DON'T HATE THE WAIT

How Virtual Queuing Can Transform the Customer Journey and Reshape the Way We Wait for Service

Lavi Industries
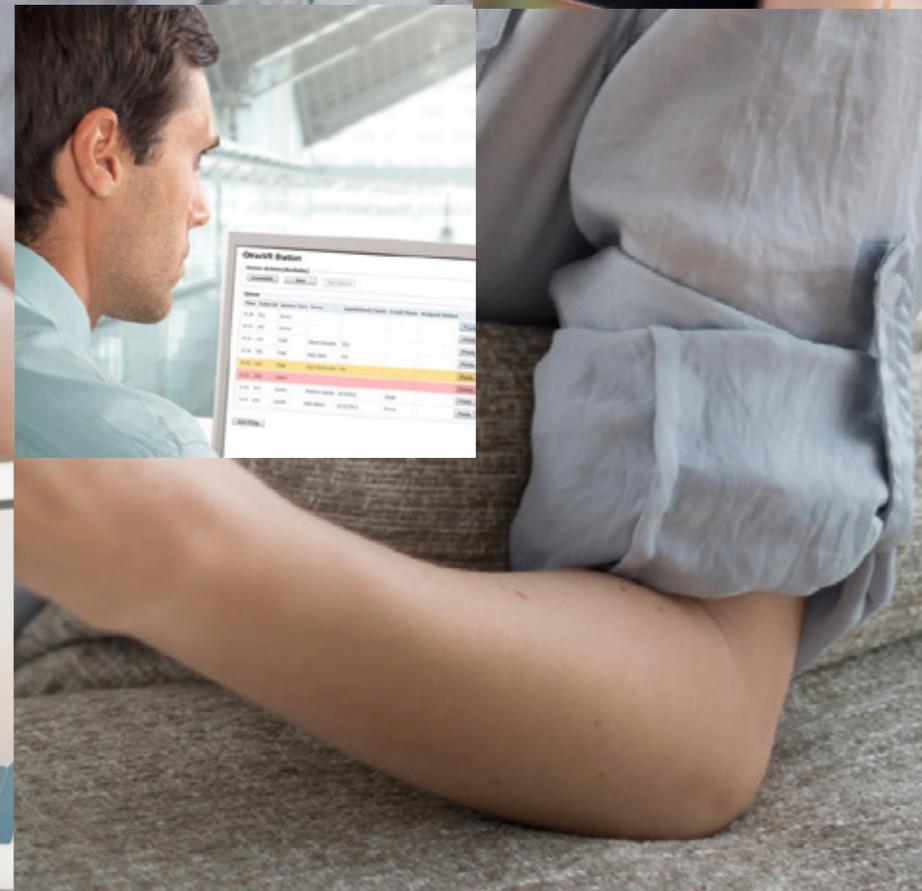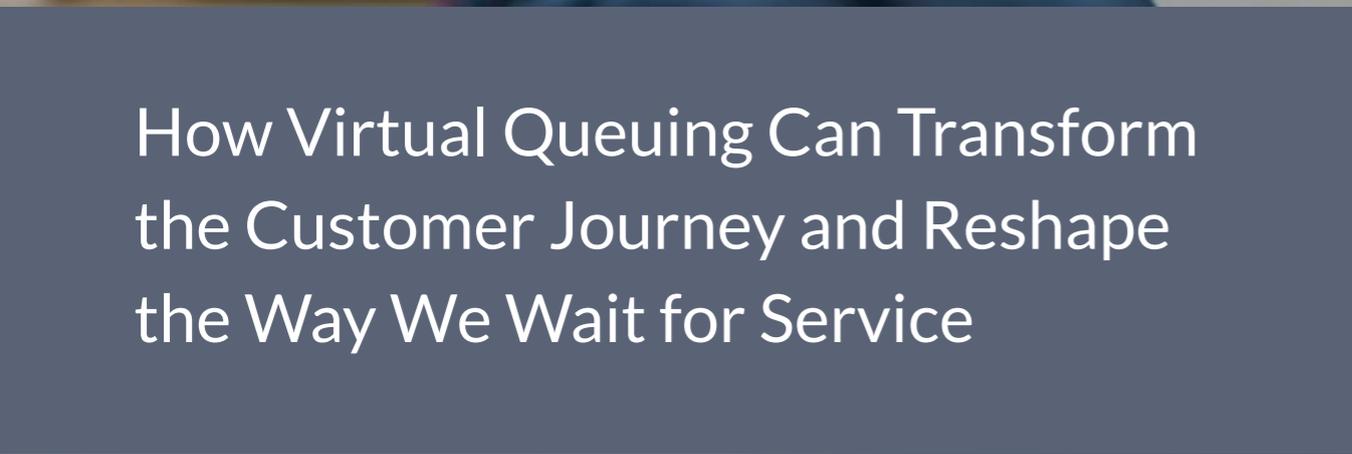
Are long lines impacting your customer experience and costing your business money?

It's no secret that customers hate to wait. Whether waiting in line to buy something, see an event, or register for college classes, waiting lines can be a real let down to an otherwise enjoyable, exciting, or productive experience.

Long lines can quickly lead to unhappy crowds and this creates a drag on the customer experience, likely hurting your brand and your profits.

Research shows that U.S. businesses lose an estimated $83 billion in sales annually due to poor customer experiences.[1]

Waiting lines can play a significant role. Studies have proven that, in general, as waiting time increases, customer satisfaction decreases[2]. Additionally, most people overestimate their wait times, sometimes as much as 50%[3], and these estimated wait durations have an equal, if not greater, effect on satisfaction than actual waiting time. The case for a more productive and enjoyable waiting experience is solid. How are you responding?

Many businesses today are thinking about queuing entirely differently. So differently, in fact, that they are trading in the standard "stand-in-line" model for a virtual queuing approach. Instead of putting customers in a situation where they stand in line, virtual queuing offers customers an entirely different, more convenient, more enjoyable and productive way to wait.

In this e-book we'll show you how virtual queuing works and give you the insight and information you need to decide if virtual queuing is right for your business and your customers.

You'll learn:

✓ What is virtual queuing and is it right for my business?

✓ How companies across industries are using virtual queuing to reshape the customer journey and improve business results

✓ 5 ways virtual queuing can transform your customers' experiences

✓ Why virtual queuing increases productivity and your bottom line

✓ How to leverage virtual queuing in an omni-channel marketing plan

✓ How to use scheduling and appointments to maximize service allocation

✓ How the transformation to virtual queuing can help make brand ambassadors out of your customers

✓ What to look for in a virtual queuing system

[1] GENESYS, WITH RESEARCH FIRM GREENFIELD ONLINE AND DATAMONITOR/OVUM ANALYSTS
[2] http://scholarship.sha.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1188&context=articles
[3] http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB125063608198641491

What is Virtual Queuing?

As the name implies, a virtual queue is one that eliminates the physical queue. No intimidatingly long lines of customers, no rubberneckers desperately wishing they'd chosen to stand in a "better line," and no getting stuck behind a slow customer. Virtual queuing is a powerful solution that can improve the customer experience simply by eliminating the physical line.

Virtual Queuing: A Definition

Virtual queuing is an approach to managing customer waiting lines that utilizes technology to virtually place customers into a queue for service, provides a means for calling the customer to that service, and offers a system to monitor and manage the customer/service workload and optimize its efficiency.

Virtual queuing is effective at dispersing waiting crowds, creating a pleasant environment for customers. It frees customers to shop while they wait, increasing impulse purchases and decreasing perceived wait times. And it allows customers to arrive for service when a business is actually ready to serve them, virtually eliminating the most frustrating part of service.

Dispersed crowds mean businesses need to dedicate less of their valuable floor space for waiting. And the powerful analytics inherent with virtual queuing systems allow businesses to manage and optimize service and workload. Finally, virtual queuing provides multiple touchpoints and channels of communication directly with the customer, proving a perfect fit within an omni-channel marketing plan.

Virtual queuing is an innovative and intuitive process that makes it easy for customers to reserve their place in line and ensure they will be served fairly.

