

Managing the Chaos in Your Government Office

12 Ways to Satisfy Your Citizens While They Wait



Introduction

Waiting rooms and office lobbies can be stressful places to spend any amount of time. Just ask anyone who has worked in a busy government service office. The nature of checking in and sitting down or waiting in a long line often causes anxiety and uncertainty for your citizens who, more times than not, are running a million errands that day and unknowingly long they are expected wait for their turn.

The following best practices reveal how to alleviate stress (and sometimes chaos!) that can arise in a busy office lobby.

Implementing any of the following ideas in your office lobby will improve your citizen's experience. And if you're able to eliminate the inconvenience of waiting in a physical line, you can improve citizen satisfaction even further while allowing staff to feel confident and in control.



1. Keep them hydrated.

When people are thirsty or feeling dehydrated, tension can mount. Help the citizens from having to walk out of the office lobby to find a water fountain or purchase bottled water.

Maintaining a spring water dispenser with disposable cups is an easy way to show that you're dedicated to keeping them comfortable — and it doesn't require a huge investment.

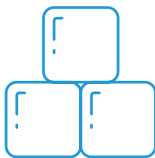


2. WiFi + phone charging stations.

It's become nearly a must-have these days: free WiFi. If your office lobby isn't equipped to provide your citizens with free access to the internet on their mobile devices, they will usually become frustrated.

Access to WiFi in public spaces is becoming so widespread that many people anticipate its presence whenever they're in a place like a waiting room, office building, restaurant, or lobby.

Modernize your office lobby with complimentary guest Wifi access along with phone charging stations so people can charge their batteries while waiting to be served. Remember to post a sign that gives information about the free WiFi as well as the password to log in.



3. Entertain the kids.

Having a basket of coloring books and crayons for children to play with will accomplish two things: keep parents and caregivers from having to find ways to entertain their children while they wait, and offer the rest of the lobby patrons relief from bored or noisy children.



4. Keep pens and paper at the ready.

And speaking of keeping the kids occupied, be sure to have a stash of pens and blank paper available for the adults too! Many people use the time they spend waiting in lobbies to make to do lists, pay bills, and catch up on paperwork.

Keeping pens and paper readily available also prevents your staff from being interrupted by people coming up to ask if they can borrow a pen.



5. Keep chairs, surfaces, and doors clean.

You probably already have a cleaning crew that maintains your office lobby regularly. The lobby is best checked 2-3 times throughout the business day to ensure that trash cans are emptied, magazine racks/piles are straightened and that doors, glass and other surfaces are free from smudges, debris, dust, and germs.

Many people already feel a bit anxious waiting in tight spaces with strangers and an untidy appearance or lack of cleanliness can increase anxiety for everyone.



6. Hand sanitizer, tissues, and waste baskets.

Being in close proximity to strangers may be stressful, so long wait times can heighten the anxiety for some of your citizens.

Providing tissues and waste baskets in visible areas of the waiting area is common practice, but it's important to also offer hand sanitizer. This will encourage good hygiene among your citizens and allow everyone in the lobby to feel a bit more secure in the environment if someone does have need to sneeze, cough, or blow their nose.



7. Soft, calming music.

Silence can make visitors in your office lobby feel uncomfortable when they're standing in line or sitting in close quarters with strangers. Some people feel pressure to make small talk to try and eliminate silence and wind up putting others in a position to hold conversations they may prefer not to have.

This is why calm music is a great way to keep the people waiting in your office lobby relaxed. Please note that playing music in a business requires a business licensed account. You can find commercial-free, licensed music accounts from several places on the internet — SiriusXM for Business and Mood Media are two to check out.



8. Crosswords, puzzles, brain teasers, and Sudoku.

In addition to magazines, brain games are a great distraction for people waiting in line. Sudoku and crossword puzzles are entertaining crowd pleasers.



9. Add an aquarium.

Maintaining a nice fish tank in your lobby will require a bit more effort in terms of maintenance, but the payoff could be worth it. Many people find water elements to be relaxing and soothing.

The aquarium provides a point of concentration for your citizens and allows them to relax while they observe the fish swimming in the water. Added bonus? Kids love fish tanks! So if the coloring books and crayons aren't cutting it, you've got back up.



10. Trivia games on the wait notification screen.

Companies such as Tap TV, Buzztime, and Motor Vehicle Network offer trivia game channels and more to help your citizens pass the time. For example, a trivia question will appear on the screen along with 4-5 multiple choice answers. A timer at the bottom of the screen indicates how much time is left to make their final selection before the correct answer is displayed.

This keeps people engaged and entertained and can even end up sparking a friendly competition between the people waiting together. And best of all? Their focus is taken off of the fact that they're waiting (and they might even learn some cool facts to impress their friends!)



11. Local newspaper and relevant publications.

Expand the reading material in your office lobby area to include a few copies of the local newspaper and a regional, or topically relevant publication.

People often enjoy taking a break from staring at their screens and so whether it's a subscription to your area's daily or weekly newspaper, having a bit of local news on hand that people can flip through allows people a break from their phone screen during longer wait times.



12. Implement a mobile check-in system.

Mobile check-in systems eliminate lines and crowded lobbies, increase productivity, and decrease operating costs. Have you ever actually gone through the process of checking-in at your own facility and waited in the office lobby?

If you haven't, go ahead and try it to get a feel for the experience — you might be surprised by what you discover.

However, with today's technology, there are mobile-enabled queuing systems capable of creating virtual lines that eliminate physical lines and reduce the number of people crowded within government offices.

The technology is out there, but you'll want to ask a few questions as you check out the various systems available today:

- ▶ Does the system provide citizens with the ability to join these virtual lines from their mobile phone, home phone, an on-site kiosk or directly from your website?
- ▶ Are your citizens able to interact with the system if they need to scoot back in line while they run an errand or step outside to take an important personal or work phone call?
- ▶ Are citizens informed via text message updates as their turn approaches? When they reach the front of the line, do they receive a text message summoning them to the correct counter number?

Selecting the right automated queuing system for your organization's needs will result in boosted productivity, happier staff, better response quality, and improved citizen satisfaction scores.

This last tip allows your citizens to wait for services however and wherever they choose by holding their spot in line with a mobile phone — no matter where they are!

This decreases your citizens' perceived wait time and equips government offices with flexible solutions that provide absolute control over scheduling and customer flow.

For more information on how to implement a mobile check-in system in your government office, please schedule a demo with QLess today!

Request Demo

About QLess

QLess is the global leader in wait management and mobile check-in. The company's patented, cloud-based technology helps government offices lower operating costs and improve citizens' experiences by eliminating lines and offering convenient ways to make and manage appointments. QLess clients span six continents and include the government offices of Chicago Public Schools, City of Denver, City of Spokane, City of Milford, City of Buenos Aires, the Consulate of Honduras, and many more.



99%
citizen satisfaction



75%
reduction of walkaways



40 million
current users



1,200+ years
of time saved

"QLess saves permit applicants hours of wasted time, reduces stress for everyone, and allows our staff to better monitor performance."

— Director of Permitting and Land Use, City of Milford, Connecticut

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