

# The 2023 guide to ~~pre-holiday~~ planning



Consumers are buying holiday gifts earlier and earlier every year. [50% begin their holiday shopping in October](#), spending more money than those who start after Thanksgiving.

But here's the challenge: customers want businesses to respond quickly. During the holidays, these high expectations are only amplified. Without proper preparation, this surge in support requests can frazzle internal staff, reducing support quality and frustrating consumers.

Planning your support team to cover holiday spikes can be a logistical nightmare. How many team members do you need? Do you need to hire additional staff? How can you meet customers' expectations and ensure they get the help they need?

Launching holiday support early is a simple solution that meets higher volumes of customer support with proactive preparation. Earlier launching makes support effortless for customers and positions brands as the simplest business to work with. Interested in learning how you can meet consumer demand and scale during the holidays by launching earlier?

Let's talk about it.

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# Why early launching is a **competitive advantage** during peak seasons

## 1. Stay ahead of seasonality

At a time when customers expect near perfect service, a proactive approach to preparing early for holidays helps to position a business as a reliable and customer-centric organization that is well-equipped to handle the rush.

By launching earlier, teams have more flexibility to deliver quality experiences that keep customers satisfied and supported throughout the holiday season and beyond.

## 2. Take the hassle out of hiring and focus on growth

It takes [36 to 42 days to fill the average position](#) in the U.S., and it can cost up to 40% of an employee's base salary to hire a new employee with benefits. Not only is it challenging and expensive to find talent, but thorough training can be time-consuming, which many businesses might not be able to manage during the holidays.

Working with an [end-to-end support provider](#) takes the hassle out of hiring because the more time teams have to prepare, the more a business can ensure consistent holiday support.

**"Pre-peak season lead time isn't just for training. It's also for agents' on-floor experience and allows management time to adjust to higher agent ratios, resulting in improved quality and higher CSAT."**

Janeille, Delivery Director, 6 yrs working at Influx

### 3. Maximize your budget

Outsourcing partners stretch your budget further with tailored solutions designed to fit your business. Hiring and managing talent in-house can be expensive, especially when the extra support might only be needed during the holidays. Launching early with a service provider takes the strain off internal teams and frees up time to focus on other responsibilities.

### 4. Ensure error prevention and a smooth customer experience

Preparing months ahead for the holidays ensures enough time to fine-tune responses, test and optimize, and get support staff on the same page to understand the product inside and out without unnecessary stress.

[Good experiences are a huge decision-maker for 90% of customers](#) when choosing which business to patronize. When agents don't know what they're talking about or don't have the confidence that comes with experience, it reduces support quality and frustrates customers. Being prepared keeps new customers happy and loyal customers close.

### 5. Make sure internal teams are well-equipped without burnout

The holidays can be stressful, but with planning, they don't have to be. One in three contact center leaders (33%) say [high agent turnover is one of their biggest pain points](#). Outside support can protect your staff from getting overwhelmed, which directly impacts the quality of support they can deliver to customers.

#### EFFICIENCY UNLEASHED: OUTSOURCING TO BEAT SEASONALITY

Staying ahead of the competition and the holiday surge is simple with a [flexible, full coverage service provider](#). Influx makes it easy to seamlessly scale up your workforce and beat seasonality. And the best part? Affordable, [month-to-month pricing](#). Get started today to keep your customers supported.

# What does **the data** say?

- Two bad experiences is enough for [86% of consumers to leave a brand they trusted](#).
- [Customer service influences future buying decisions](#) for 94% of customers.
- 80% of customers [feel more emotionally attached](#) to the brand whose customer service addresses their concerns.
- Interacting with agents who have little or no context [leads to customers having to repeat themselves and causing frustration for 60% of consumers](#). Customers want support to acknowledge their inquiries well and solve them immediately.
- Improved CX can [increase company revenue by 10-15%](#).
- [94% of consumers](#) are more likely to buy again after good customer service.
- [59% of businesses outsource](#) to cut costs while 26% of small businesses outsource to get help from an expert.
- 57% of [support leaders are finding it hard to recruit and retain](#) high quality support agents right now.

