

“Is this the solution?”



Düsseldorf

“I was actually before you in the queue” says an irritated customer waiting at the counter in a coffee-bar. “oh is that the case? Please, go ahead, it wasn’t intentional” answers the older woman in a business outfit. “the queue goes in turn” is the prompt reaction of the other person while the barista smiles and takes the order from the agitated man. As the waiting customers are successively served, more and more new customers enter the shop, some for the very first time. Similar situations pass. Some were waiting at the order counter for their drink, others were forming some sort of queue. New customers appeared overwhelmed trying to work out where they should actually be waiting in line. At times there were around 10 customers standing in a group in front of the displays and at the order counter. Further customers entered the store but turned on their heels and left again...

A typical problem in self-service setups which arises often where the “order counter” is also the “pick-up counter”. This is partially down to an employee taking the orders of multiple customers before starting to prepare them. The advantage is that the customer has already ordered and the waiting time is “only” for the preparation of the order. In the case of parallel order and serving, however, the customers waiting for their drinks gather around in a group. As a result, new customers often “assume” that the queue is for orders and within a millisecond misunderstand the situation and get in the line “incorrectly”. The consequence of this is that after the customers have discovered (or rather unravelled) the error, they leave annoyed without having bought anything. **Solution:** create a separate pick-up area at the end of the counter. **Tip:** in addition, place a sign at the order counter with the message “Please order here”. Make sure the sign doesn’t block the sight of the “drinks board”. An

alternative would be to only label the “pick-up area”. A further possibility would be to put markings on the floor with arrows signaling the directions (although this have proven less successful) or “order here” queue separators to guide the customers. **Tip:** train your employees in such a way that they generally do not get involved in the discussions with the “waiting customers” but rather aim their question at the supposed next customer – “I’m not sure, but who is next?” In 9 out of 10 cases, the situation will resolve itself and one customer will concede. **Tip:** based on the hourly sales, check whether it might not be sensible to plan for a second employee. “One” employee would then focus on taking the orders and the “second” would prepare the drinks so that they are ideally handed out at the end of the counter. **Tip:** plan your shop fittings so that the customers are presented with the “snack-counter” and with the sweet and savoury snacks while they are waiting. Product pressure and enticing presentation inspire the impulse purchases. **Tip:** shorten the waiting time for your customers with electronic boards that show off information about “offers” and “new creations”. Here it is important to show appetising pictures or films that create the right moods. This could be features such as the methods of preparation of the drinks, or the cultivation, harvesting and roasting of coffee. **Tip:** train your employees to catch the eye of waiting customers to show that they have “taken notice” of them. The risk that customers will leave the store without purchasing due to long waiting times is measurably reduced. **Tip:** for the customers who are waiting for their drink, give them the chance to see how “their drink” is being prepared. The waiting time is shortened in the minds of the customers and your image as an expert is strengthened. Good luck!