

THE DIGITAL CUSTOMER:

Eliminate the wait to delight customers, improve productivity,
and increase sales

About the Author



Charlie Meyer, Vice President of Sales

Charlie leads the North American sales team, which is responsible for all aspects of sales and leads a team that demonstrates the business value and fit of QLess' software solutions. With more than 20 years of sales leadership experience in enterprise and SaaS software, Charlie brings a wealth of sales and leadership guidance to the growing company and market. He also possesses a talent for evangelizing new technologies.

Prior to QLess, Charlie has held the position of VP of Sales at several start-up companies and successfully grew them from birth to acquisition. Charlie graduated from the University of South Dakota with a BA degree in Business Administration.

Amp Up Revenue – Convert Online Browsing to Offline Sales

Carla wanted to buy a new sofa. She spent hours researching sofas online, reading reviews, and comparing prices. She narrowed down her selection to a few different models, but ultimately, she wanted to know what it felt like to sit on them. She headed to a furniture store whose website she had studied in depth. Because it was lunchtime, the store was crowded with shoppers. She wandered through the store looking for the sofas she had researched online but could not find them – although she discovered a couple of throw pillows she liked. She also looked for an associate to help her, but the few that she saw were busy with other customers. After 30 minutes, she needed to head back to work. She abandoned the pillows and left without seeing the sofas. The next day she bought a sofa from a competitor.

In the last decade, the world of retail has been turned upside down. Instead of walking into a store and browsing, 67% of consumers say they research products online before shopping for them in brick-and-mortar stores.¹ Consumers have more information than ever at their fingertips – product features, competitive products, pricing, and even what friends, family, and total strangers think about products. The consumer's buying options have expanded, making it more competitive than ever for retailers to close the deal. But despite all the growth in online shopping, Americans still spend 64% of their shopping budget in-store, and 36% online.²

From Clicks to Brick-And-Mortar Sales

For most retailers, the holy grail is an omnichannel shopping experience that converts online browsing into offline sales. When a potential customer browses online, retailers know their full browsing history, their path through the website, where they lingered, what they put in their shopping cart, and whether they completed the transaction or

abandoned their cart. But today when that same customer walks into a brick-and-mortar store, they're a blank slate. Retailers would love to know the online identity of shoppers in the store so they can better understand their customers, provide personalized service, and move them toward a decision to purchase.

QLess makes this possible by offering online shoppers the option to join a virtual queue to visit the store and meet with an associate in person – perhaps with the enticement of a special offer for doing so. This gives the store the ability to provide the assigned associate key information from the customer's browsing history, and provide personalized service to close the sale.

Let Shoppers Browse While They Wait

With QLess, customers no longer spend valuable shopping time waiting in line. Customers can either reserve a spot upon arrival, or join the line remotely. Timely updates notify customers when it's their turn, with the option to

reschedule in the event they're still shopping. This reduces walk-aways and extends prime-time revenue. If customers need to wait for assistance after they have arrived at the store, they can browse instead of standing line, which often leads to additional spending. In addition, with QLess, retailers can see when a store has a long wait time and can send customers to another nearby location with a shorter wait.

“Beyond the positive aspects of managing the line and enabling customers to know their relative position in line, the amazing thing for us is the personalization of the line and the handling of customers. Gone is: ‘Can I help the next available person in line,’ replaced by: ‘Mary, I can help you.’”

Mike Hills, General Manager
of Acton Toyota

1. RetailDIVE, “Why researching online, shopping offline is the new norm,” Sandy Skrovan, May 17, 2017.

<https://www.retaildive.com/news/why-researching-online-shopping-offline-is-the-new-norm/442754/>

2. Big Commerce, “Ecommerce Trends: 147 Stats Revealing How Modern Customers Shop in 2017,” Tracey Wallace, 2017.

<https://www.bigcommerce.com/blog/ecommerce-trends/>

Increase the Lifetime Value of Customers

A week later, Carla went to the mobile phone store to have someone fix a technical problem she was having with her phone, something she preferred to do in person. All of the associates were busy, and there was a long line. This time she decided to wait it out. Eventually, she got to the front of the line and sat down with the next available associate. Unfortunately, the associate was a new hire and did not have the expertise to solve her problem. Frustrated, she left negative reviews on social media and moved her phone to a different carrier. Several of her friends also decided to move to a different carrier based on her negative review.

Negative reviews can be a death knell for retailers. One negative review will cost a retailer roughly 30 potential customers. This means that if a customer spends, on average, \$200 on a single visit, that's a loss of \$6,000 for every negative review – or more if the business counts on repeat customers.³ People hate standing in line. And they really hate standing in line only to meet with an associate who is unable to help them.

Associates with the Right Expertise Delight Customers

Retailers can turn things around and delight their customers by getting them out of line and matching them with associates with the right skills and knowledge to help them. QLess provides virtual queueing so customers can join a queue from a mobile device before they leave home. They can navigate their day and get things done until they are notified that their turn is coming up. In addition, if customers indicate products they're interested in or if the retailer can look at their browsing history, the system can assign an associate with relevant expertise to directly address their needs.

Measure Customer Satisfaction to Improve It

To increase customer satisfaction, retailers must measure it accurately – and understand the root cause of any dissatisfaction. Too few shoppers complete paper or phone surveys, which making the results inconclusive. Meanwhile, systems in stores that asks shoppers to choose a happy face or sad face to rate their visit have several limitations. They are anonymous, so a review could come from a child, or a single unhappy shopper could enter multiple negative reviews. These simple systems don't enable shoppers to indicate what they're happy or unhappy about or who served them.

