MERRY-GO-ROUND

It's your turn!
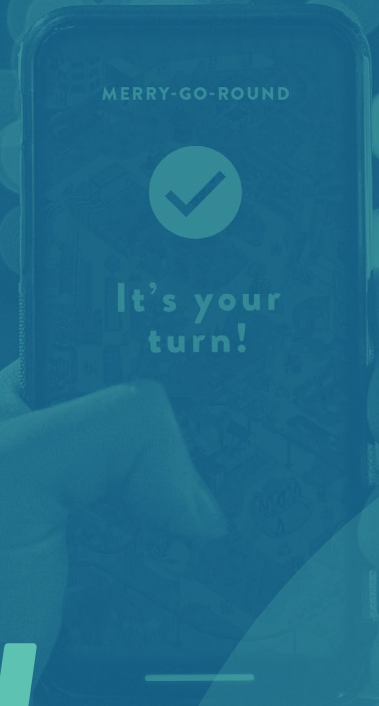
Virtual Queueing and Crowd Management solution for a COVID-era reality

How leisure and entertainment properties can use virtual queueing to offer a safer guest experience

CONNECT&GO

Leisure and entertainment properties around the world have already experienced a significant decline in their operations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even as these properties begin to slowly re-open, capacities will be reduced, and guests' safety concerns will be top of mind. Venue operators are considering new ways to provide physical distancing opportunities for guests that not only increase their safety, but also add to their overall guest experience.

Many operators are looking at virtual queuing as a convenient solution that allows guests to limit the time they spend in crowded areas, while still getting full enjoyment from the rides and attractions available at the venue. "MiceChat, the Disney fan website, wrote that the new app-based virtual queues could be implemented as a form of social distancing. 'We're wondering if the implementation of virtual queues for popular attractions could mitigate the amount of time spent standing next to other riders,' MiceChat wrote. 'When Disneyland reopens, whenever that might be, they'll still want to keep large groups from forming until this crisis has been averted.'[1]
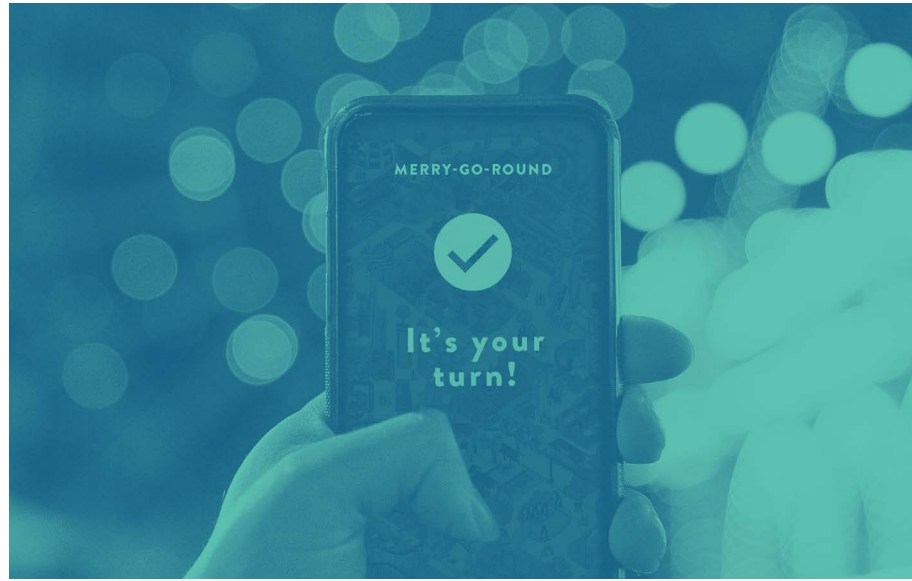
Why use virtual queueing?

› Governments will continue to issue physical distancing requirements, and virtual queueing is an excellent way to adhere to these restrictions while also making the experience fun for guests.

› Guests feel safer when they do not have to wait in close proximity with others in long lines.

› Virtual Queuing is different from a "front of the line" system that some theme parks operate. "FOL" systems allow guests to purchase the privilege of going on the ride without waiting. A properly executed queueing system allows everyone a chance to reserve a virtual spot for an attraction, but they don't have to physically wait in line. Virtual queuing is similar to the reservation system used in many restaurants where the guest adds their name to a list and is then given a device that will buzz when their table is ready.and to review their spending at any time. Parents can even load a pre-determined amount onto their child's wristband, allowing the child to enjoy a certain level of independence when spending at the leisure property.

