

# THE DIGITAL CITIZEN:

How to make government agencies more efficient and user-friendly

## About the Author

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### **Zach Zipay, Senior Director of Government Solutions**

With more than 10 years experience in the field of government, Mr. Zipay works closely with government agencies – such as the Michigan Department of State, the Nevada DMV, and the Orange County Tax Collector – to oversee the deployment and management of SaaS solutions in the government environment. He works closely with numerous government agencies and offices to eliminate the long office waits that would have otherwise been unavoidable. Mr. Zipay earned his Bachelor of Business Administration at Ohio University and his MBA at the University of South Florida.

# Eliminate Lines to Improve Citizen Experience

*Bob needed to renew his driver's license. He headed to the DMV during his 30-minute lunch break, but the line was out the door. He would have to choose between getting his license renewed and returning to work late or taking his chances to come back another day. Upset about the wait, he grumbled about his situation on several social media platforms and headed back to work, hoping that the line the next day would be shorter.*

Citizens have high expectations for government services, whether at the state or municipal level. They've been spoiled by the private sector to expect instant answers and digital solutions. In fact, in a survey of more than 3,000 U.S. citizens in mid-2016, 85 percent of respondents said they expect the same or higher quality from government digital services as they do from commercial organizations.<sup>1</sup>

We've all become accustomed to the instant gratification of getting things done digitally. When we're upset with a commercial establishment, we can take our business elsewhere, but when government agencies force us to stand in line or do things manually, we don't have that option. Instead, we may leave negative feedback on review websites or take it out on the elected officials responsible for the agency by voting them out of office at our next opportunity.

It's a universal problem across city, county, state, and federal government agencies: long lines create an unpleasant citizen experience. For example, in a recent survey, 31 percent of respondents rated their overall satisfaction with their state DMV as either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, and in the same survey, 47 percent said the wait at DMV was more than 30 minutes.<sup>2</sup>

With QLess queue management solutions, citizens don't need to stand in line. They can go to the agency website to view current wait times and join the queue online, through an app, or with a text message or phone call. The queue is online, so citizens can tend to other business as they wait their turn, knowing that the system will keep them informed of their wait time. Government agencies can demonstrate that they care about citizens and respect their time by eliminating standing in line.



*“QLess is technology that leapfrogs what exists today, allowing citizens to get in the queue without having to visit the office and only come in when it is their turn.”*

**Deputy Assistant Director  
State Department of  
Motor Vehicles**

1. Accenture, “U.S. Citizens on Digital Government,” Feb., 2017. <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/citizen-satisfaction-with-digital-government-services-doubles-in-two-years-accenture-report-shows.htm>

2. DMV.com, “DMV Satisfaction Survey,” 2013. <https://www.dmv.com/survey-questions-infographic>



## Prepare for the Unexpected

*Bob, a contractor, went to City Hall to get a permit for his latest building project. After waiting 45 minutes in line, a windstorm knocked out power to City Hall. No one in the waiting area was hurt, but without power, no business could be done. Everyone waiting in line was asked to come back when systems were restored. A few days later, Bob returned to City Hall and found longer lines because many people were seeking city services after the storm, which had spawned several tornadoes. The staffers were overwhelmed, unable to process all the requests, stalling the recovery effort.*

The US has been hit by at least 15 separate weather and climate disasters in 2017 alone, each with losses exceeding \$1 billion.<sup>3</sup> Government agencies need to plan ahead to be ready when disaster strikes.

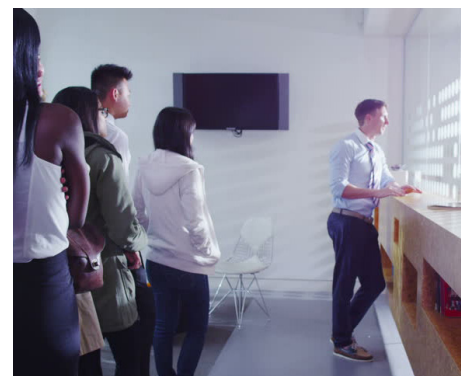
Requests for specific government services can increase dramatically after a disaster. For instance, a storm with baseball-sized hail hit the Denver metro area, causing \$1.4 billion worth of damage in May 2017. In the four months following the storm, the number of building permits issued in Denver increased by over 37 percent compared to the same time period the previous year.<sup>4</sup> This is why government agencies need to build into their disaster planning the ability to meet increased demand for services, including resource management to optimize the efficiency of existing staff.

