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The Ultimate
CX Ramp Guide

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Everything You Need to Know to Successfully Navigate Seasonal Peaks

If you're in a business that has seasonal or holiday peaks, you know the difficulties and challenges of Ramp Season. It's a little like getting ready to play the Super Bowl. This is the time when your peak sales occur, and you need to onboard new customer support, sales, and/or tech support agents to handle higher call volumes.

In retail, you're probably familiar with "The Big Five" - the five holidays, starting on Thanksgiving through to Cyber Monday, that for many retailers, generate 25-35% of yearly sales. In 2021 alone, U.S. holiday sales grew 14%, up to $886 billion, making it a record year, even amid supply chain issues and rising inflation.

Are you ready for the Big Five Holidays that generate more than 35% of yearly sales?

Some retailers we spoke to claim that seasonal peaks can even account for up to 60% of their annual sales. It can be your highest revenue driver – but only if consumers enjoy a seamless purchase journey.

A Salesforce survey found that **nearly HALF of consumers worldwide recently switched brands for better customer service.** That is why Ramp Season can be both rewarding and frustrating. It holds the promise of great profits, but only when delivered alongside great customer support.

Even for seasoned pros, Ramp Season can seem overwhelming. Like going to the Super Bowl, you must organize your team leaders, get your playbook ready, and source the best players (agents) to bring it home for the win... It can seem like an insurmountable task. You may have to ramp from 2,500 steady-state, fulltime equivalent seats (FTEs) to 5,000, or even 7,000, in less than 3 months. Beyond the IT infrastructure and capacity planning, you also need to recruit and train thousands of agents.

You might be wondering, 'should I enlist some help from a seasoned Customer Experience (CX) Provider? We'll get into this a bit later with our **Should I Outsource Quiz.**

First, let's look at what an ideal ramp can look like and how to plan for the 5 Stages of Ramping...

Ready, Set, RAMP!

Everyone needs a Ramp Plan. It's like building a new stretch of highway to connect more of your customers to your business. But that involves planning, preparing, hiring, and managing the daily ebb and flow of traffic on your new roadway.

Will this highway be able to handle the expected number of drivers? Will you have enough toll booth operators (agents) to assist them? Will you have the right kind of lanes (voice and non-voice channels) to satisfy driver preferences and needs?

Here's an example of what a successful ramp CAN look like...

As the largest and fastest growing hospitality brand in the world, this client experiences two large yearly ramps around spring and summer that coincide with peak travel seasons.

To manage the sudden increase in bookings, this client needed to ramp from approx. 400 FTE (full-time equivalent) inbound Customer Care and Reservations agents to over 1,000.

We had to recruit across four of our locations, including Saint Lucia, Guyana, and Montego Bay and Kingston in Jamaica, and we used several strategic initiatives to encourage more applicants, including a 'refer a friend' reward program, ad boosts and open house hiring fairs.

Within 90 days, we had 1,100 agents in production and in March, when the client requested even more additional seats, we were able to recruit 160 extra people, bringing the total headcount to almost 1,300 FTEs.

Meeting the client's speed to proficiency timeline of 60 days meant running concurrent training classes, both in-person and virtual, day and night. To free up physical training spaces, we reorganized some of our regular agent classes across several sites, and temporarily switched other agents to remote work using our secure work-at-home platform. We also redeployed resources from other non-competing business units and retrained agents to serve this hospitality account.

Throughout the ramp, we were able to achieve a consistent 4.5-4.8-star rating for Overall Customer Satisfaction and were able to meet, and even in some cases, exceed sales conversion targets by up to 10%!

This ability to successfully scale quickly, and in large numbers, is why we are considered the client's #1 CX delivery partner.

Yet not all ramps are that successful. If you don't plan sufficiently or execute correctly, the results could be disastrous. According to Microsoft's most recent report, The Global State of Customer Service, nearly two-thirds of consumers will sever a relationship with a business due to poor customer experience.

But there's a reason to do it right. Companies with great customer experience often bring in 6X more sales revenue. That's why it can be beneficial to work with a customer experience delivery partner who can develop a Rock-Solid Ramp Plan."

Your Ramp Plan Must Be **Rock Solid**

On average, it takes 3.2 months for new reps to be fully onboarded, trained and ready to take calls. If you want to complete your Ramp in that time, or even less, you will need clear timelines for each of the **5 Stages of Ramping**.

STAGE 3)
TRAINING & ONBOARDING
With ramp season's short timeline, you need fast speed to proficiency for new hires. You need to find a quick way for seasonal agents to be oriented, culturalized to your brand, and trained. This could be done through a combination of in-person and virtual training.

STAGE 4)
RETENTION
Don't forget about retention! Think about building retention into your ramp plan by allowing high-performing employees to transition into supervisory roles. Or, if you have several business lines, consider cross-training some of your agents.

STAGE 2)
RECRUITMENT
Once you have identified the required headcount, the next stage is finding the right agents. Recruitment can be time-consuming. You will need to craft specific candidate profiles with the skill sets you need. Then, figure out the best sourcing methods, whether that's hiring fairs, job boards etc.

STAGE 5)
RAMPING DOWN
Remember, every well-planned highway has an on-ramp and an off-ramp. Your ramp plan should also include a wind-down plan. Will you keep seasonal talent? Before making any decisions, look at your call volume data to ensure that decreasing headcount won't affect your customers' overall experience.

