

A No-Fail Approach to Seasonal Spikes in Contact Center Volume

As online shopping proliferates and consumer expectations skyrocket, cost effectively managing a contact center without sacrificing customer experience is a monumental challenge for retailers. Smart contact center leaders are finding that adeptly navigating seasonality is the formula for success.

But getting it right isn't just a matter of hiring more customer service agents as needed. It takes anticipating ever-fluctuating demand, tapping into a flexible workforce, and identifying and leveraging the right tools to manage it all.

It's well accepted that modern consumers are impatient and easily frustrated. As a result, it's easy—and damaging—for retailers to lose revenue when agents are slow to respond or handle interactions ineffectively. Plus, in the age of social media, people are quick to share their experiences, online and off.

Adding to the challenge, retailers can no longer predict with certainty when seasonal spikes will occur. Today, it's insufficient to plan only for the traffic surges associated with traditional holidays like Christmas and Valentine's Day, and events such as the Super Bowl and back-to-school shopping. Now, retailers must spin up extra agents as needed in response to unexpected spikes that occur in the "influencer economy." Think: the short-lived but intense interest around something like a viral video, major news event or even a marketing campaign promoting a sale.

The Seasonality & Influencer Economy Effect: As Online Retail Sales Increase, So Does Contact Center Volume

- The 2018 holiday season saw at least a 16% increase in online sales.¹
- After securing a spot in Super Bowl LIII in 2019, the Los Angeles Rams rang up about \$3.5 million in online sales in 10 days—the equivalent to 2016 total online sales for the team.²
- As the largest shopping holiday in the world, Singles' Day in China eclipses Black Friday and Cyber Monday's combined sales in the United States.³
- Mattress retailer Purple has racked up hundreds of millions of video views on YouTube. The company said one, 12-week campaign drove a 3.4 times return on ad spend.⁴

(1) Digital Commerce 360

(2) Bloomberg

(3) The Balance

(4) U.S. Chamber of Commerce

New Rules for a New World

The ramp-up associated with seasonal business peaks, such as additional software licenses and staff, can be costly for any size contact center. For some, though, it is entirely cost prohibitive. The result is blocked calls, unavailable service, poor overall customer experience and, ultimately, lost business.

In the past, well-funded contact centers would manage spikes by engineering for demand. That meant increasing technology bandwidth and hiring on-site seasonal employees who may—but often don't—bring the experience and skill to seamlessly handle the high volume. Even with this approach, contact centers suffer from lower service levels because they lack time to adequately train seasonal staff.

Scale at Will with On-Demand Agents

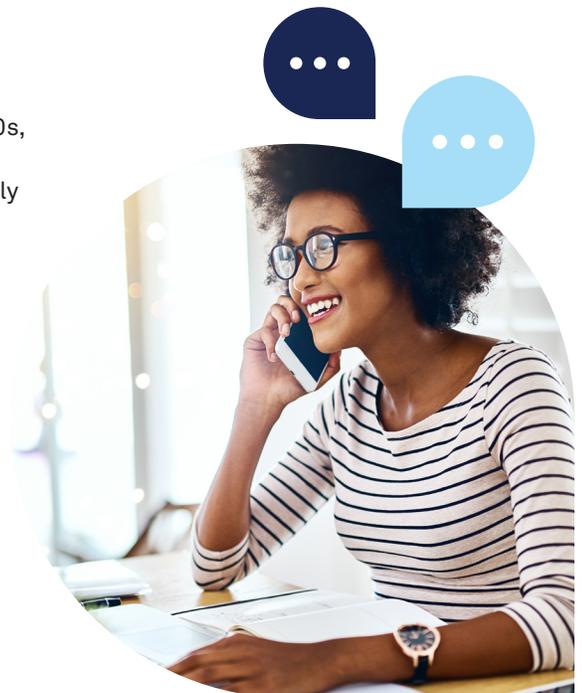
One new way modern retailers handle the unique requirements related to online seasonal spikes is by calling upon on-demand agents. The advantages include the ability to hire agents located anywhere while quickly scaling up or down for fluctuating contact center volume. Accenture calls this a “liquid workforce” and a “new competitive advantage.”