After a disaster, citizens rely on government services – debris removal, utilities, water, mail services, document replacement, building permits, and much more. After the wildfires in Sonoma County in October 2017, the county used QLess queue management to help people seeking assistance. The QLess system enabled residents

displaced by the fires to attend to other business remotely while waiting their turn to talk to the county agency. With so much to do to put their lives back together, they were very grateful to not have to stand in line.

The QLess system helps during and after a disaster in several ways. If a disaster strikes a government agency office that is using QLess, most of the people waiting in the virtual queue will be waiting remotely, so there will be fewer citizens within the building who will need to be protected or evacuated, and shutting down the virtual queue will keep additional people from coming to the disaster area. In addition, people who are in the queue when the disaster strikes will get to keep their place in line as soon as the situation is stabilized. The QLess system is cloud-based (with redundancy built in), so the QLess data will be unaffected by the disaster.

The QLess system will also keep track of staff hours worked and number of citizens served – before, during, and after the disaster. This can help with staff members eligible for overtime pay or to help justify requests for additional budget by providing automated reports on services provided.



*“With QLess, government employees spend less time managing traffic and instead focus on serving citizens and getting them on their way.”*

**Jim Cochrane,**  
Chief Information Officer  
Orange County Tax Collector

3. NOAA, “Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disaster,” Oct. 6, 2017. <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/events/US/1980-2017>

4. Denver Development Services, Building Permits. <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-development-services/help-me-find-/building-permits.html>

# Improve Resource Management and Staff Morale

*The Building Official was frustrated. There had been no line in the Building and Development Department a few hours ago, and the staffers had nothing to do. Now the line was out the door, everyone was aggravated, and the employees would have to stay late, collecting overtime pay again, which would strain the budget. The Building Official knew that the citizens standing in line were unhappy with the long wait times, and she dreaded their negative Tweets and how that would affect her reputation with constituents.*

A best practice to minimize wait time is to collect data on how and when citizens use services and improve resource scheduling based on demand. QLess is not just about eliminating citizen lines – the platform also provides detailed metrics that make it a powerful workforce management solution. With QLess, managers understand which services are needed at which times so they can set staffing levels accordingly – and encourage citizens to come during less busy times. By load balancing appointments throughout the day, QLess maximizes staff utilization and saves government agencies the need to constantly staff to peak time levels.

The QLess system also allows managers to see and compare transaction times across staff members in order to improve efficiency. With live dashboards staff can view service trends in real-time to help identify procedural enhancements and drive improvement of services. And this reporting is completely automated. There is no need to manually check people in, type things into a spreadsheet, or spend time formatting a report.

Government agencies can provide services to more citizens per day with QLess. QLess FlexAppointments fills even small holes in the schedule, so if an appointment ends 10 minutes early, the system calls the next person in the queue. Staff members never sit idle waiting for the next appointment.

In addition, QLess helps reduce no-shows up to 60 percent, and it lets citizens indicate that they are running late by texting a single letter response, which moves them back in the queue to accommodate their schedule without losing their place entirely. The system keeps citizens informed with status updates so they're ready to go when it's their turn.

Best of all, because it can accurately forecast service times, the QLess system can shut down the queue toward the end of the day so that staff can go home on time instead of staying late every day. This makes for happier, more productive staff members – and reduces budget-busting overtime pay.



*“QLess gives us data to make decisions – it’s a great piece of software. It allows us to set customer expectations, and that is invaluable as we have had great feedback. It’s made my life easier and helped us drive the business forward. QLess allows us to set goals and monitor against them.”*

Steve Coffey, Manager  
City of Riverside

# Transform your Government Office with QLess

*Bob joined the QLess mobile queue for the Building and Development Department. While waiting for his turn, he worked at his job site. He received a text that his turn would be in 15 minutes. Shortly after that, Bob received a text message that power was out at City Hall, and his appointment would be rescheduled. Three hours later when the power was restored, he kept his place in line and was notified of his turn.*

*As requests for government services increased after the earlier storms, QLess helped optimize the use of staff time so that citizens could be served a timely manner. And as things returned to normal, staff members received valuable feedback about how they spend their time to help improve efficiency. And with QLess eliminating the need to wait on line, the citizens are giving the department great reviews.*

## Solution

- » Interactive mobile queuing eliminates standing in line and demonstrates respect for citizens' time.
- » Analytics gather queue data to prepare your office ahead of rising demand.
- » Cloud-based solutions maintain uptime even when disaster strikes, allowing your office to effortlessly reschedule appointments and keep citizens informed.
- » Live dashboards provide staff with trends in real-time to identify procedural enhancements and drive improvement of citizen services.
- » Resource scheduling equips your office with a clear image of staffing needs.



*"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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