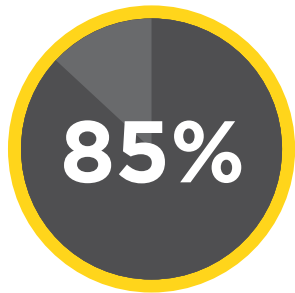# AUTOMATE THE WAIT

YOUR TURN!

HOW QUEUE MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING THE WAITING LINE EXPERIENCE

Lavi Industries

It seems no area of our business or personal lives is untouched by technology. From how customers browse, to how they buy, to how they spread the word about their experiences—it has all been transformed by technology.

85%

of purchases will be influenced by some sort of digital experience in 2015.

BUSINESSWEEK

Even the ever-present waiting line, or "queue," is no stranger to the impact of technology. And when you consider the role of the waiting line experience in driving customer satisfaction and loyalty, it's no wonder many businesses have opened their doors to the adoption of technology at this critical service juncture.

Queue management— the job of managing waiting lines—is important in driving customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and resulting profits at a key point in the customer service relationship. This point is, of course, the time when the sales or service "transaction" is actually taking place. With today's technology we can lessen the time spent waiting, improve the customer experience in the queue, better control wait times, and drive impulse sales in line.

- Why queue management deserves your attention
- How technology is transforming the customer experience
- How businesses can dramatically boost efficiency, customer flow, and profits
- 3 innovative and easy-to-use queuing solutions every business should consider

WHY QUEUE MANAGEMENT DESERVES YOUR ATTENTION

Queue management impacts profitability and long-term business success.

"The last thing we want to do with our dwindling leisure time is squander it in stasis." [1]

NEW YORK TIMES

Businesses spend plenty of time thinking about how to attract new customers through their doors. Once those customers cross the threshold, however, the service experience takes over. Service excellence drives improved customer satisfaction, higher customer retention, and more customer referrals—all of which boosts revenues and the bottom line.

Unfortunately, there's a crucial juncture of the customer service journey that is too often neglected or under-emphasized.

[1] *New York Times, Why Waiting is Torture*
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/19/opinion/sunday/why-waiting-in-line-is-torture.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Busy lifestyles mean less free time. Still, Americans spend roughly 37 billion hours each year waiting in line. And let's face it: **waiting is stressful, boring, and a real waste of our precious time.** As customers face increasing time pressures, waiting in a long and arduous queue weighs heavily on the feelings they have toward the company subjecting them to the wait.

At the same time, the waiting line, or queue, is one of the most distinguishing features of a great customer experience.

Recognized retail expert and author of "Why We Buy," Paco Underhill, suggests that the waiting line is the single biggest factor affecting customer satisfaction in retail stores.

Other industries are no exception. Try to think of the last conversation you had with someone about their latest travel experience without hearing about the length or speed of the security, ticketing, or boarding lines. The same can be said for amusement parks, stadiums, restaurants, and just about any other place where crowds gather. Even school districts are being criticized for keeping students waiting in long lines to be served lunch, given the short amount of time students have to nourish themselves before they must return to the classroom.[2]

[2] *San Francisco Chronicle, Schoolkids starved for time to eat their lunches*
http://www.sfgate.com/education/article/Schoolkids-starved-for-time-to-eat-their-lunches-4766005.php?cmpid=twitter
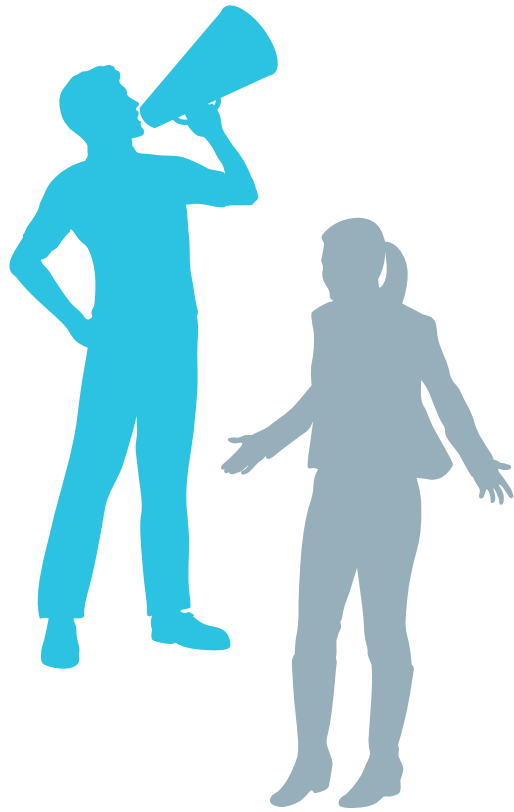
The Disastrous Results of Poor Queue Management