Not being limited to local agents within driving distance of a brick-and-mortar contact center—which can only house a finite number of agents—is a gamechanger. Pulling from a pool of geographically dispersed agents, as needed, allows you to choose the best talent for the job. These far-flung contact center agents enable retailers to scale fluidly—whether up or down—in line with changing contact center needs.

This approach allows retailers to recoup investments in training since they can call upon these agents as needed throughout the year. Overall, the on-demand approach ensures high levels of customer service regardless of volume.

The Cloud Is a Game-Changer

While the technology for work-from-home agents has existed since the late 1990s, early solutions were expensive and cumbersome. Modern contact centers now harness an increasingly powerful arsenal of technology to help deliver digitally transformed customer care in any season. But striking the balance between maintaining high service levels while controlling costs is tricky.



The cloud can help dramatically, making it practical for contact centers to hire and retain on-demand agents. In fact, pairing on-demand agents with a cloud contact center is the way retailers realize the tremendous advantages enabled by a remote workforce.

Here's How:

- **Pay-as-you-need pricing.** With cloud-based contact center solutions, businesses pay only for the licenses they need, when they need them. Cloud solutions also eliminate the need for major capital budget outlays for the most current technology. That's because cloud vendors handle the upgrades and maintenance.
- **Support for work-from-home-agents.** The right contact center solution ensures agents are ready for the scalability and flexibility needed for seasonal business demands and expected—or unexpected—traffic spikes. Plus, support for multiple communication channels—from email to text to chat—can alleviate the burden of seasonal activity fluctuations because, unlike the phone, they don't need to be answered in real time.
- **Quality management solutions drive agent effectiveness.** Cloud-based contact centers not only provide flexibility to the agents and businesses, but also allow contact center supervisors greater efficiencies. With the cloud, supervisors can give feedback to agents regardless of their location. It enables them to hire and manage agents completely remotely.

With more omnichannel interactions, listening to calls is no longer enough for quality assurance. Speech analytics powered by artificial intelligence (AI) go far beyond what a single supervisor can learn listening to individual phone calls. Speech analytics, across channels, can quickly illuminate customer experience issues, especially during seasonal traffic peaks.

Survive and Thrive During Business Peaks

For retail contact centers, any time can be a busy time, since fluctuations in business volume arise throughout the year. Maintaining consistently high levels of customer experience through the ebb and flow of contact center volume is critical to thrive in any season. Fortunately, there is a way to handle scalability for spikes in business. A cloud-based contact center solution is the fastest and smartest way to ensure flexibility and scalability while maintaining the highest levels of customer experience in any season.

If you'd like to see a demo of Serenova's CxEngage cloud-based contact center solution and learn more about our pay-only-for-what-you-use pricing model, [request a demo](#).

About Serenova

Serenova has transformed the customer experience. Over a decade ago, the company realized technology didn't exist that could deliver immediate, consistent and exceptional service. So, it created a true cloud contact center solution that could. The result is the ability to unify everything from customer engagement to quality management to analytics. This single source of truth provides global brands insights about customer information and experiences as they pivot between channels such as SMS, voice or Facebook messenger.

Whether it's technology, healthcare or retail, brands from all industries come to Serenova for its global coverage and deep integrations into the business systems used every day. Why is this important? It creates the opportunity to keep pace with customers by quickly scaling up across the enterprise or out geographically. Recognized by analysts such as Gartner, Serenova is committed to building on an 18-year legacy leading the way in cloud-based contact center innovations.

To learn more, visit www.serenova.com. For live updates, follow [@SerenovaShine](https://twitter.com/SerenovaShine).