Here's how it works:

1. Appointment Option

Before even arriving at the business, customers can make an appointment for service. Appointments, made online or through a mobile app using virtual queuing's scheduling software, can allow a business to better manage its service workload and employee scheduling. And, of course, scheduled appointments offer customers a way to drastically reduce wait times the day of service.
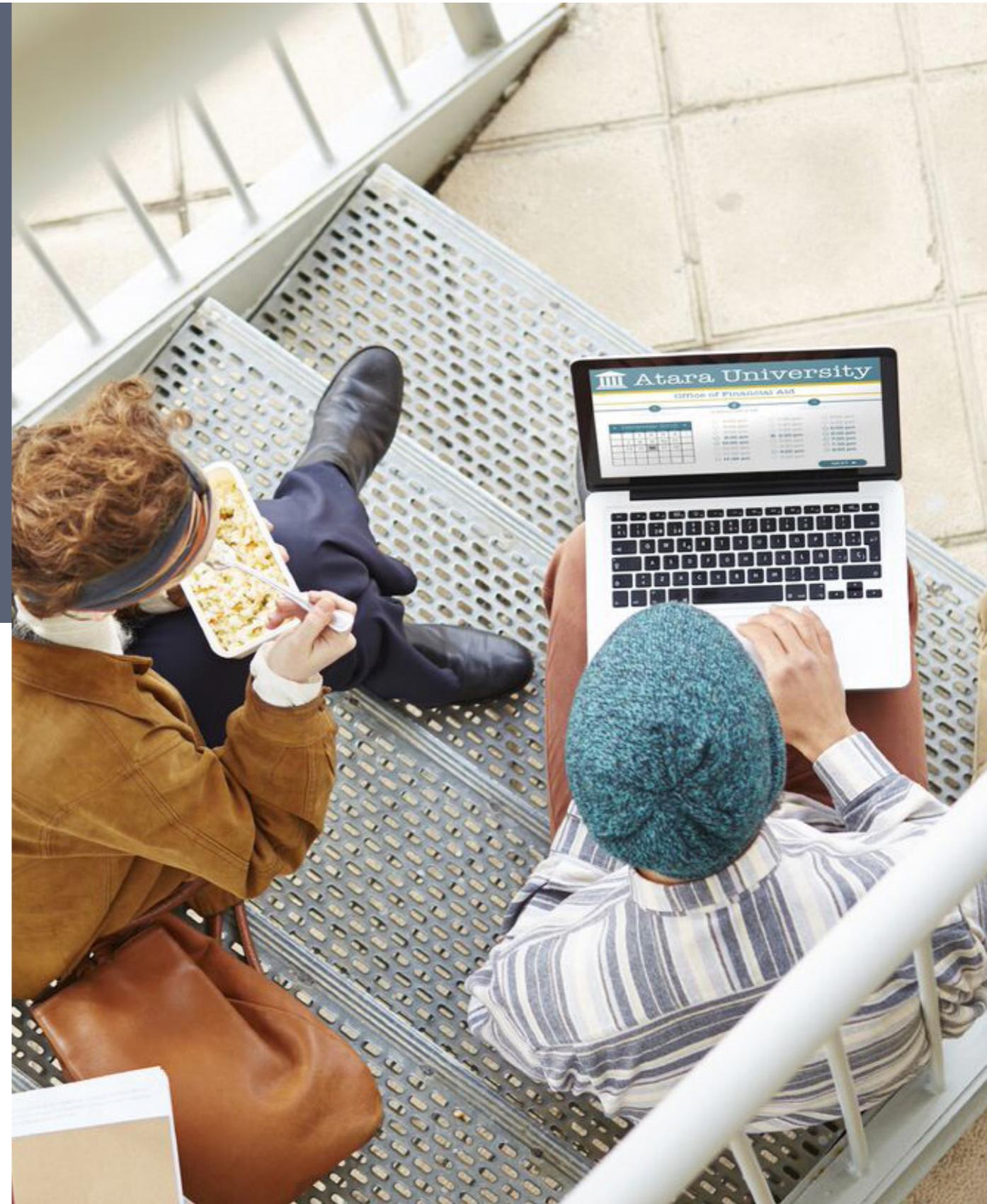
2. Registration

Customers register for service at a kiosk, tablet, or mobile device. The registration process can be off-site or on-premises, self-service or completed by a host. It can be as simple as swiping a loyalty card at a kiosk or offer a more complex process of questions, answers and information gathering. Customers with appointments use the registration point as a way to check-in and let the business know they've arrived.
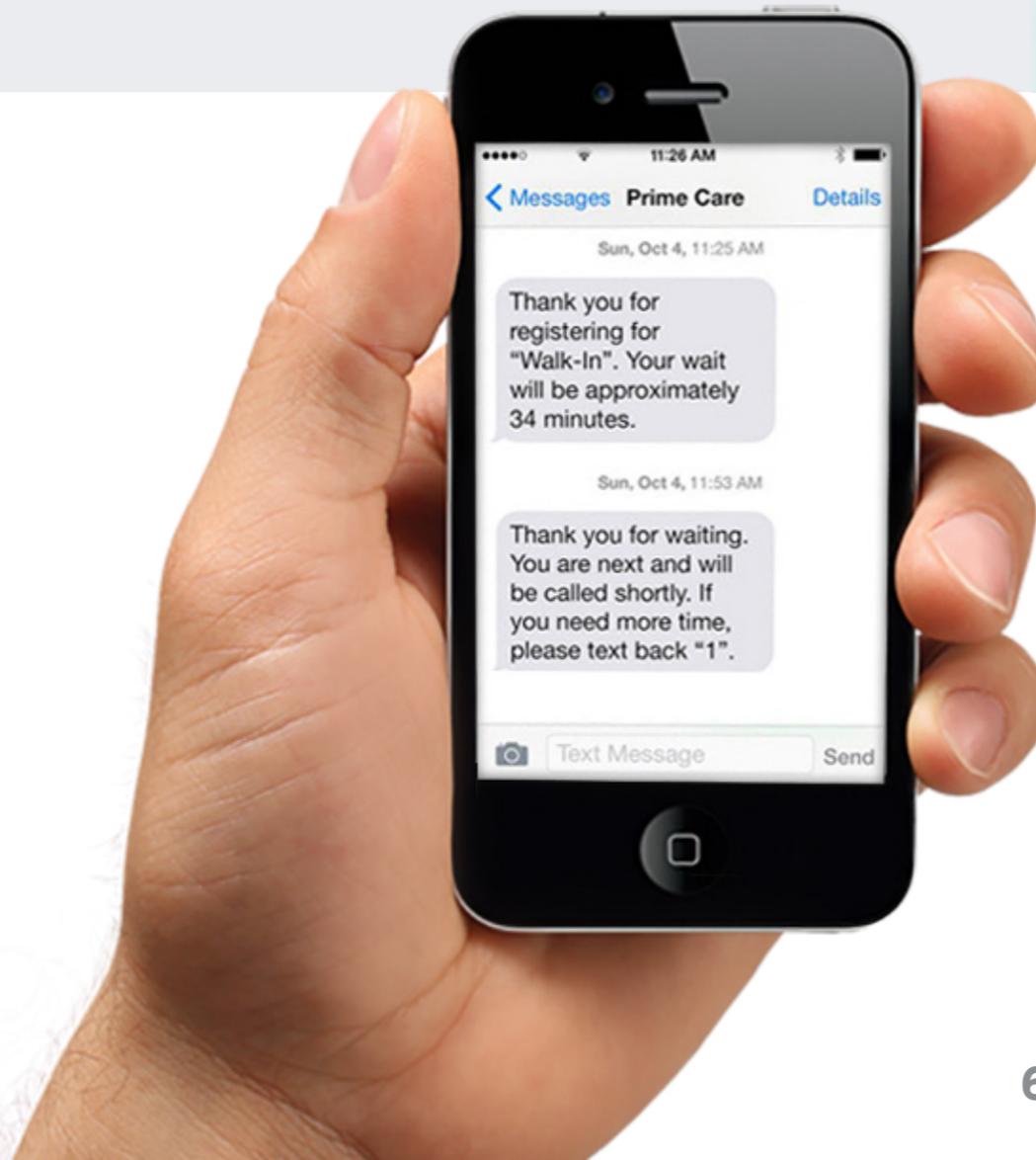
3. Set Expectations

Customer touchpoints allow businesses to set expectations, interact with the customer, and enhance the customer experience. Appointment confirmations and reminders keep communication open using email and text-messaging. Printed registration tickets or text confirmations can provide estimated wait times and other important notices. And digital signage and text messaging can provide queue, wait, and service updates as well as targeted marketing opportunities.

4. Manage Queues & Customers

Behind the scenes, service agents and managers can see the whole picture, or just their own service area. Waiting customers and service queues are viewed on PC's or tablets and can be managed, grouped, and sorted. Customers can be transferred to other queues, moved up or down in the queue, prioritized for service, and much more. Alerts and notes instantly notify service agents of customers with long waits or special needs. And live dashboards help managers see what's going on in the queues right now.

5. Call for Service / Hail Customers

Customers are hailed to service counters or areas via text message or LCD screens displaying the customer's name or call number. The system can re-queue no-show customers, or delete repeated no-shows from the system. Using 2-way text-messaging, customers can even ask for more time if they're not quite ready for service, or ask to be removed from the queue entirely.

PLEASE COME TO SERVICE AREA

6. Optimize Efficiency & Increase Productivity

By its very nature, a virtual queuing system is always collecting data — customer counts, wait times, service loads, service times, and much more. Gathering this data into useful and productive reports is at the heart of any effective virtual queuing system. Real-time dashboards and alerts allow managers to react before problems on the floor get out of hand and historical reports reveal trends, problems, and opportunities to help organizations increase service productivity, optimize efficiency, and ultimately enhance the customer experience.