66 With a virtual queue, people can enjoy their day in the park, riding other rides, eating, drinking, and shopping, all while keeping their place in line in the virtual queue.[2] 99
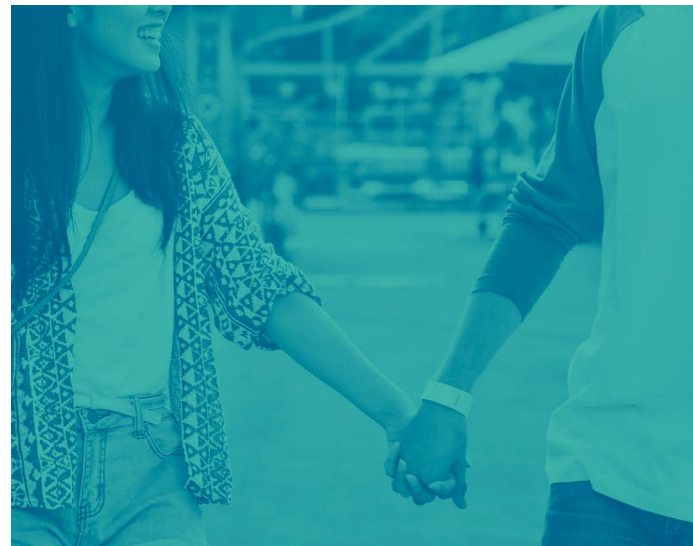
[1] **Are more virtual queues in Disneyland's post-coronavirus future?** By Brady Macdonald. The Orange County Register – March 2020.
https://www.ocregister.com/2020/03/19/are-more-virtual-queues-in-disneylands-post-coronavirus-future/

[2] **Why virtual queues need to become a theme park standard** by Robert Niles. Theme Park Insider - December 2019
https://www.themeparkinsider.com/flume/201912/7148/

How does virtual queueing work?

The Connect&GO virtual queuing system is extremely flexible so that it can easily be implemented in any leisure venue and for a range of operational styles and conditions. Operators can choose to provide the system using RFID technology, through guests' personal mobile devices, or a combination of the two. Non-mobile guests use a self-serve kiosk or a simple tap-point for booking their reservations, while people with devices can access ride information and make reservations on their device. Handheld scanners are used at rides entrances by staff and can read either RFID or phones to confirm a reservation.

1 Quick tap kiosk

Guests can scan their RFID wristbands at these simple kiosks to claim a spot in the queue. The display will show the number of guests that are ahead in line and an estimated wait time before the next reserved spot for one particular attraction. After a simple tap, guests can then walk away and enjoy other features of the park; knowing they can claim their spot in the line by simply scanning again when they return to the ride.

2 Self-Registration Kiosk

Guests can use kiosks that are formatted to provide information on a number of attractions to view the estimated wait time and select a ride. After confirming their reservation, they can have the option to receive a printed voucher with a barcode. Either the barcode or their RFID wearable can be scanned at the ride when they return. If a guest's mobile device has already been linked to their profile, they system will recognize it when they scan at a kiosk and the system can send an SMS message to remind them to go to the attraction when it is their turn.
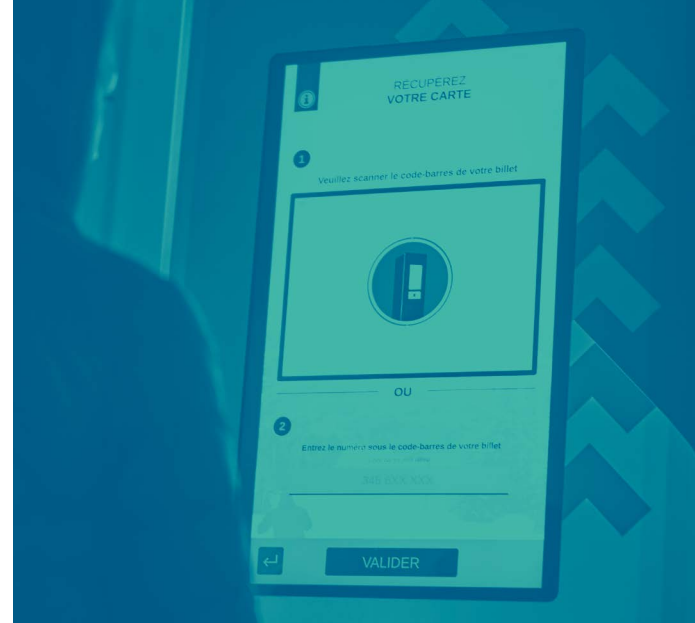
3 Mobile registration web page

This is an online version of the Registration Kiosk. Guests can use their mobile device to access the web page and see the estimated wait time for a ride and can claim their spot in the queue. Once they get to the ride, the guest simply needs to scan their wristband to claim their spot, or if its allowed, they can have their mobile device scanned.

