



FRONTLION GUIDE

How to Avoid the Hidden Costs of Purchasing a Queue System

What to know before you invest in virtual queue management — and how to spot hidden fees before they find you.

Table of Contents

- 1 Introduction
 - 2 Why Go Virtual?
 - 3 The Perils of Picking the Wrong Platform
 - 4 What to Look for in a Solution
 - 5 The Frontlion Difference
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Introduction

Digital processes continually shape the consumer experience in ways that might have been unimaginable just a decade ago. People can order groceries, hire a driver, check out library books, apply for a mortgage, and schedule a COVID-19 vaccination from their smartphones.

Queue management has also gone digital, benefiting both organizations and the customers they serve. Companies are adopting virtual queue management systems that allow people to wait their turn without actually waiting in a physical line. Consumers love the freedom of such a solution, and organizations are realizing an impressive return on investment (ROI).

However, the price to implement a virtual queue has emerged as a concern. Some providers may tack on hidden costs that cut into ROI and erode confidence in the solution. Moreover, a platform that doesn't perform as expected won't provide the benefits the organization was seeking and might have needed. This guide will look at the benefits of a virtual queue management system, the problems and costs that can arise if you pick the wrong platform, and the features consistent in the best solutions.

Why Go Virtual?

In a traditional physical queue, people wait in a line, wait in a designated area, or take a number and wait for theirs to be called out. A virtual queue management system doesn't eliminate the waiting, but it does take the crowd out of the equation.

A virtual queue generally works via a specialized software application. Patrons enter the queue through their smartphones, a kiosk, or another device. The system then sends them alerts via text or browser messages about their place in line, expected wait time, and, eventually, when their turn is imminent so they can return to the point of service.

For many organizations, a virtual queue management system offers many advantages that physical queues can't. Here are some of those benefits:

EFFICIENCY

When managed correctly, physical queues can work well and, in some environments (e.g., airport security checkpoints, grocery stores), are the best/only strategy to manage crowds. However, if virtual queue management is an option, impactful efficiency gains are achievable and potentially game-changing. These improvements include:

Less employee time spent dealing with a queue: Physical queues often require employees to oversee and manage the line. With a virtual system, there are no crowds of people lined up, which frees up precious minutes for employees.

Improved service: Virtual queue management systems can ask customers to provide important info to the employee team before their turn in line comes up. This not only helps employees anticipate a customer's needs but also allows a specialist to be assigned to a customer based on those needs.

Shorter wait times: Because employees are more focused and customers are less agitated, the queue moves quicker, thus reducing the time people are waiting to be served.

These efficiencies and others build upon each other, so gains made are cumulative—and any unexpected slowdowns don't set the queue back too far.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

No one likes waiting in a long queue. Anything that can shorten the wait improves customer satisfaction and makes the queue feel less like a queue.

Virtual queues give customers the freedom to wait on their own terms. They can browse the store, grab a coffee, or find someplace to chill rather than be forced to stand and wait. Even if the wait is the same amount of time it would be with a physical queue, customers perceive it as being shorter.

Satisfied queue participants tend to be happier at the point of service. If that service is just as satisfying, customers might leave with a favorable impression of the business, which bodes well for a repeat visit and good online reviews.

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EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Most service employees will tell you that dealing with ornery customers is one of the worst parts of their jobs. Long, chaotic queues can contribute to pent up customers. Therefore, if customers are happier thanks to a virtual queue, employees won't feel so drained in dealing with them.

Another employee benefit: not needing to manage the physical queue. Well-defined lines can eliminate some confusion, but less organized queues can result in employees trying to figure out who's next—and bruised feelings if they guess wrong. Virtual queues eliminate the guesswork so employees can devote their full attention to the customer being served at that moment.

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SAFETY

In the era of COVID-19, a physical queue with many people lined up in a semi-confined space is not much of a health/safety best practice. Even with social distancing (which, though great in theory, requires more floor space to work), masks, and vaccines, a long line with a throng of customers can scare off people who are apprehensive about the virus.

The pandemic will eventually subside, but the safety issues of a physical queue won't. People not in line still need to navigate around it. Undefined queues can wind into places that prevent shoppers from reaching items, and line jumping—intentional or inadvertent—can be a problem. Virtual queues remove the crowd from the equation, allowing for better traffic flow, less jostling and uncertainty, and patrons who feel more comfortable in your facility.

INCREASED SALES OPPORTUNITIES

Customers who are in a queue but free to go wherever they want have a whole store of opportunities open to them. And because they don't feel stuck in a line, they might be in a better mood and more apt to buy something. That's a powerful combination: a happy customer who is choosing to wait in your store and has access to the whole building. Add in-app advertising on the virtual queue management platform (more on that later) into the mix, and the potential boost to ROI can't be overlooked.