Benefits Aplenty

Enriches the wait-time experience — Virtual queuing frees up a customer's waiting time, giving them a choice as to how they spend their time.

Reduces perceived wait time — While waiting for service, customers can relax, browse, shop, or even stay at home, helping to dramatically reduce perceived wait times.

Creates more satisfied, happy customers — Publishing wait times keeps expectations in check, reducing stress.

Enhances customer flow — Virtual queuing systems can automate a multiple service process, allowing customers (or patients) to move through a series of services without having to re-queue for each one.

Improves productivity — Historical reports can help uncover trends and expose service issues that can then be addressed. Real-time dashboards and alerts can help front-line employees deal with current problems before they get out of hand.

Increases efficiency — Virtual queuing identifies customers' needs early. Does the customer speak a particular language? Has the customer met all pre-qualifiers for the requested service? Does the customer have preferred status? Businesses can then effectively match customers with the proper service employee.

Reduces actual wait time — As agents become more productive and service becomes more efficient, actual wait time naturally decreases.

Increases sales — Because customers are free to wait for service elsewhere, they are more likely to continue shopping while they wait to checkout, or to sit at the bar while they wait for a gaming table, adding incremental sales.
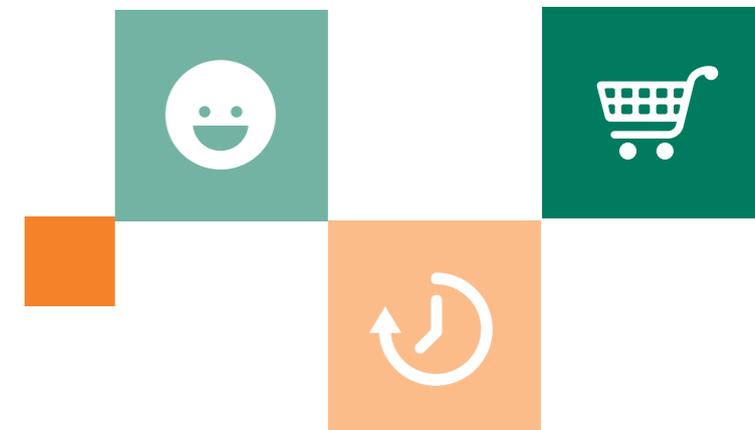
Is Virtual Queuing Right for Your Business?

You might be surprised to discover the wide range of business types that are currently bringing virtual queuing into their operations. From educational institutions and retail stores to airports, stadiums, and casinos, just about any situation where customers need service warrants at least a consideration of virtual queuing.

Here are some things to think about when it comes to implementing a virtual queue:

When you do have square footage to spare...

...comfortable seating, digital displays, and other forms of entertainment or distraction are welcome by waiting patrons. A classic virtual queuing scenario incorporates LCD displays throughout the waiting area that notify customers with queueing prompts, such as, "Now serving #22 at

window 5." When not displaying queuing messages, these screens can be used for promotions, advertisements, or important information – whatever type of programming is appropriate for your audience.

When you don't have square footage to spare...

...a virtual queue is still feasible. In fact, adopting this kind of queue strategy may be the best thing you ever do for your business. It frees up valuable floor space that would normally be reserved for lines, providing more browsing and shopping areas for your customers.
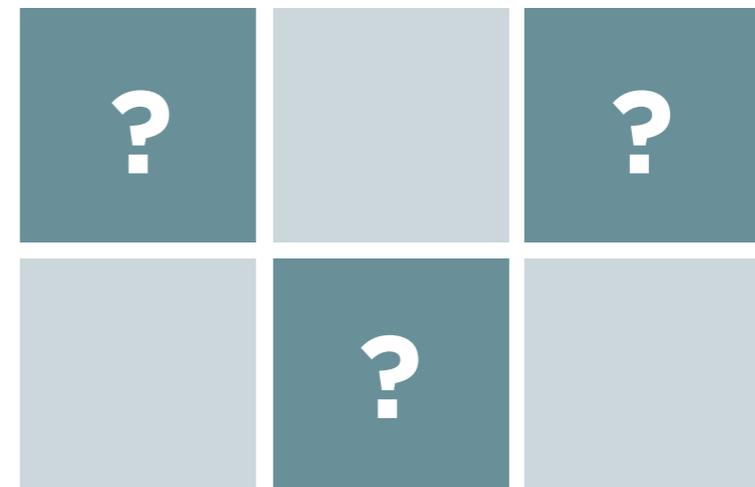
When you have a retail-oriented environment…

…a virtual queue gives customers the freedom to continue shopping, browsing, and gathering more items while they wait for service. This increases the opportunity for impulse purchases. Whether you're using traditional checkout areas or mobile POS, virtual queueing is an option.

When you're trying to compete with online shopping…

… it's critical to do whatever you can as a brick-and-mortar establishment to stand out above your online competitors and still draw customers to your doors. The growth for purchasing goods and services online shows no signs of slowing, which means if a customer is dreading setting foot in your establishment because of lengthy or frustrating queues, they'll find a way to avoid the encounter. Virtual queuing can help remove the dread of waiting in line, bringing you closer to the online-no-waiting-line experience. After all, you still have something to offer that most of cyberspace does not: the ability to get customers what they want immediately.

When you want to automate a process…

… virtual queuing excels. Is it important to automatically choose a service queue for customers based on answers to critical questions? Add this information gathering right into the registration process and let the system do the work. Need to move customers through a series of pre-defined services that are co-dependent on each other? Automate the process with a virtual queuing system. Want to send automatic follow-up texts to customers to rate their service experience? Virtual queuing systems can do that, too.

When you're seeking to optimize the service experience...

... virtual queuing makes it possible for service staff to be more engaged with customers and more efficient at their jobs. Virtual queuing software can keep track of who's waiting, what they're waiting for, who's a priority, and any special requests – and the beauty of all this actionable, real-time information is that it's available at your employees' fingertips so they can personalize the encounters they have with individual guests and improve their communication with all waiting customers.

When you want to be a better manager...

... the virtual queue gives you the inside track on what's happening with customers and employees during the customer journey. When you have detailed intel about customer waits, service rates, and more, you'll be able to help employees work more efficiently, deploy more service agents when necessary, reassign service agents who could be more helpful elsewhere, and head off any problems before they have a chance to occur or get out of control. Virtual queues also enhance planning efforts for busy seasons, holidays, or special events because historical reporting helps you visualize traffic or wait time trends for any date or time period.
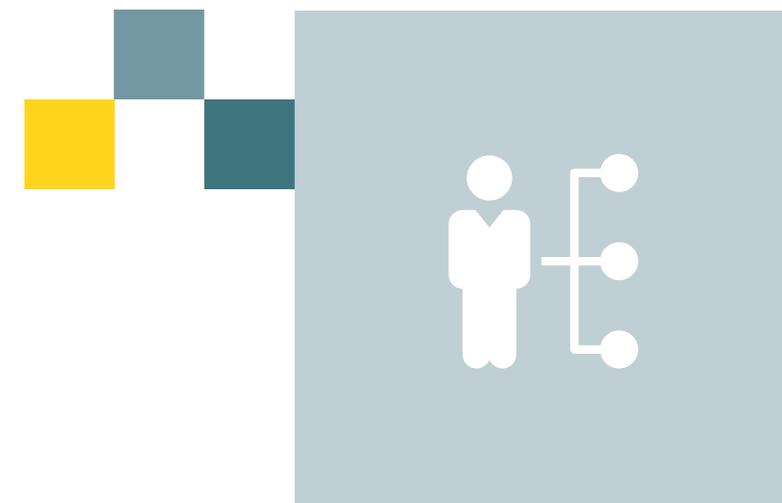
When you need a solution that fits your business…

…virtual queuing systems can be customized to meet your specific business needs. Virtual queues are hardly one-size-fits-all. You can design a virtual queue that suits your operation to the letter. Here are just some of the elements that you can implement into your virtual queuing system:

✓ Touchscreen check-in kiosks for intuitive customer use.

✓ Mobile-based interfaces.

✓ Kiosks emblazoned with identifiable customer graphics for easy recognition.

✓ Customizable registration screens that can be as simple or sophisticated as the service requires.

✓ Published wait times and service queue positions, both on-site and web-based, because known wait times feel shorter than unknown wait times, and customers like knowing where they are in the queue.

✓ Pre-scheduled or appointment-based arrivals that virtually eliminate onsite waits.

✓ Digital signage with audible and visual cues to move customers efficiently to available service areas.

✓ Text messaging to communicate with customers about their wait or to provide information about your business.

✓ Ability for customers to re-queue themselves, for example, if they are running late or need more time, by responding to queuing alerts via text message.