When businesses fail to manage their queues effectively, customers will balk (abandon planned purchases before entering the service line) or renege (abandon a queue after waiting in line for a period of time). Many customers won't even make it through the doors because they perceive that the lines are far too long for them to warrant the effort. In fact, studies show that 49 percent of customers will walk away at the mere existence of a line, 81 percent are likely to share a bad experience with others, and 38 percent would consider permanently shopping elsewhere because of lines that are too long or poorly managed.[3]

The financial impacts of queue mismanagement can be significant – just a 5 percent loss of total in-store sales caused by balking and reneging during a heavy shopping period, such as Black Friday weekend, would translate to over $1 billion in lost sales.

[3] *Research from Cable & Wireless and QM Group*

HOW TECHNOLOGY FACILITATES QUEUE MANAGEMENT

As companies search for ways to improve the efficiency, productivity, and satisfaction of customers in the queue, technology provides many answers. Innovations are put to work across all aspects of the queue, from the way customers move through the line to the way they're hailed for service.

Customer Flow Optimization

The flow of customers through the queue is facilitated by technology, including systems that call customers forward in a more efficient manner, allow agents to easily move customers from one line to another, and provide managers real-time metrics to respond to the real-time ebb and flow of the waiting line.

Real and Perceived Wait Times

Technology is also at work on customer's perception of the waiting experience, where both the actual wait time and the perceived wait time play a role. For example, since known waits feel longer than unknown waits, technology helps by measuring and displaying expected wait times to customers as they enter and move through the queue. Actual wait times are being driven down by technology that helps customers quickly find the next available agent, allows them to pre-schedule a place in line at a time when the wait is likely to be less, or alerts front-line management when more service points are needed to handle predicted rises in customer flow.

Customer Experience

With the help of technology, businesses are changing the way customers wait in line. For example, eliminating actual waiting lines and freeing customers to shop while they wait. Even putting the waiting line in the palm of the hand, where customers can register for service from their mobile device and wait wherever is convenient.

Agent Efficiency

Queuing technology is being used to improve the productivity of service agents and cashiers—thereby cutting costs. Queue management systems allow agents to hail customers more efficiently but they also allow managers to more closely monitor the service times and productivity of these key staff members.

Managerial Decision Making

Another major advancement in queue management technology involves real-time queue monitoring and reporting capabilities that alert managers to changes in queue volume, declining agent productivity, and excessive wait times.

WHAT YOU CAN ACHIEVE WITH QUEUE MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY

35% average increase in **service efficiency**

10-30% decrease in **average wait times**

40% decrease in **customers' perceived wait times**

400% increase in **impulse purchases at checkout**

3 QUEUING TECHNOLOGIES EVERY ORGANIZATION SHOULD CONSIDER

1 ELECTRONIC CALL-FORWARD QUEUING

Queuing technology is being used to combat the sometimes challenging and time-consuming task of hailing the next customer in line. From station lights to digital media displays, businesses can speed up the queuing process and remove confusion as customers find their way to the next available service agent or cashier.

With a simple button-push on a wireless remote, agents can instantly alert the next waiting customer and effortlessly guide them to an open service position using both audio and visuals from the LCD display. And multiple systems can be configured to work together, allowing agents to use their remote to call customers from other service queues.

Product Highlight: Media Manager

Dramatically increase impulse sales and reduce perceived wait time at checkout with in-store digital signage managed by a powerful media manager. Combine signage with electronic queuing for maximum ROI. A media management system can centralize control of in-store electronic signage and in-queue digital messaging within a single location or across multiple stores and regions.

Benefits of Electronic Queuing:

Manages customer flow efficiently and effectively, especially during peak times, speeding up service and reducing customer frustration and stress.