The Perils of Picking the Wrong Platform

Many organizations view a queue management system as an investment—they hope for a return in terms of better sales, improved customer experience, reduced operational costs, and so on. As with any investment, if you're forced to sink more money into a solution after your initial/monthly expenditure, ROI suffers and doubt that you made the right choice starts creeping in.

Naturally, a solution that doesn't meet your needs can be just as costly as any unexpected fees you may encounter. Keep these concerns in mind as you evaluate queue management platforms:

COMPLEX IMPLEMENTATION

From a purely technical standpoint, a virtual queue management system that is difficult to implement can increase costs and reduce ROI. For starters, the resources necessary to set up the platform can spiral out of control if your managers and IT people struggle with the process. Moreover, if the system is too complex for employees to use, either they'll require extra training or not use the solution to its fullest capabilities (or both).

The real danger with a platform that isn't easily implemented and remains unwieldy even after it's up and running is that it won't be used at peak times—precisely when it is needed most and can provide maximum benefits. The investment never reaches its full potential, and the problems the system was intended to solve instead persist.

INCOMPATIBILITY

To achieve maximum efficiency, a virtual queue management platform should be fully compatible with all smartphones and web browsers that customers are using, as well as the computer systems and tablets that employees work from. Slow loading times reduce the efficiency gains the solution is intended to achieve, confirmed by research showing that 53 percent of mobile website visits will be abandoned if a page takes more than three seconds to load. Moreover, images and graphics that won't display on a customer's phone can also torpedo user experience and cause confusion.

Incompatibility also slows down implementation because the platform might require additional technical resources to get up and running—and then there still might not be any guarantee the software will work properly. A "cross your fingers and hope it works" queue management strategy is obviously not cost-effective and risks making lines more chaotic ...

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POOR USER EXPERIENCE

Ultimately, customer experience must be prioritized when selecting a queue management system. With this approach, customer experience equates to user experience—and if an application is too difficult to use, customers will not be pleased. They might develop a negative perception of your business, accost employees to ask for help or just to complain that the system isn't working, or simply leave and maybe never return. That last risk is all too real: According to PwC, nearly one in three consumers will ditch a brand they love after one bad experience.

A solution that crashes on a person's smartphone is also an obvious concern, but if a platform is difficult to use or requires too much scanning, scrolling, or magnifying, customers will see it as a hindrance rather than something intended to improve their experience. The risk of irritated customers remains, and the bottom line can suffer.

A MISUNDERSTANDING OF QUEUES

In many commercial, educational, and public sector settings, queues are inevitable. Some virtual queue management solution providers forget about the management and become hyper-focused on solving a problem that really can't be eliminated. If 50 people enter your store at once demanding service, some must inevitably wait. How they wait becomes the challenge to address and manage.

If a provider doesn't fundamentally understand the nature of queues and queue management, it may emphasize bells and whistles over the practical application of those features—and the promised efficiency may never materialize. Of course, bells and whistles are important, but the best platforms bring a deep knowledge of queues so that functionality translates into true efficiency.

LACK OF CUSTOMER ADOPTION

As much as people love their smartphones, they increasingly don't like being told they have to download an app onto their devices in order to participate in something—such as shopping inside a physical store. There's a place for retail apps (consumers spent 82 billion hours on shopping apps in 2020), but making them mandatory to simply use a queue might turn off customers, who may refuse to download the app and either ignore the virtual queue or leave the store.

As already stated, a virtual queue management system that customers choose not to use cuts into ROI. A platform that seamlessly works with a smartphone's web and SMS functions allows customers to use the system without any annoying and storage-consuming applications to download and install.

ADDITIONAL COSTS

A comprehensive queue management system should be just that: comprehensive, including the features necessary to achieve full product effectiveness from day one. Beware of platforms that want to tack on extra costs such as setup, basic reporting, or additional costs per user. Those seemingly small fees add up and can make the solution you invest in feel more like a money pit.

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What to Look for in a Solution

A virtual queue management system is more than just a piece of software. A great platform brings together operations, sales strategy, customer experience, human resources, and data. Here are some features to look for when evaluating a queue management solution and its provider:

DEEP QUEUE EXPERIENCE

Queue management is a science, but at times, it is also an art form. Moreover, it must be customer-centric—and, for providers, be client-centric. Choose a partner that thoroughly understands these concepts and takes the time to apply its experience to your unique challenges. A top-notch provider approaches its solutions with a combination of creativity and practicality, and it won't be afraid to tell you if a virtual queue might not be your best option.