The benefits of operating a queuing system

BENEFITS FOR GUESTS

> Guests who are particularly concerned about germ transmission will appreciate being able to skip waiting in a long and crowded queue in close proximity with others.

> No one likes waiting in lines! Guests will appreciate being able to experience more of the venue. They will see and do more and get more value from their visit.

"As society co-exists with the coronavirus, we can expect a new dynamic to emerge. In the past, visitors may have been influenced by geography, price or online reviews when choosing how to spend their leisure time. But tomorrow's visitors will be asking one simple question. Which attraction is safest for me to visit with my family? [3]*"*
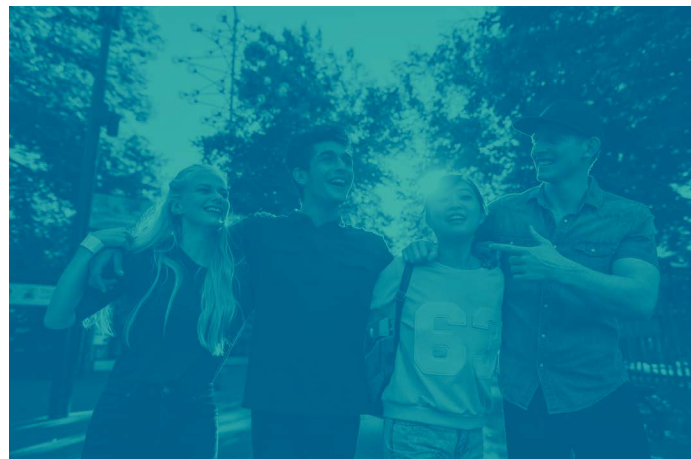

BENEFITS FOR OPERATORS

> Being able to avoid waiting in long lines will make guests happier; and happier guests generally spend more money, want to stay longer at the venue, and are more willing to come back with friends. Happy guests are also more pleasant with staff!

> Waiting in line has always been the #1 guest complaint at parks on busy days. This is a great opportunity to get systems in place that will scale as parks return to full operation in the future.

> With physical distancing rules in place, an attraction may not have enough room for guests to line up with adequate space between one another. A queueing system will reduce the number of people in the physical queue and helps to avoid the potential complication of queueing overflows into main traffic areas.

> With less people in the park than before, per-cap opportunities will be even more important. If guests aren't stuck in a queue, they will be free to spend more at concessions and gift shops.

[3] **Safe reopening of attractions after COVID-19: why a mobile app could be the answer** by Emma Jones. Attractions.io – May 2020
https://blooloop.com/features/safely-reopening-attractions-covid-mobile-app/

What to consider when exploring adding queueing at your facility

Make it easy, fair and convenient

› Ensure that guests of all ages can benefit from the virtual queueing feature at your facility. Encourage parents to register and manage the profiles of their kids who would like to reserve spots for certain rides and attractions.

› Consider offering a low-cost RFID wristband for every guest to enjoy the benefits of virtual queueing. An RFID chip is read faster than the QR of a barcode, and unlike mobile devices, they won't run out of battery or require charging stations, and they won't be a loose article for the guest to worry about losing or having stolen.

› Guests will have questions about how the virtual queueing system works at first; so it is important to ensure the staff understand the technology and how it supports the services offered at the property. All employees should be able to help guests make changes to their reservations if needed.
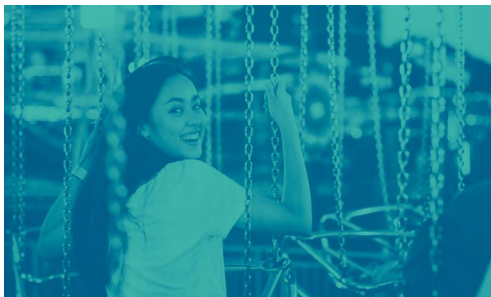
Clear communication, branding and leveraging the queueing experience

› Consider recording a short "how-to" video to share on your social media channels so that guests.