Leverages wait time by integrating promotion, advertising, and branding to a captive audience.

Reduces perceived wait times – by as much as 40% – by keeping customers engaged while they are queuing.

2 VIRTUAL QUEUING

When it comes to decreasing perceived wait times and boosting impulse purchases, virtual queuing offers a powerful solution. Virtual queuing takes the physical waiting line out of the equation. Customers simply check in to the waiting line via an in-store kiosk (or any internet-enabled device for that matter) and wait to be called via in-store or text message alerts. While waiting, customers can shop, watch media on the queuing system display monitors, or relax while they wait for service.

Virtual queuing is proven to decrease perceived wait times by allowing customers to engage in other activities while they wait. And it increases impulse purchasing by allowing customers to shop while they wait.

A Simple Process. Extraordinary Results.

1 Registration

Customers register for service at a kiosk or mobile device. A ticket or text message confirms the customer's unique call number and estimated wait time.

2 Waiting for Service

As customers wait, they are free to browse, shop or relax. Service agents can see all waiting customers via their screen or device and receive visual alerts when wait times or other data meet preset thresholds.

3 Hailing

Customers are called to service positions-both visually and audibly—via LCD screens in the waiting area or via text messaging.

Hail Customers Via Text Messaging

Text-based hailing frees the customer up to browse or shop in a much larger area.

Reminder texts can be sent prior to service to allow customers time to return to the service area.

Texts can contain additional information such as promotional messaging.

YOUR WAIT TIME IS APPROX. 4 MIN.
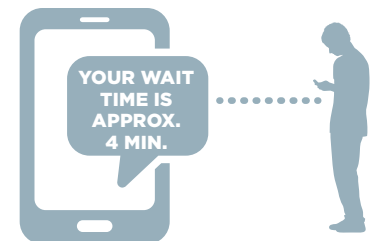
A Powerful Customer Service Tool

Browser-based Agent screens can be viewed on PC's, tablets, or mobile devices.

Agents call the next customer – on a first come, first served basis – by the simple push of a button.

Agents can prioritize or re-queue a customer, transfer them to another service, or change individual customer information at any time.

Colored rows allow agents to quickly view and act upon customers who pass certain preset thresholds such as maximum wait times.
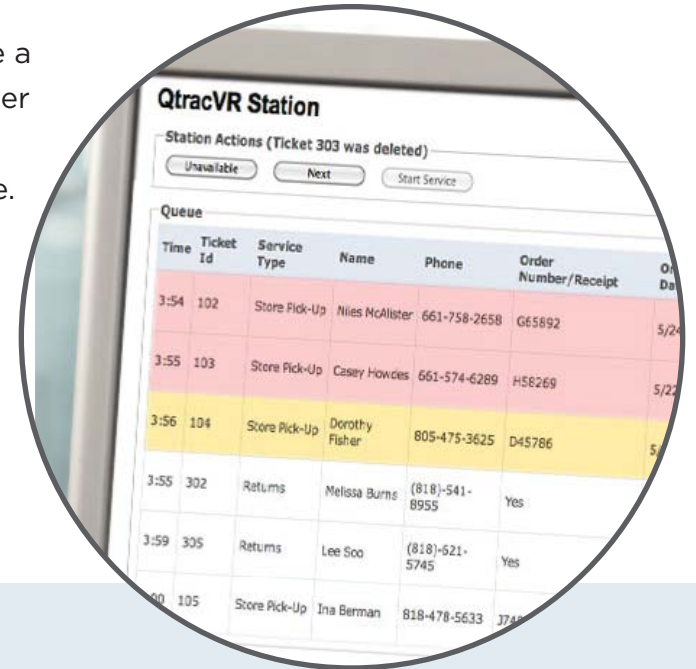
Product Highlight: Qtrac Scheduler