EASY INTEGRATION

No virtual queue management system will be 100 percent plug-and-play, but the best ones should still get you close to out-of-the-box functionality. Streamlined implementation provides a solid starting place from which to use a new platform, and an intuitive user experience with the software helps employees master it in less time and with a greater understanding of all available features. Effective integration not only saves money in the short term but also boosts ROI in the long term.

FLEXIBILITY

Of course, there isn't one absolute way to configure any system. Organizations should tailor their virtual queue management settings to their unique requirements. Quality software provides flexibility to set up and adapt a system to any business processes. This provides two key benefits:

Organizations aren't limited by the software. If they need to adjust or scale, the capabilities are already there, ready to change without much hassle or fear of messing something up.

Because they are configuring the software themselves, they aren't subject to the hidden costs of paying the platform vendor for every change they need.

DEDICATED SUPPORT

"Ease of use" should never mean that you are entirely on your own with a virtual queue management system. The top vendors provide extensive support—including a dedicated

project account and helpdesk management—to help you adapt and grow with the solution. If you've invested in a system, you shouldn't be subject to hidden fees for change orders or basic assistance. Choose a partner that collaborates with you on growth, not one that charges you for every little thing.

CUSTOMER CENTRICITY

Although a virtual queue management system offers value and operational efficiency to organizations, it must primarily serve the customers who patronize those organizations. User experience is key, so look for a platform that is easy for people to read and interact with on their smartphones and other devices. With just a few simple clicks, customers can join a virtual line, check their status in the queue, and be alerted when their turn arrives.

Ideally, customers (including, and maybe especially, ones who aren't tech-savvy) will come away from their experience with the system thinking that their wait in the queue wasn't so bad after all—and maybe that it was helpful or even enjoyable instead. This creates a positive impression of your business, thus improving the likelihood of customers becoming repeat customers.

ACCESSIBILITY AND MULTILINGUAL CAPABILITIES

Most organizations provide accessibility options within their physical locations, from signage in multiple languages to automatic doors to fixtures that can be reached by wheelchair. Because virtual queues replace physical lines, queue management systems shouldn't be any different.

Leading platforms offer the ability to interact with the user in another language or to have instructions read aloud, among other accessibility features. This should be accomplished upon implementation and not after a system is in place, at which point it can become much more expensive to address.

COMPREHENSIVE REPORTING

A digital queue management system generates reams of data, from average time spent in line to peak period analysis to customer metrics (e.g., how many customers leave after joining a virtual queue?). Reporting should be comprehensive because the data informs operational strategy and, subsequently, contributes to ROI.

DIGITAL PROMOTIONS

Over the decades, queue management took advantage of sales displays and impulse purchases in the line itself, even if customers were just buying a pack of gum or a tube of lip balm. Going virtual doesn't mean those opportunities must disappear.

With in-app ads, mobile promotions can be sent to customers' phones as they wait in the queue. For example, someone in a retailer's pharmacy queue can be sent a special offer, via the

platform, for an item they can pick up in another part of the store while they wait. Or an amusement park patron can be encouraged to purchase concessions while they roam the grounds as they wait for their turn on a roller coaster. In these ways, the queue becomes more than a queue; it evolves into an ROI-building revenue machine.

With in-app ads, mobile promotions can be sent to customers' phones as they wait in the queue.

TRANSPARENT PRICING

When you're budgeting for a virtual queue management system, the last thing you need are unexpected costs, including being charged for features that you didn't realize cost extra. Trustworthy providers are transparent with their pricing so you know exactly how much you'll pay for the base application and any features (e.g., advanced analytics, customer engagement surveys) you want to add on. Establishing ROI becomes easier if you know exactly how much you're spending and budgeting and don't encounter any surprises.

The Frontlion Difference

When considering a virtual queue management system—and the costs and features associated with a solution—look at the value a platform will provide. Streamlined operations, satisfied customers, empowered employees, and increased sales are possible and can be achieved without worrying that costs to implement, maintain, and scale the system might spiral out of control.

Frontlion delivers not only unparalleled functionality in a virtual queue management platform but also the confidence that you're dealing with an expert, honest partner with your best interests in mind. Whatever your industry, we can help you reimagine your queues. Contact us today to schedule a demo.

At Frontlion, our queuing management experts ask the right questions, we listen carefully, and we continue to engage until we've mastered every aspect of your queuing process. Our questions are geared toward understanding your needs and those of your customers. But we don't stop there. We continue planning, iterating, and testing until the queuing system aligns to meet your business requirements.

Frontlion is the perfect virtual queuing solution for a variety of industries, including healthcare, banking, public sector, retail, and telecommunications. Contact us today to schedule a demo.



The Frontlion Difference

We're dedicated to ensuring your organization has everything it needs to reimagine queue management — without hidden costs eating into ROI.

Frontlion is the perfect virtual queueing solution for healthcare, banking, public sector, retail, and telecommunications.