By comparison, the QLess Survey feature collects instant customer feedback through quick, convenient SMS surveys – providing valuable insights in order to optimize staffing, identify operational enhancements and drive improvement to customer service. The surveys only go to shoppers, not to their children, and the software knows which shoppers responded. QLess also knows which associate helped the shopper, and the shopper can text a comment to explain their rating. That gives the

store manager the information to work with any associates who may have received a negative review and help them improve their future customer interactions. The manager also has the contact information of the particular shopper so that they're able to properly address the situation. One QLess customer increased survey responses from 100 to 1,500 over the same time period by switching to SMS surveys.

When retailers demonstrate that they value customers' time, provide the right expertise to meet their needs, ask for feedback, and pro-actively address any issues that come up, they delight their customers.



3. Drae Media, "What Does a Single Negative Review Cost You?" Dawn Wigginton, November 26, 2016. <http://draemedia.com/single-negative-review-cost/>

Increase the Lifetime Value of Customers *(continued)*

Expand Loyalty Programs

Once a customer is delighted, QLess can ask them to opt-in to a VIP program to receive special offers. While customers are typically hesitant to give up contact information for these programs, with QLess, they know that the retailer already has their phone number (which they entered for the opportunity to join the virtual queue). Their only decision is whether to receive the benefits of the program, so they're likely to opt in.

"With QLess, we've been able to reduce the amount of time people must wait in line, meaning far fewer walk-aways and more business. The QLess mobile solution allows us to bring our staff to customers rather than waiting for customers to come to them. By serving our customers more quickly, we have an opportunity to retain and grow their business with us – that was impossible before. We've found a solution that fits with our vision for being a mobile leader."

Global Head of Retail
Technology at Vodafone



Maximize Productivity With Happy, Engaged Associates

The furniture store manager was struggling. On most weekdays, the store is empty in the morning, but ridiculously crowded at lunchtime and in the afternoon. Associates either sit around doing nothing or are stretched to the limit when the store is busy. No one can tell which customers are showrooming and which are there to make a purchase. That makes it hard to prioritize where store associates should focus. Customers who are angry about the wait often yell at store associates, and the associates feel like they are set up for failure. It's no wonder that the store has a high turnover rate for employees.

To improve productivity, a best practice is to collect data on when shoppers tend to shop and improve resource scheduling based on demand. QLess is not just about eliminating standing in line. The platform also includes analytics that turn data into useful metrics, making it a powerful workforce management solution – with a real-time dashboard that shows which associates are busy and which are idle at any moment. It enables managers to staff appropriately based on expected demand and can also load-balance by encouraging shoppers to come during less busy times or to visit a nearby store that is less crowded. This helps maximize staff utilization without having to constantly staff to peak time levels.

Dynamically Fill Appointment Slots to Maximize Throughput

QLess Flex Appointments help retailers that provide a service to fill every nook and cranny of their schedule to greatly improve throughput. It automatically fills time slots from canceled appointments and appointments that run shorter than expected, and it converts no-shows

to late-shows by allowing customers who are running late to move backward in line, instead of losing their place entirely. By keeping customers apprised of their wait time on their mobile devices, customers arrive on time, ready to go, so associates don't need to wait around for them.

More Engaged Employees, Less Turnover

A disengaged employee costs an organization approximately \$3,400 for every \$10,000 in annual salary.⁴ QLess helps turn that around, too. Store associates can better serve customers when they have more information, and that makes them feel more confident in their work. Managers can provide better feedback to associates based on information from QLess – such as time spent per appointment and comments about specific associates. When customers are not frustrated from standing in long lines, they treat staff better, leading to happier employees, increasing employee engagement, and reducing turnover.



"We beat a national company record performing 170 haircuts in one day, and I couldn't have done it without QLess software! That is triple the number of normal haircuts in one day, and the system ran smoothly."

**Drew McWilliams, Owner,
Pigtails & Crewcuts, 45 locations**

4. DecisionWise, "Show Me the Money: The ROI of Employee Engagement," Reese Haydon. <https://www.decision-wise.com/show-me-the-money-the-roi-of-employee-engagement/>

The QLess Solution

While researching sofas online, Carla is offered a 10% discount if she joins the online queue to meet with an associate at her local store. Since she wanted to check out the sofas in person anyway, she joins the QLess Mobile Queue for an in-person visit to the store during her lunch hour. While she's in a meeting that is clearly going to run over, she receives a text that her appointment at the store is in 15 minutes. By replying to the text, she can move her appointment a little later without losing her place in line. When she arrives at the store, she is greeted by name and shown the products that she browsed online by an associate with the relevant knowledge and expertise. Thrilled with the level of service, she makes a purchase and leaves a glowing review on social media. Since the store already had her contact information, when the QLess app asks if she'd like to opt in to receive special offers, she sees no downside and agrees.

With QLess, store management can track how store associates spend their time to help them to be more efficient. Store associates have information about shoppers who have already browsed online. This makes it easy to anticipate questions and recommend products that will appeal to the customer – and helps associates focus attention on customers with a serious interest in buying. Without long waits, the stress levels are lowered – for staff and customers alike.

Solution

- » Bridge the gap from online browsing to offline sales by giving customers the opportunity to schedule time to visit the store and meet with an associate.
- » Improve customer satisfaction by eliminating waiting in line, providing personalized service based on knowledge of online browsing, and providing associates with the right skills to help each customer.
- » Learn more from customer satisfaction surveys – what went right or wrong, and which associate was involved – and contact the customer if there is an issue that still needs to be resolved.
- » Improve resource scheduling based on data on store traffic. Increase throughput so that store associates can help more customers per day.
- » Gather contact information on shoppers and let them opt in to receive promotional material and personalized offers.
- » Improve employee engagement by providing useful feedback based on actual data.
- » Give shoppers an easy way to be heard and ask them about their experience through SMS surveys.





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