✓ Allowing service employees to view and service all customers in all queues or just a subset of which they are qualified to service.

✓ Automated service processes.

✓ Grouping, prioritizing, re-queuing, and transferring of customers.

✓ Real-time alerts to uncover issues before they get out of hand.

✓ Built-in media capabilities so programming can be designed to entertain and distract customers while they wait (and this can happen within a single display or across an entire network).

If you offer customers a service, there's a good chance virtual queuing can help.

How Companies Across Industries are Using Virtual Queuing to Reshape the Customer Journey and Improve Business Results

Even if you are already convinced that virtual queuing is generally a good idea, you might still wonder if a virtual queue will work in your industry or for your specific business type. The answer might surprise you. Let's take a look at some real world applications for virtual queuing across industries today:

Colleges & Universities

A smarter queuing option

Colleges and universities aren't necessarily known for their long lines. Until it comes to registration. When thousands of students descend upon the Administration all at once, chaos ensues. Colleges and universities across the country are implementing virtual queuing systems with mobile messaging to help restore order and a sense of calm to the registration process. And students are finding the transformation both liberating and stress-reducing.

Using their mobile devices, students register for a service queue and are given an approximate wait time and a link to check on their position in the queue. There's no need to come anywhere near the administration building. Students wait in their dorm room, the student union, the library, virtually anywhere. When it's their turn, a text notification reminds them to make their way to the service area. A simple reply allows students to delay service for a short time if they aren't quite ready to arrive.

Register

Student registers using any web-enabled device...

...then relaxes while they wait virtually anywhere on campus.

Student is hailed via text...

...and arrives at the assigned registrar.
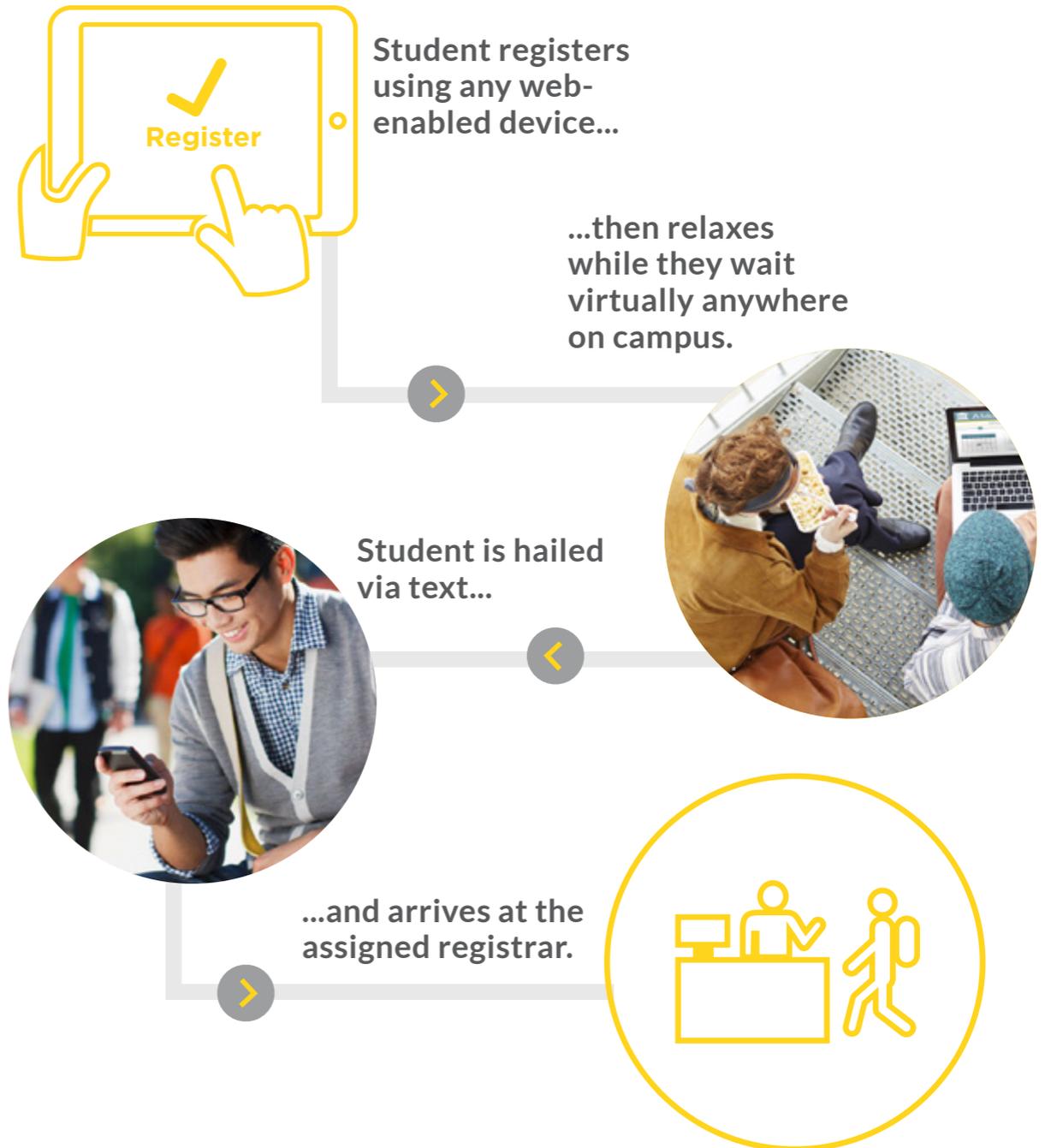
Retail

Fitting rooms try virtual queuing on for size

Fitting rooms should be the apex of a customer's clothes-shopping experience, but it can actually be the pits. And if lines are too long, impatience can cost you sales and hurt your brand. Smart retailers are giving customers the option to register for a fitting room while they shop. They are then notified via text or in-store digital signage when their fitting room is ready.

Eliminating the lines allow staff to focus on serving customers instead of managing unruly crowds, and frees customers to shop while they wait. This can serve to remove a source of stress, reduce perceived wait times, and increase sales.

Customer registers with a sales associate...

... and continues shopping.

Customer is hailed via text.

Customer can ask for more time to shop and is requeued.

Customer is hailed again...

..and proceeds to the fitting room.

Casinos & Game Rooms

## Don't leave the customer experience to chance

Gaming players love the thrill and unpredictability of a table game, yet aren't so fond of playing the waiting game for the most popular tables. Using virtual queuing, gaming rooms and casinos are leveling up the customer experience. They understand the importance of being flexible — every guest is unique and wants to be treated as such — so they take advantage of virtual queuing's flexible registration process, providing the typical self-service table registration using online, mobile, and onsite kiosks, as well as a more personalized onsite hostess-assisted approach.

Additionally, virtual queuing's powerful service interface keeps track of vital guest information — waiting times, priority seating, special requests, assigned table, VIP status — so that employees are better equipped to provide personal service to guests.

Player registers using kiosk or with a host...

...and continues engaging in casino activities.

Player is hailed via text...

You're up!
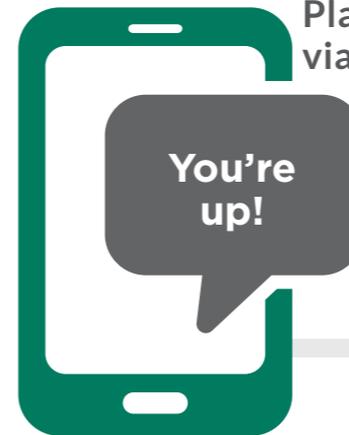
...and arrives at the table.

Airports

Reducing the stress of flight delays

Recently, a major airline found a way to address the madness caused by flight "issues" by using virtual queuing in the customer service area to manage the hundreds and sometimes thousands of passengers who feel the sting of a flight delay or cancellation. The airline discovered that a great solution to waiting is having no line at all. By eliminating the physical line entirely using virtual queuing technology, the airline now avoids the task of having to ask tense and sometimes aggressive passengers to patiently wait in a snaking line for their turn and their new transportation option.

Passengers enter the virtual waiting area where they scan their current boarding pass. This registers them in the virtual queue while simultaneously porting their information to dedicated airline personnel who are assigned to figure out the solutions to flight delay cases. This registration officially places the passenger in the queue and frees them from having to stand in any sort of line. The passenger is also given an estimated wait time so they know when to return to the waiting area, which means the mind-numbing feeling of being stuck

waiting is tremendously mitigated. Virtual queuing's powerful service interface gives airline personnel the ability to group and prioritize passengers based on flight or destination information that is always visible on the screen. The result is greater optimization of service efficiency and increased productivity.

Sample Configuration

Passenger registers at kiosk with boarding pass...

... and enjoys some free time.

Passenger is hailed via text and digital signage...

...and goes to agent. Passenger is reassgined if necessary.

Passenger is rehailed...

... and goes to the service agent again.