Lavi's Qtrac Scheduler allows customers to make appointments from the comfort of home. They can locate nearby stores offering the exact services they desire. Once they choose a store and service, they select a convenient date and time and schedule the appointment.
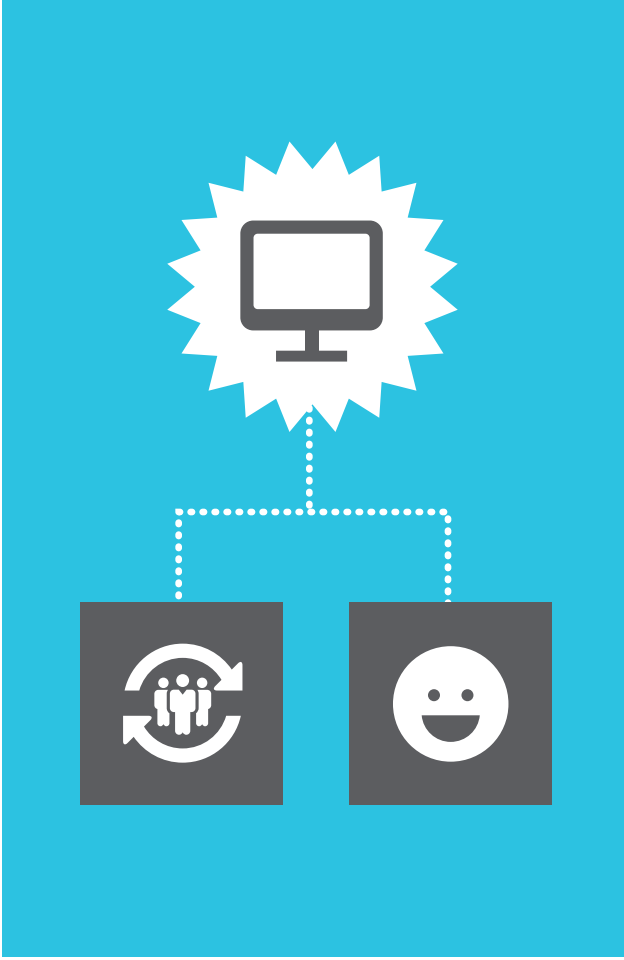
Benefits of Virtual Queuing:

Enhance the customer experience with features such as expected wait times and SMS hailing.

Decrease perceived wait times by freeing the customer to shop or relax while waiting for service.

Maximize customer flow and increase service efficiency with the ability to pull from other service queues, prioritize, or transfer a customer.

Optimize agent efficiency with robust real-time and historical reporting, including statistics on agent utilization, average and maximum service times, and more.

3 REAL-TIME QUEUE MONITORING & ANALYTICS

Rather than waiting for customers to complain or walk away, smart queue management involves proactive monitoring of the queue. Today's queue management technology automates the collection and delivery of real-time and historical data pertaining to service efficiency and customer experience in the queue. Affordable solutions for people-counting, service-time monitoring, and real-time queue analytics help managers catch problems before they get out of control.

Through queue monitoring, performance metrics are delivered in real-time through dashboards or mobile text alerts to store managers and employees for reallocation of resources. With these metrics in hand it becomes possible to predict and respond to the lulls and rushes of waiting customers.

Important to the customer experience, queue monitoring can also be used to keep customers informed of expected wait times in one or multiple queues. Publishing expected wait times via digital screens in the waiting area helps customers feel better about their wait by removing the "unknown."

Queue Monitoring Technology Gives You the Intelligence You Need.

Real-time management dashboards display current wait times, customer counts, service times, and more.

Publish wait times to customers via in-store displays or mobile or web applications to help maximize service-point utilization.

Instant alerts can be sent to managers when queues reach pre-set thresholds.

Historical reports track service efficiency, queue performance, and conversion rates across multiple stores and regions.

Benefits of Real Time Queue Monitoring:

Performance metrics are delivered in real-time to store managers and employees for reallocation of resources.

▶ Allocate service to demand.

▶ Prevent service breakdowns with predictive metrics.

▶ View real-time dashboards in store.

▶ Receive configurable alerts on browsers or mobile apps.

▶ Generate powerful historical reports.

CONCLUSION

Queue management deserves your attention. To the extent you can successfully use technology in your queuing approach you have the opportunity to dramatically improve customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and profits at a critical point in the customer service relationship. As you've discovered, today's technology can lessen the time spent waiting, improve the customer experience in the queue, allow managers and staff to better control wait times, and drive impulse sales.

How will technology help your waiting line and your business? Let a Lavi expert help plan your approach.

Lavi Industries

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