› Make it fun! This is a wonderful guest service opportunity and can become an integral part of your brand. Virtual queuing is an opportunity for operators to enjoy a direct connection with the guest that didn't exist before. Consider ways to leverage this connection and add more value for your guests. For example, if a guest receives an RFID media, think of other ways it could be used such as easy contactless payments, or gamification programs such as points races or scavenger hunts.

Even the act of queueing can earn a guest points towards a loyalty program at your venue.
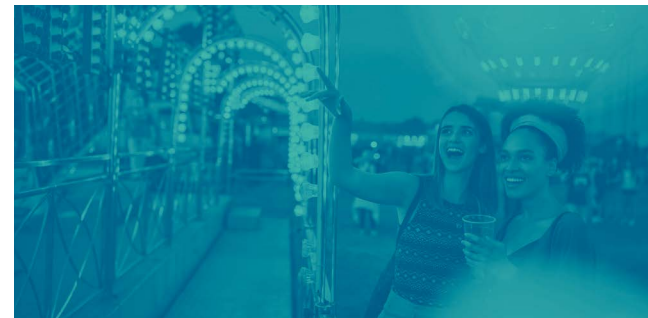
Assess access paths to attractions (don't forget ADA compliance!)

› Every attraction entrance needs to be reviewed to determine whether it allows for smooth operation with a queueing system. Remember that if every person has a reservation, then the regular queue can be used for access; there is no need for a "merge point" that is associated with Front of line and premium queueing systems.

› Be sure to have your staff situated to validate reservations in a safe and comfortable location.

› Once a guest is "checked in" for the ride, it is important that you have a plan in place for the attraction loading area so as to continue to enforce safe physical distancing for your guests.

› Remember to consider ADA /wheelchair access in the ride access plan.

Prepare to be flexible

› Even though we can expect lower capacity limits at all venues, people will still be drawn to iconic attractions and crowding will happen. Consider implementing a virtual queuing solution at the most popular attractions first so as to avoid congestion in these high-traffic areas. Also, a modular approach can be taken to add other attractions quickly if needed. Be flexible and ready to change as the operation conditions change.

Don't forget about entertainment options while people are waiting out of the queue

› Be careful not to trade being bored in a queue with being bored out of a queue. Consider new opportunities to engage and delight guests. Include live entertainment, or active play areas for guests to enjoy while they are waiting for their spot on the ride. Also new entertainment options such as venue-wide scavenger hunts can be implemented using the same RFID technology.

Is this a cost or a revenue opportunity?

› Most operators realize that offering a queueing system as a premium upsell isn't an ethical option in a COVID-19-era. "In the current pandemic environment, these systems may become essential if theme parks and similar venues want to survive while also protecting their guests."[4] 100% of the people accessing an attraction should be managed using a virtual queue, so it is difficult to charge for the service. Rather than seeing this as another operational cost, you may want to consider the opportunities for a return on investment:

- This a new marketing opportunity. You are giving people the greatest gift; more time to maximize their fun.

- You may want to consider sponsorship opportunities to offset costs of the virtual queuing system.

- You may want to add a small service fee to all admission prices to cover the costs of this and other new features or services available at your venue.

- Get creative and find new incentives for to guests to spend money while waiting for their reserved spot on a ride.

- Offer premium re-usable RFID media as an upsell item for members. This will create a new revenue stream and branding opportunity.

[4] **Virtual queuing technology gains new prominence in world of social distancing** by Calum Muirhead. Proactive – May 2020
https://ca.proactiveinvestors.com/companies/news/918657/virtual-queuing-technology-gains-new-prominence-in-world-of-social-distancing-918657.html

Leisure and entertainment properties continue to be a massive draw for people of all ages. As the pandemic panic subsides, guests will be eager to return to amusement parks, water parks, family entertainment centers and more.

While new physical distancing and sanitization measures will be required, property owners can integrate safety measures in ways that won't detract from guests' enjoyment during the visit. Virtual queuing offers a clear advantage in terms of guest safety, but also provides numerous benefits for both guests and operators. Taking steps to provide adequate safety for guests is an excellent way to generate brand loyalty, and freeing guests from the burden of waiting in lines creates new opportunities for direct communication and increased spending incentives.

CONNECT&GO

We can't wait to connect the experience for you!

Contact us or visit our website for more information on these and other RFID possibilities.

Visit our website >