## TOP 3 FACTORS IMPACTING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE:

- 65.2% of consumers want to be [treated like a valued customer](#).
- 55.3% appreciate agents with [strong product knowledge](#) or brand expertise.
- 53.5% of consumers want [a fast response](#).



# How to overcome holiday challenges with proactive solutions

## 2. A fragmented customer journey

The customer journey is not linear, and there are many different avenues that customers take when making purchase decisions, especially during the holidays. Curating experiences that help customers flow into the journey requires working out the gaps in support.

**THE SOLUTION:** Organize and embrace omnichannel by creating a seamless shopping experience for all customers. Prepare, review, and optimize omnichannel support for the holidays to empower customers to engage with your brand through their preferred method.

## 1. Rising above the noise


People see anywhere between [4,000 and 10,000 ads/day](#). With customers seeing so many brand messages daily, how can businesses stand out with a competitive edge?

**THE SOLUTION:** Create customer experiences that are unforgettable. Launching earlier allows you to get ready to offer genuine customer connections and solidify your support solutions to remove any friction.

## 3. Seasonal staffing challenges

One of the most difficult things about planning an upcoming holiday is forecasting what support coverage you'll need. There's a tricky balance to strike. You need enough agents to resolve your customers' queries but not too many agents that you risk becoming financially inefficient.

**THE SOLUTION:** Hiring seasonal staff, cross-training employees, and finding a reliable service provider are options to prevent staffing difficulties.

 **TIP**

Conduct mock holiday scenarios with your support team to simulate an increased work-load and proactively identify any gaps in processes.

## HOLIDAY CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS CONT.

### 4. Proactive issue resolution

When 78% of [customers have backed out of a purchase due to a poor experience](#), the stakes are too high to not make customer service your top priority. Knowledgeable, confident, and reliable support agents are an important part of consistent support quality, but it can take anywhere from three to eight months for a new hire to become fully productive. So, how can businesses plan for efficient support when they don't have the resources?

THE SOLUTION: Proactive support minimizes the volume of inquiries. Review historical data to identify common issues customers have faced. Based on the analysis of previous seasons, anticipate potential customer needs and pain points during the holidays and develop strategies to address these issues proactively.

### 5. Post-holiday support influx

Many companies run regular promotions during holiday periods to drive purchases, which increases the volume of support queries to handle. Along with sales and marketing, maintaining holiday momentum can be difficult for any business.

THE SOLUTION: Ensure that any unresolved or pending issues from the holiday season are addressed with transparency. Keep a close eye on customer feedback, reviews, and social media mentions. Maintain momentum and stay agile to understand how you can continuously improve support services for the next holiday season.

 **TIP**

Keep a close eye on customer support metrics from previous holiday seasons to predict potential challenges and make data-driven decisions for faster improvements.



# A simple checklist to get ahead of the holiday rush

Ready to conquer the holiday season and make it your most successful yet? Natisha, Influx Account Manager of 5 years, crafted a checklist to help you get ahead of the game.

## ✓ Get systems in place to respond quickly

First response time is the #1 impacting factor when it comes to CSAT. Businesses that respond to a customer's message within five minutes are [70% more likely to make a sale](#). Give agents the ability to respond quickly and be present in as many channels as possible. Look at all inquiries and identify where you can use self-service such as 'track my order.'

"A support systems audit should be your absolute first step - this will allow faster resolution and that is one of the best things you can give new or existing customers."

## ✓ Set up macros

The best defense is a good offense. [Setting up or refreshing help desk macros](#) to answer questions your customers typically ask over the holidays can save valuable time.

"Don't lose your voice in all the details. The key to macros is maintaining your brand and creating value for your customers."

## ✓ Optimize your website

If a site loads any longer than 4 seconds, users begin to abandon, and transactions decrease by 1% each second. [Optimizing your website for the holidays](#) helps you stand out, attract more visitors, improve user experience, and build trust with your audience.

"Connect with your marketing team and optimize your site. Your website performance is essential in ensuring that your online presence aligns with holiday shoppers' unique demands and expectations."