Amusement Parks

Less waiting, more fun

Amusements parks are just as well known for their long lines as they're known for their entertaining rides. Legoland in the UK has turned to a virtual queue to free its visitors from standing in line. It's still a first-come, first-served method (for the basic user of the device), and every park patron is waiting the same amount of time that they would if they were standing in a physical line, but the virtual queue system enables them to do other things while they wait – like buy that souvenir, take pictures, sit down for a breather, grab a snack, or take a trip to the loo. Visitors can reserve a spot in line for a particular ride from anywhere in the park, receive their ride time, then do what they please in the meantime as they wait.

Visitor registers for next ride using mobile device...

...and continues engaging in park activities.

You're up!

Visitor is hailed via text...

...and goes on the ride.

Banks

Helping customers feel valued

Banking customers want to feel valued by their bank. The better a bank knows its customers, the better it is able to serve them and help them feel that their business is valued.

With a virtual queuing system, customers can register for service and in the process, specify why they have come into the bank. As soon as the virtual queuing system captures the registration information, it can follow pre-established rules to route the customer to the service agent who is best-trained to assist them. Virtual queuing's ability to match service personnel to service needs helps optimize the bank's service efficiency, which improves service levels and the customer experience.

Customer registers using kiosk, entering specific reasons for visit.

System captures registration information.

Customer is routed to the appropriate service rep.

DMVs

Reducing traffic and congestion

Department of Motor Vehicles offices (DMVs) have long been known for frustratingly-long waits. But times are changing and many DMVs have taken big steps to achieve their goal of 'just in time service.' In other words, they want to cut wait times and eliminate crowds on premises. How? Virtual queuing combined with scheduling and appointments. Customers can pre-schedule their arrival time by essentially 'holding their place' in line before they arrive at the DMV location or they can set an appointment date and time to ensure even more expedient service.

What's more, as these pre-scheduled arrivals are set, the virtual queue system can deliver accurate estimated wait times by taking into account customers currently in the queue and those arriving with appointments. Finally, once the customer's turn is near, the system can send a text alert to the customer's mobile phone to ensure they arrive on time. All of this leads to an overall better service experience for customers and a more efficient process for DMV staff.
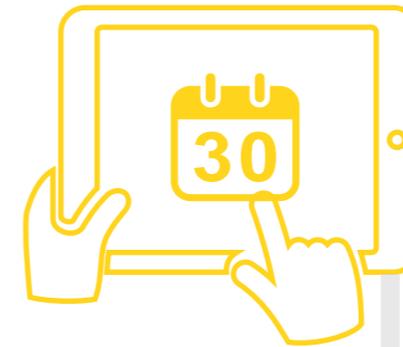
Customer makes an appointment and recieves a calendar date.

Customer goes to DMV...

...and is hailed via a digital screen in the waiting area or a text message to their mobile device.
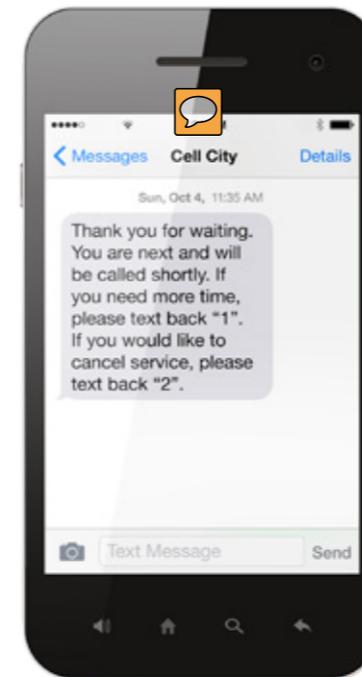
Customer arrives at agent for service.

Messages Cell City Details

Sun, Oct 4, 11:35 AM

Thank you for waiting. You are next and will be called shortly. If you need more time, please text back "1". If you would like to cancel service, please text back "2".

Text Message Send

Healthcare

Automate the flow of patient care

Healthcare organizations are built to serve the needs of a large number of patients, day in and day out. But it seems that no matter how well-equipped the organization is, long wait times are the norm. As these patients experience long wait times, often in multiple queues, their patience can run thin. Virtual queuing has come to the aid of healthcare organizations as they strive to better manage the logistics involved in transferring patients from one treatment area to another.

The virtual queuing system can check patients in as they enter the facility and then staff can use the system to easily and automatically transfer the patient to the next step in the care process. For example, the queue can start with patient admittance, move the patient to bloodwork, then to imaging, and finally to discharge. Along the way, the patient is seamlessly transferred to the right queue, provided an estimated wait time, and served in the appropriate order.

Sample Configuration

Patient checks in and is admitted...

... and is provided an estimated wait time.

Patient is seen for bloodwork...

...then transferred to the next queue.

Patient is seen again...

...then discharged
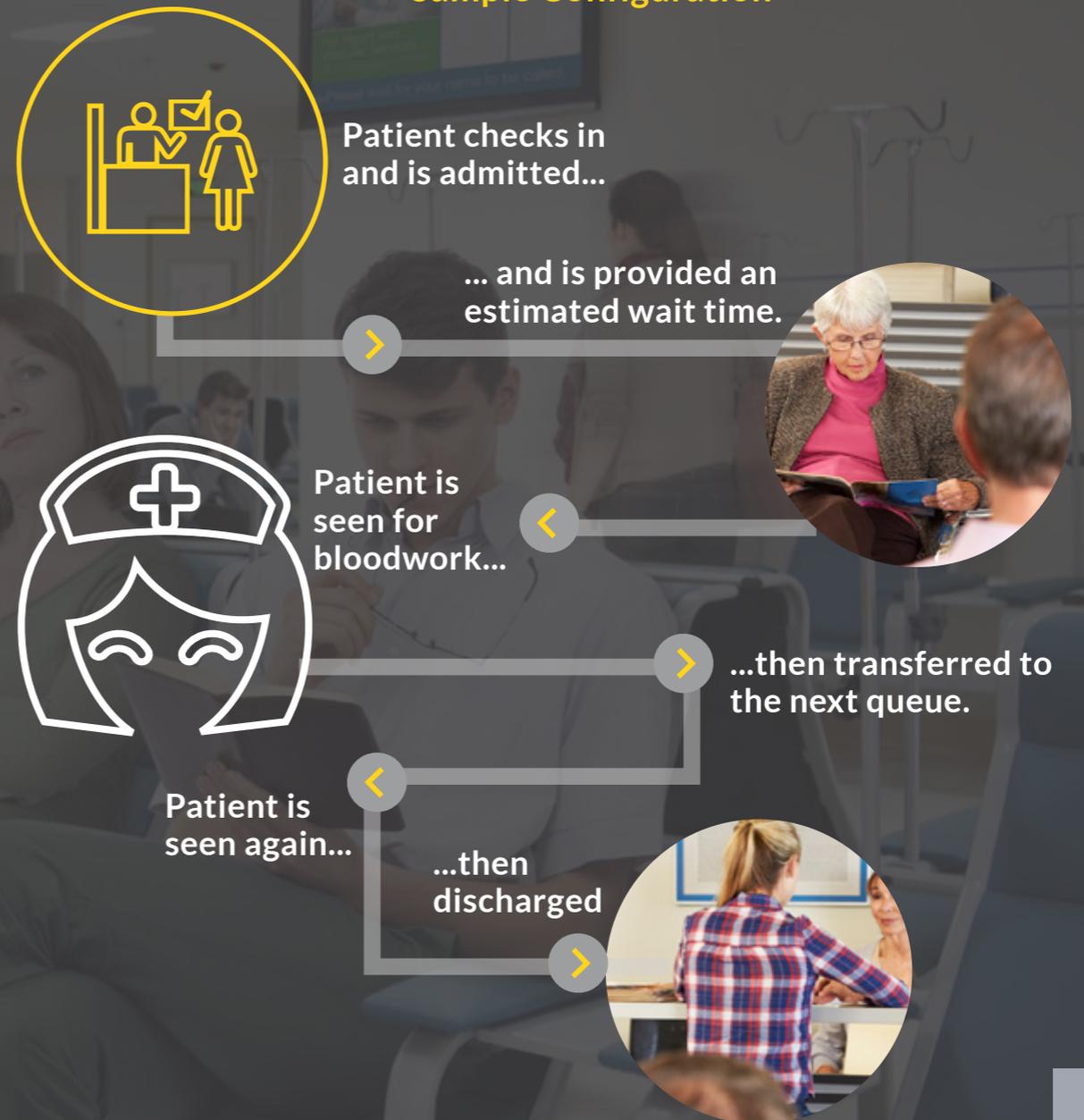
Examples like these go on and on. The flexibility and scalability of virtual queuing means that it can work for a wide range of scenarios. How might it work for your business?

5 Ways Virtual Queuing Can Transform the Customer Experience

"Waiting is the hardest part."