STAGE 1)
CAPACITY PLANNING
The first thing is understanding the needs of the business. What do your call volumes look like? What channels do you need: voice, email, chat? How many seats? It's key to determine how many agents you will need per hour or per shift.

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The 6 Danger Signs
of a Poorly Executed Ramp

Here are some signs of an Unsuccessful Ramp:

⚠️ **INFRASTRUCTURE AND IT OVERLOAD – SYSTEMS OVERWHELMED**

⚠️ **NOT BEING ABLE TO SOURCE ENOUGH AGENTS TO FILL SEATS**

⚠️ **LOWER SALES REVENUES THAN EXPECTED**

⚠️ **LOSS OF CUSTOMERS DUE TO POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE**

⚠️ **HIGHER CUSTOMER WAIT TIMES, HANDLE TIME, EXCESSIVE CALL TRANSFERS, LOWER CSAT (CUSTOMER SATISFACTION)**

Want to know if you should outsource? Take our quiz.

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When to Bring in
Ramp Reinforcers

Should I Outsource Quiz
Sometimes, it is much easier to outsource your customer experience, especially around Ramp Season. A CX partner can guide you through the steps of ramping and take care of the heavy lifting, so you don't have to worry.

The question is - should you outsource? Take our quick quiz below to find out.

See which ones apply to your business...

☐ **Do you need to ramp fast (less than 3 months)?**

☐ **Do you have a large holiday ramp where you need to scale up 20% or more?**

☐ **Do you want to avoid making huge in-house investments in recruitment, training, and infrastructure just for your Ramp Season?**

☐ **Do you need multi-language capability or bilingual agents?**

☐ **Do you need more agents than you can find in your geographic area?**

☐ **Do you need to find agents with specific credentials, licenses or experience and want to find qualified candidates quickly?**

☐ **Do you want to avoid the hassle of recruiting and offloading seasonal hires?**

☐ **Do you need help with your business' digital transformation? Or want to understand your contact center data better?**

☐ **Are you interested in the latest CX technologies and want new, innovative solutions to CX challenges?**

IF YOU CHECK MORE THAN 3 OF THE ABOVE,
IT'S TIME TO OUTSOURCE.

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Why You May Want to Partner with a CX Outsourcer

SCALE – A CX delivery partner will often have multiple geographic locations and can access qualified candidates faster by tapping into wider international talent pools.

FLEXIBILITY – Outsourcers can offer flexible, affordable contracts that allow you to scale your operations up or down, depending on your needs, without making huge investments in recruitment, training, and infrastructure.

QUALITY – Outsourcers can analyze, adjust, and adapt hiring profiles and training output, so every single wave does better than the previous. They can also assess top performing agents, so they can set new benchmarks for new hires, which makes finding more qualified candidates easier.

EXPERIENCE – From capacity planning to passing on best practices, a CX partner has the experience to ensure your Ramp goes off without a hitch.

EASE – A CX partner benefits from a larger international footprint, with access to global talent pools, cost-effective IT services and world-class programmers, giving them the ability to quickly scale and pivot services on demand.

WORKFORCE OPTIMIZATION - Because they serve multiple accounts, instead of offloading seasonal agents, outsourcers can retrain and redeploy them to other non-competing industries or lines of business.

TECHNOLOGY – CX providers can become technology partners, helping you to better understand your customers and your contact center data, so you can translate that into operational improvements and efficiencies, as well as enhancements to your overall customer journey.

Benefits of the Nearshore

You may be familiar with traditional offshore outsourcing destinations, largely in Asia. But there is an alternative. The need for better business continuity and easier access to operations teams, highlighted by the 2020 global pandemic, has brought increased attention to outsourcers Closer to Home.

What are the benefits of outsourcing to the nearshore?

- **Geographic proximity to U.S., with shorter flight and travel times**

- **Similar time zones make for easy collaboration with outsourced ops teams**

- **Some of the highest levels of English language proficiency in the world**

- **Access to large pools of young, educated, tech-savvy and multilingual talent**

- **Cultural affinity – familiarity with U.S. products and services and customers**

- **Same lower costs as offshoring, but contact centers are easier to access**

itel is one of the most reliable and internationally recognized CX providers. We were born in the nearshore and we understand how to leverage its benefits with flexible CX services anywhere, any time.
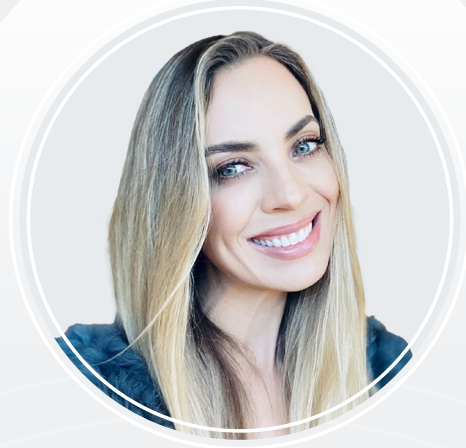
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About Us

itel is the nearshore region's largest homegrown CX provider. It's our backyard and we know it well. We can leverage the benefits of nearshore to make your outsourcing delivery effortless.

If you would like to know more about itel, an award-winning, international CX provider grown out of the Nearshore region, reach out to us at

www.itelinternational.com

Reach Out

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For general inquiries, you can also contact us at **info@itelinternational.com** or visit us **here** to learn more about itel.