## SIMPLE HOLIDAY RUSH CHECKLIST CONT.

### ✓ Make returns and exchanges simple

[A hassle-free returns and exchanges policy](#) contributes to an overall positive shopping experience. By making the returns and exchanges process easy, businesses demonstrate a commitment to customer satisfaction. This helps build trust and confidence, leading to increased customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.

"Keep the efficiency of your support team in mind when creating your returns policy. Lengthy and difficult processes can create unnecessary work."

### ✓ Prepare a plan for unhappy customers

To keep conversations positive, it's essential that support agents are [trained on soft skills](#) to maximize empathy and de-escalate confrontational interactions. Having a plan in place for [how to manage unhappy holiday customers](#) will make things easier on support teams, which can keep lengthy interactions to a minimum, gather feedback, and potentially turn a customer's negative experience into a positive one.

"Unhappy customers want to be heard, and having a plan in place makes those hard conversations a little bit easier."

#### UNWRAPPING THE PERFECT SOLUTION

A well-executed checklist that combines in-house efforts with outsourcing strategies can significantly impact a business's success during the holiday rush. Here's how Influx keeps outsourced holiday service simple:

- All training and management included
- Operational [flexibility to scale up or down](#) as needed
- On-demand, full coverage support that prevents staff burnout
- Affordable [month-to-month pricing](#)

# Pros of outsourcing for flexible periods vs. seasonal hiring

To maximize sales opportunities and meet a higher volume of orders and requests, businesses need additional staff to ensure high-quality support operations and better customer experiences that meet demand.

## PROS - OUTSOURCING

- Hiring, onboarding, training, and performance managing are far more cost-effective
- Specialize your team more easily
- Scale up and down capacity
- Gets you out of the weeds and focused on building better customer experiences
- Mitigate compliance risks and security breaches

## PROS - INTERNAL HIRE

- More real-time control over teams day-to-day
- Direct communication from face-to-face conversations
- Control over wages
- Grow your internal workforce

Knowing when to hire and when to outsource is important. Before making a decision, it's crucial to carefully consider your specific business needs and goals and then weigh the pros and cons of each option.

**"Whether to outsource or hire is always a tough call. It comes down to where the progression of your business is and where you're most equipped to drive value."**

Toni, HR Director, 2 yrs working at Influx

# Embracing the **early launch** advantage: the results

Whether you're clearing the backlog or prepping for the holidays, brands of all sizes work with Influx to flex and scale support year-round.



## ECOMMERCE

See how Casely partnered with Influx to improve their brand star rating from 3.3 to 4.8 while [growing their business 16,954%](#).

- reduced response time by 9x
- <7 minute average FRT

[Learn more →](#)

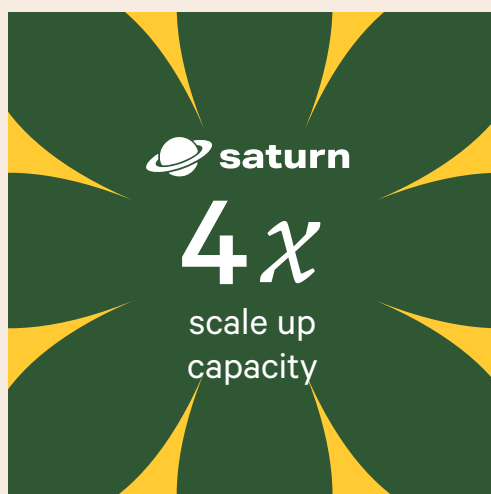


## DELIVERY SERVICE

Read how Sendle [scaled 2X in one month for the holidays](#) by partnering with Influx.

- 1 hour response times
- 2x scale up in October
- 27,000+ resolutions in one month

[Learn more →](#)



## MOBILE APP

See how Saturn [got on top of a 15K+ backlog due to seasonal growth](#) by partnering with Influx – scaling from 5 to 22 agents.

- 4x seasonal ticket spikes flex
- 24/7 coverage for SMS and in-app messaging

[Learn more →](#)

# Ready to get started?



Get ahead of seasonality and focus on growth with Influx.

Influx builds full-service support teams that flex and scale monthly, enabling companies to deliver fast, high-quality support experiences, 24/7.

[Let's get started](#) →