— Tom Petty

Do you feel constantly challenged to maintain operational efficiency while also delivering an exceptional customer experience? These two goals can often feel opposing and finding the right balance is difficult. Pushing people through the line and completing the transaction within a targeted time frame would deliver operational efficiency but it can also lead customers to feel neglected. Serving customers more efficiently without sacrificing the quality of that service can lead to a transformational customer experience and is made possible with the help of virtual queuing.

Here are five key ways virtual queuing specifically improves the customer experience:

2. By optimizing agent-customer interactions

By connecting the right server to the right customer, the engagement or transaction that follows is more likely to happen with greater ease and effectiveness. For example, a person registering for new license plates at the DMV will be better helped by an agent who regularly processes these transactions, as opposed to an agent who deals with new car registrations. The customer is matched with the agent who is best qualified to handle their matter. How do they get matched? Through the multi-level menus that are available during registration – customers can get as specific as possible about their needs, or answer questions that will guide them to the appropriate service if they're unsure about what service they need.

1. By increasing service efficiency

More efficient service agents? Yes, please. When physical queues are in place, some agents have lengthy lines that keep them constantly busy, while other agents have brief transactions that leave their station free more often. The virtual queue makes it possible to equalize the distribution of responsibilities. When the physical queue is eliminated, service agent downtime is kept to a minimum and the agent-customer engagement is constant. This keeps customers from feeling like they picked the "wrong" line, and it gets agents in the habit of working efficiently so that they keep the "line" moving.

4. By creating a more enjoyable wait

One of the hardest things about waiting is how undefined it is. Standing in a line, customers have no way to really know if it's going to take five minutes or 30 minutes until it's their turn. But when customers receive an estimated wait time, some of the stress about waiting gets deflated immediately. Known waits feel shorter than unknown waits, so publishing wait times actually make the waits seem shorter. Additionally, the freedom customers experience from not waiting in line creates a huge boost to their satisfaction and your brand. The goodwill created by allowing customers the opportunity to choose how, and where, they spend their wait, increases satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately the bottom line.

3. By getting the customer started

Customers do not like to be ignored. They want to be acknowledged and know that their presence will not be overlooked. Getting customers started by having them register for their place in line as early in their visit to your establishment as possible means they already feel like they've been noticed. They're "in the system" which means they can rest easy with the knowledge that they've done their part and it's now up to your business to deliver. Now just make sure you do.

5. By reducing the perceived wait

It's been proven time and again that perception matters more than reality. If your customers think that their wait in line is slow and tedious, even if the queue is moving at the fastest it has all day, then there will be no shaking them of that opinion. Each person's perception of what they're experiencing in line is their reality, so getting rid of the line by using a virtual queue instantly influences the perception of the wait. Customers no longer focus on who's ahead of them or who's taking too long, they no longer see "shorter" lines or "faster" service agents – there is a sense of equality about the virtual wait. Plus, customers aren't thinking about what else they could be doing rather than standing in line – they have the opportunity to do it. And as we've said before – occupied time feels shorter than unoccupied time.

Customer experience matters. And virtual queuing can help bring that experience to a more satisfying level.

Why Virtual Queuing Increases Productivity and Your Bottom Line

While there's something to be said for hiring incredibly fastidious and capable service agents, it's the customers who can often make or break the efficiency of a service agent. One particularly slow-moving, chatty, or confused customer can turn a once-speedy line into molasses. The virtual queue takes the physical element of the line out of the equation, allowing the customers to serve as an integral part of the success of this modern queuing formation.

Customer Action:

When registering at a virtual queue check-in kiosk, customers can be prompted to provide detailed information about their visit and, at this moment, they are giving their future service agent a set of valuable footnotes to enhance their visit.

Customer Information:

Customers feed the virtual queuing software the kind of particulars needed to be prioritized through the system and directed to the correct service agent the first time.

Agent Action:

With one push of a button, agents can call the next customer on a first-come, first-served basis, or instead choose to prioritize a customer out-of-sequence based on collected information.

Agent Information:

The virtual queuing system alerts agents when wait times or other data meet preset thresholds, giving them a nudge to work faster, prioritize a customer, or reroute the next waiting customer to a different service agent in order to improve their experience.

Profitability is undeniably improved with the virtual queue as well. Customers aren't confined to a waiting line which, simply enough, means they're free to keep shopping while they wait. Plus, when customers are happier waiting the way they want to rather than the way a physical queue is forcing them to wait, they're more content and, therefore, more likely to be loyal customers.

How to Leverage Virtual Queuing in an Omni-Channel Marketing Plan

"It's about serving customers better, not about selling them harder."
— Retail Vision Survey, Motorola

Omni-channel shopping has now become the norm in the retail environment[4]. According to the 2015 Digital Study from Loyalty360, 45% of survey respondents performed some kind of shopping-related task on mobile in the past three months alone.

Omni-channel marketing is motivated by a desire to allow and assist customers in their quest to shop and interact with brands across channels, any time, any place. But omni-channel isn't specific to retail, and it isn't only about selling more. The real omni-channel strategy is about the customer – particularly the level and consistency of customer service across channels. A Retail Vision Survey[5] conducted by Motorola found that over half of brick-and-mortar retailers see improvement in customer service as a primary driver for a technology investment.

As part of an omni-channel strategy, virtual queuing technology showcases your commitment to serving customers better.

Where there is a checkout line, there can be tension between businesses and customers. It's a means to an end that a business can't avoid, and it's a necessary evil that customers must endure. But in a society where customers

expect things to be faster and more sophisticated at every turn, you have to keep up – virtual queuing makes it possible to offer more to your customers without a significant additional expense.

Customers can register for any service you offer through a virtual queuing system, whether via internet, mobile apps, or interactive kiosks. They might need technical support, have a product return, or simply a question. No matter what a customer is seeking, service is the end result – and service is the sustainable differentiator that can be enhanced by new technology.
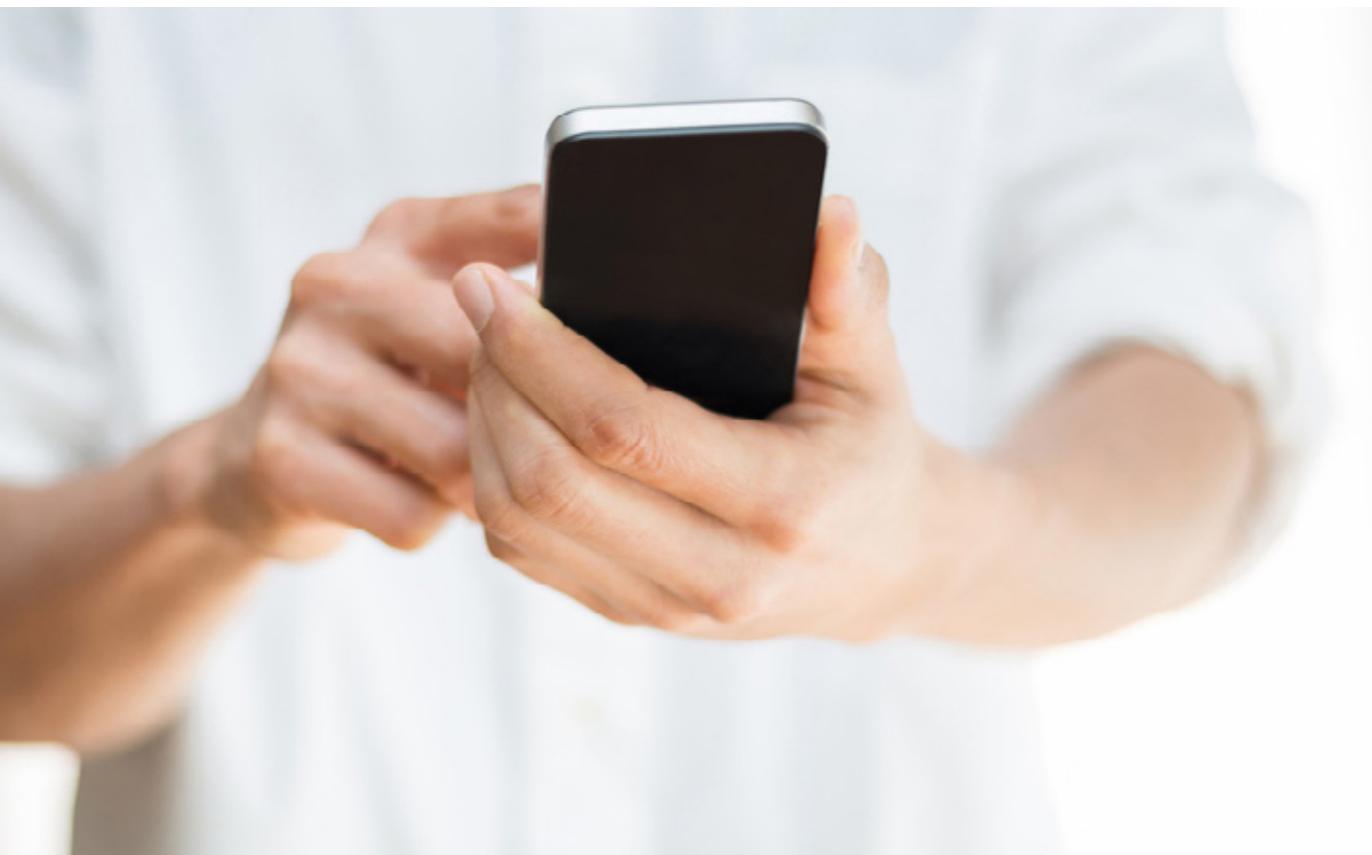
The Virtual Queue and Your Mobile Strategy

The tipping point has happened: mobile digital media time in the U.S. is now significantly higher at 51% compared to desktop usage at 42%[6].

