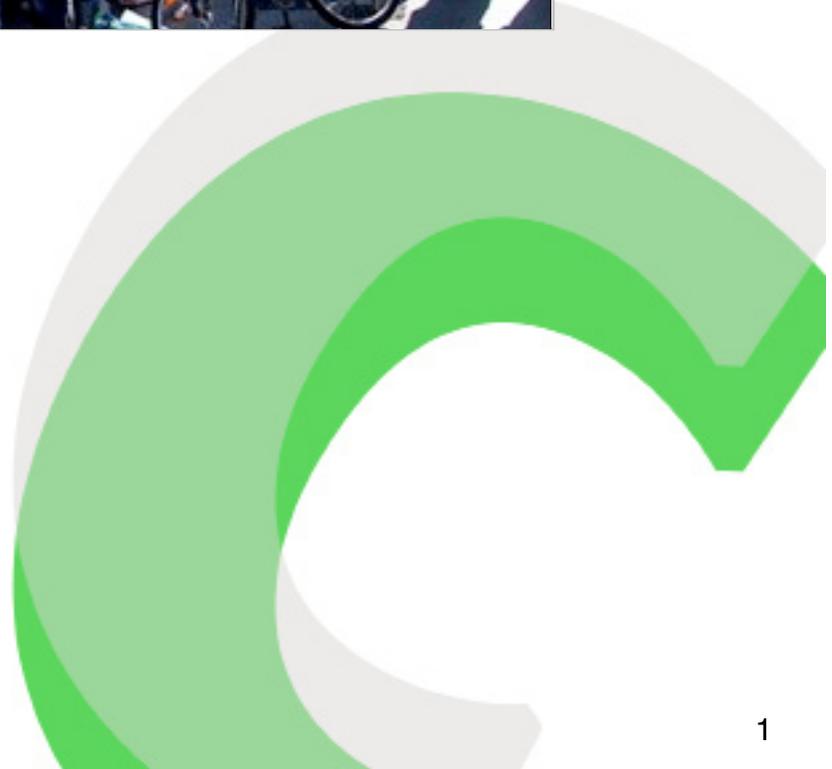


C·Note's Line Handbook

How to build a good line
from a customer point of view

[Waiting in line - the movie](#)



Why a Line Handbook?

On average, we spend 2 to 3 years of our lives standing in line. Although there is a lot of research on how to deal with lines, businesses still aren't building good ones.

So, we observed over 100 lines and interviewed more than 50 people standing in line. Here's what we learned about how to build a good line - and maybe even a great one - from a customer point of view.

Good lines

1. Manage expectations



Basic sign



Traffic light with time indicator



Traffic jam information

Let your customers know how long your line will take. There are many ways to do this, from a simple sign at the start of the line, to digital screens overhead. The main point is to give customers an idea of what to expect.

Good lines

2. Organize your lines



At this french fries stand a simple line divider tells you where to place your order, and where to pick up your order



These screens at the Van Gogh museum tell you which register is open

Make it clear where the line starts, and signal what the line is for. Nothing will frustrate customers more than standing in the wrong line.

You can do this by placing a “line manager” at the end of the line to answer questions and at the same time indicate where the line starts. If you use signs, make sure they’re clear and visible.

Good lines

3. Make it feel short(er)



This line at an amusement park continues inside



At most fast food chains you can look at the menu while you wait in line



You can put your groceries on the belt while in line

If the lines look too long and/or slow moving, people might not get in line at all. Can you make a line “feel” short?

There are a few things you can consider, depending on what type of line you have...

- Wrap the line, so it looks like it’s moving all the time
- Give out numbers, so the line “disappears”
- Consider breaking up the line, by moving part inside
- Start your activity already in line. For example, at Starbucks you watch your order being made, while waiting to pay.

Good lines

4. Offer an alternative



The fast-pass system at Disneyworld



Take the stairs instead of escalator

Some people will not get in line, regardless of how well organized it is, or how good it looks. So, provide an alternative (that works).

Great alternatives:

- Fast-pass system at Disneyland
- Internet booking & check-in
- Online ticket office, online shopping in general
- Taking stairs instead of waiting for escalator
- Call to get in line while still at home for NYC restaurants

Would any of these alternatives work for you?

And then, go the extra mile!

Great lines go beyond good lines - they do something useful with the time customers spend in line.

How about...

- Offering customers a cup of coffee
- Placing ski-lift lines in the sun
- Wifi at the doctor's waiting room
- Fashion tv at the fitting rooms
- Make your line "the place to be" (e.g. night clubs, hip restaurants)

Remember, your idea should be *relevant* to the line experience. Few people can appreciate a clown while hungrily waiting to order a sandwich.



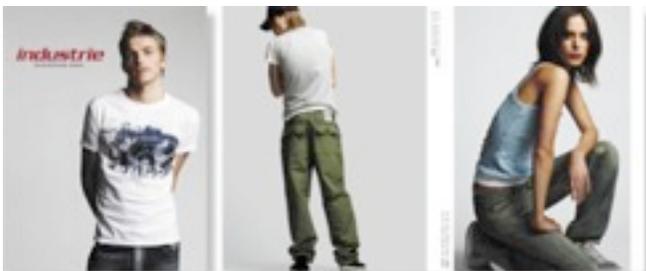
Offer lunch in line



At the doctor's office



Entertainment for kids in line at the Nemo museum



A catalogue to flip through while waiting in line for the fitting rooms



This week's magazines at the hair dresser



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