

# Welcome holiday rush challenge

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High season is relied on by many businesses to counteract quieter months and to build cash reserves for the year ahead. In addition, the opportunity exists to build on excellent brand reputation. If done well, it's a win-win commercial period. This surge in business can bring with it challenges, too, such as ensuring that businesses have the capacity to cope with an influx of enquiries and sales.



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Hotel groups and airline companies must provide the space for excellent customer experience and customer service as part of their business offering and brand management, and this is especially true in busy periods.

At the forefront of companies such as these are their contact centres, the environment within which sales are made and/or customer service takes place, depending on the nature of the company. For travellers, everything is viewed as urgent, and time, even more so than usual is at a premium, so timeous attention to queries and interaction must take place. Planning is necessary to tackle the challenge of increased traffic.

## Achieving optimal service levels

The primary areas of concern are sufficient staffing levels and technical solutions that prevent systems from lagging when there's a surge in business.

Strategies can be deployed to accommodate both of these challenges. Tools are available for workforce management that uses algorithms and analytics to predict what requirements will be, based on historical information, so staffing requirements can be established and the demands met. Companies can then have enough of the right agents available at the right time to maintain optimal service levels within the contact centre.

## Deploy self-service

Bearing in mind that agents in the contact centre form the highest cost in terms of time, the most efficient strategy is to eliminate the need, where possible, for customers to speak to agents directly. Self-service options can be deployed. These can range from simple click-through options for transactions such as balance enquiries to informing customers of additional non-agent options, such as an automated message that reminds customers that they can make purchases via a mobile application for example.

A referral process can also do this: if a person travelling finds out that a plane is delayed, a message, based on the self-service responses, can let the customer know that the airline company is aware of the issue and is taking steps to resolve the matter.

## **No excuse for poor service**

Holidaymakers frequently cite the friendliness of the people at the destinations they head to as part of the reason they enjoyed a vacation, and this is also true of the people they encounter within the companies they interact with. Increased capacity (more agents) may be required over season, but this should never be at the expense of the quality of service.

Training, monitoring and performance management must take place. A more efficient way of doing this to avoid management having to watch over agents' shoulders is to have desktop and process monitoring to ensure that the contact centre floor is being run efficiently and productively.

There's no excuse for poor service – "Sorry, we're too busy" won't work. It takes an integrated strategy, but one that reaps rewards, to ensure that a company is surge-ready and open for business, even in the holidays.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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