As a result, it's almost impossible, or at least ill-advised, to consider any new technology without considering its role in your customers' mobile-enabled lives.

Allowing customers to register for a place in line from their mobile device – whether they're in their home, office, or on the train – and then communicating with them about their turn via text message or mobile app is a home run that connects your business with your customers more than ever.

As you put together a mobile strategy, consider your customer's entire journey, from before they enter your premises, to the time they spend on site, to after they've left, to when they return again. With mobile capabilities, you can

offer your customers the chance to pre-schedule their wait conveniently from their own mobile device – it's like "calling ahead" for their service. You also disperse the waiting line with a virtual queue that notifies customers via their mobile device when their turn has come which prevents customers from standing around idly (and potentially leaving as a result).

But even more powerful is two-way communication with customers. Not only are you able to send them an alert that their turn is imminent, you can allow them to respond: "On my way" or "Need five more minutes" or "Can we reschedule?" The customer can automatically be re-queued without disrupting the productivity of the queue. Your customer will still feel acknowledged, and they won't feel pressured to change their own schedule or demands to suit the whims of a physical and unyielding line.
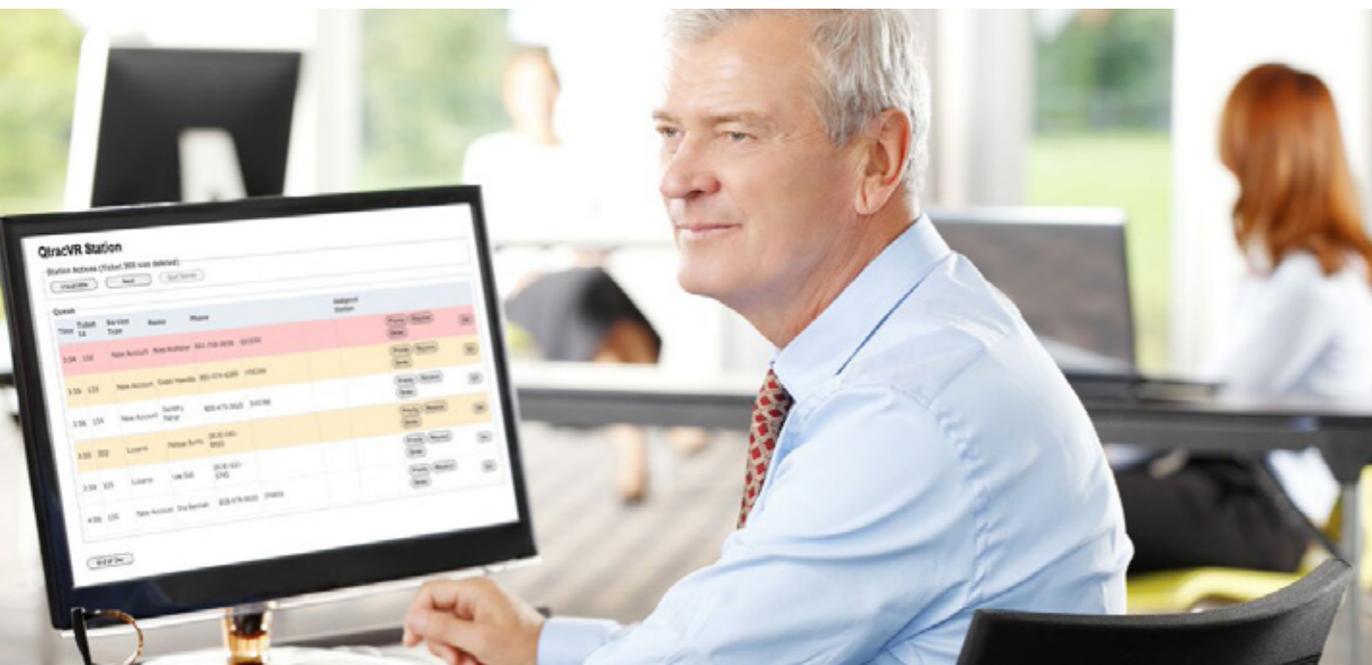
Using Scheduling and Appointments to Maximize Service Allocation

Service allocation is a challenge for many businesses that experience the ebbs and flows of customer flow. Exceedingly busy one hour. Exceptional slow the next. Optimal service allocation is made more challenging when you have cashiers or agents situated throughout the physical location or across a long line of registers or service stations. Ensuring even workload across agents can be important to maintaining employee morale and keeping a more even workload across staff.

Virtual queuing systems can help maximize service allocation through scheduling and appointment functionality. Offering customers certain windows of time where they can pre-schedule their banking transaction, time in a busy retail dressing room, business license renewal, or any number of other services, can help to spread out customer arrival rates. Furthermore, these pre-scheduled arrivals or appointments can be set to direct customers to an assigned agent and agents can be given an equal or pre-determined number of customers over a given timeframe.

[4] http://loyalty360.org/resources/article/consumers-expect-retailers-to-develop-mobile-strategy
[5] http://enterpriseinnovation.net/files/whitepapers/motorola_omnichannel_wp_final_high_120907.pdf
[6] http://www.smartinsights.com/mobile-marketing/mobile-marketing-analytics/mobile-marketing-statistics/

How the Transformation to Virtual Queuing Can Help Turn Customers into Ambassadors

We've clearly established that waiting lines can have a strong impact on the customer experience: Either as the final encounter a customer has with your business, as in the case of a retail store, or as the majority of business encounters, as in the case of an amusement park. Either way, customers are quite aware of the difference between a good queuing experience and a bad one. In a world where word of mouth travels fast, virtual queuing has the opportunity to help you turn satisfied customers into strong ambassadors of your brand by giving them something to rave about.

Your investment in a virtual queue can send a strong signal to your customers that you care about their time, are invested in their experience, and innovative in your service approach. It can also endear your customers to your brand and business, turning them into ambassadors who are more likely to forgive one bad experience, recommend you to others, and come back again in the future.

What to Look for in a Virtual Queuing System

There are three main areas to consider when shopping for a system:

Features:

The features you demand in a virtual queuing system should match up with your needs and desired outcomes. To gain the benefit of reducing wait times for customers, look for a system that features audible and visual message cues to ensure customers move efficiently to available service areas.

