customer experience. Automation is essential to deliver the best possible service and experience as it allows for less time to be invested in administrative work, which creates little to no value, and more time to be invested into building relationships with customers, which creates enormous value.

Whether by phone, email, text, social media, or chat, our customer service representatives are encouraged to interact with our customers. Limiting customer engagement only to when a manager is sitting behind a desk simply won't satisfy customer expectations today. Social media and other technologies have opened the door to interact with new and existing customers on a local, regional, or national scope with the simple stroke of a key. Embracing technology is no longer an advantage. Instead, customers expect to be able to engage with a brand and products through a virtual interface. By embracing all forms of technology, Red Dot has successfully automated on-site operations while simultaneously maximizing customer engagement.

But customer experience doesn't stop at communication. Customers also expect to have a consistent experience they can rely on. In self-storage, that means daily operations don't change. Day in and day out, customers know how the business functions. Utilizing technology is what has allowed Red Dot to achieve consistency. Our automated user interface provides customers with a consistent user experience, 24/7 functionality, and extensive support through our customer service center.

While each of these aspects of the business is important, the combination is what yields the best results. Automation, consistency, customer engagement, and employee empowerment are the pillars on which Red Dot stands. They are what have allowed us to use our resources more efficiently and provide an overall better experience for our customers and staff. They allow us to deliver quality and consistent experiences, from facility standards to customer support, at scale, without straining our employees—things all too important to fall short on.