Also consider systems that allow agents and managers to access the queuing system from a common web browser with the ability to see all queues and waiting customers, as well as the ability to filter down to a single service area. Systems should further allow agents and managers to
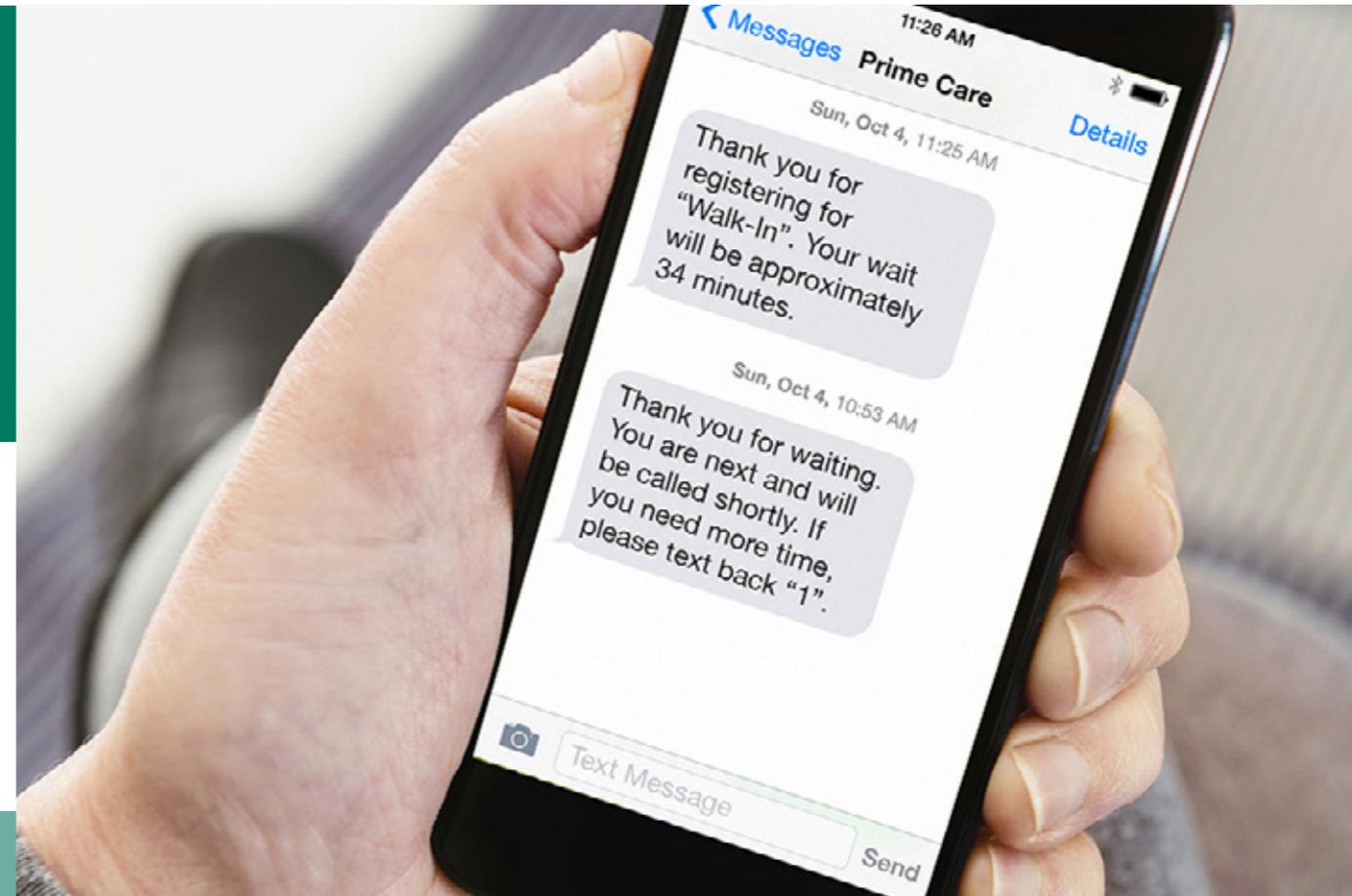
reprioritize customers. Manager dashboards and real time alerts should be included to allow managers to be more responsive to changes in service needs.

If decreasing perceived wait times is important to you, make sure your system allows for text-based communication to allow customers to be away from the location as they wait. Two-way text communication gives customers even more freedom, allowing them to postpone service, change service, or even cancel service.

Customer satisfaction is an important driver behind the choice to go virtual and as imaginable, the factors that drive satisfaction are many. Avoid frustration and reneging by looking for check-in kiosks that allow for identifiable branding (custom graphics placed on the kiosk can help it stand out). Also, touch-screen kiosks or easy-to-use computer registration systems can enhance the registration process and reduce confusion for customers. Mobile check-in and scheduling and appointment options expand the ways in which customers can interact with your business, helping to drive customer satisfaction even higher.

Other customer satisfaction-related features include the ability to facilitate the registration process with customizable registration screens. (Example: A DMV office could register customers based on the required service— license renewal, driver's test, vehicle registration, etc.—and customers could then be filtered directly to the correct service line.)

Finally, since known wait times feel shorter than unknown wait times, virtual queuing systems should clearly and accurately communicate to customers their estimated wait times and where the customer is "in the queue."

Ticket: NX0016

Item Sales

Wait Time: 4:00 mins

Customer: John Doe

Date: 06/16/10   Time: 04:15 PM

Please wait until your ticket is called.
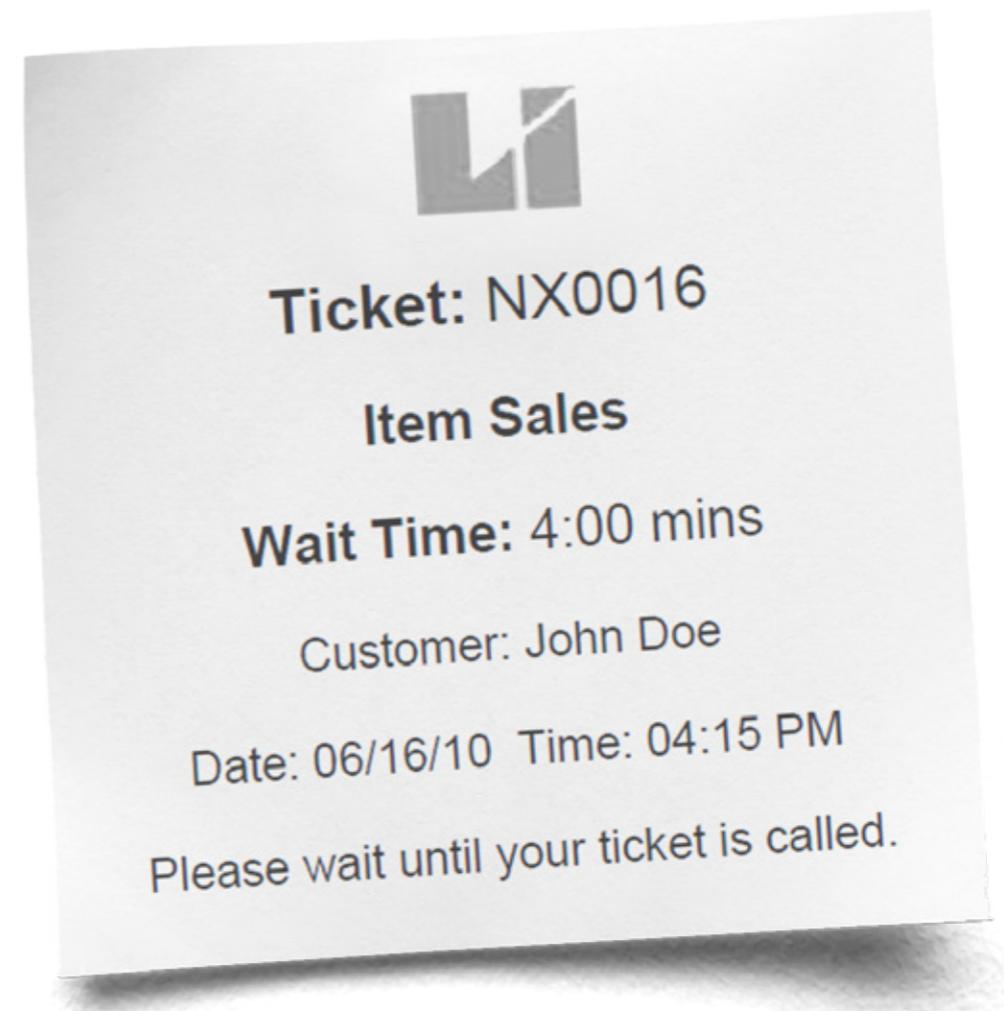
Technical Specs:

For many companies, the choice to go with a virtual queuing system is predicated on the ability for the system to work within or completely outside an existing network infrastructure.

If you need an independent system, look for one that is completely stand-alone with no network requirements. Software as a service (SaaS) configurations that are installed on the manufacturer's secure network can offer numerous benefits both in upfront setup and ongoing maintenance of your virtual queuing system. Alternatively, if using your own hardware you'll need to look for a hardware-agnostic system.

Options:

When it comes to choosing a virtual queuing system, focus on the core requirements of the system but also on how you might use the system to create an even more powerful queuing approach. Here are some potentially valuable options to consider:

✓ **Web-based registration and scheduling, allowing customer registration in any web-enabled device, such as mobile, tablet, or laptop.**

✓ **User-assisted registration (concierge).**

✓ **Text-based messaging to allow customers to leave the premises, or at least, wander further throughout the store, while they wait.**

✓ **Integrate flashing station lights to add a stronger clue in guiding patrons to the available service point.**

✓ **Add signage to easily identify check-in area.**

✓ **Centralized media manager to coordinate digital signage media within a single display or across an entire network.**

Conclusion

How you choose to manage your waiting line can speak volumes about how your business values its customers and the time they spend with your brand. Implementing a virtual queuing system can deliver benefits that extend across the customer journey straight to your bottom line. You've seen how virtual queues across many different industries can be easily adopted to remove the physical act of standing in line.

You've seen how virtual queuing can:

✓ **Enhance the customer experience** with a robust feature set, including expected wait times, SMS hailing, and online scheduling

✓ **Reduce perceived wait times** and **boost impulse purchases** by freeing customers to shop while they wait for service

✓ **Optimize customer flow** with the ability to prioritize, requeue, and transfer a customer

✓ **Maximize service efficiency** with a robust real-time and historical reporting suite

✓ **Increase customer engagement** through multiple touch-points, such as the internet, printed tickets, text, and digital signage

✓ **And much more!**

Now it's time to take the next step.

Let's plan your approach.

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