



# Ready? Set. Holiday Season!

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## Holiday Preparedness Guide for Small Businesses

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Increased Online Traffic	p.2-3
Employee Engagement	p.4
Shopping Cart Abandonment	p.5
Marketing	p.6
Holiday Preparedness Checklist	p.7



The holidays are the most joyous and the most challenging time for both, customers and companies. But as customer preferences change, so should our business practices

**We must learn new ways to serve and take care of our customers.**

Our marketing messages, customer service communications, employee engagement, and all the other parts of the customer experience must be on point.

From choosing the right channels to reach customers to lowering shopping cart abandonment rates, there are sure some challenges.

In this guide, we address the most important aspects of doing business during the holiday season.



As we approach the holiday season, let's **refocus on opportunity**. It is our opportunity to become better versions of ourselves.

To better our companies, to better our families, **to better our customer experiences and, just as importantly, to better employee experiences as well."**

Michael Kansky  
CEO of LiveHelpNow

We discuss challenges small businesses face, offer solutions, expert tips, and best tools to use.

All with hopes to help small businesses everywhere get ready for the holidays.

## Challenge: Increased Online Traffic

**In the third quarter of 2022, eCommerce estimate increased 10% from the third quarter of 2021.**

**Total retail sales increased 9% in the same period**

[US Census Bureau News](#)

Increasing customer online activity comes as no surprise as more physical retail locations turned to fully online or a hybrid business model.

With the holidays coming, even more customers will shop online. It is, therefore, essential to prepare for increased online traffic. Below, we discuss specific challenges that result from increased online traffic and get solutions and tips from industry experts.

## Supply Shortage

More online sales are great news for small businesses. Sometimes, however, this can mean supply shortages and shipping delays. Here are some tips that can help this season from industry experts at [eCommerce support platform, Miva](#).

### To keep customers informed and involved:

- Be upfront and transparent about shortages and delays
- Use your website and email marketing to set expectations about product availability and shipping times

### Leverage tools to keep customers informed:

- waitlists
- in-stock notifications
- alternative product recommendations
- real-time shipment tracking

Online sellers should keep in mind that they're going to have to **go the extra mile in managing customer expectations** during the holiday season.

Businesses should consider each of their consumer personas and their needs during this busy and uncertain time to determine how best to communicate with and serve them.

Alissa Dunbar,  
Sr. Director of Marketing at Miva, Inc.

## US HOLIDAY SHIPPING DEADLINES

[USPS](#)

[UPS](#)

[FedEx](#)

## Challenge: Increased Online Traffic

The key is to keep the customers informed before they contact you with concerns. If the communication is about them and their orders – and not promotional – the customer will appreciate the information.

That helps build trust and confidence in you and your brand and will get your customers to say, “I’ll be back!”

Shep Hyken,  
CX expert and author of  
*I’ll Be Back: How to Get Customers to  
Come Back Again and Again*

### Read More On These Communications Topics

- [5 Tips to Manage Increased Holiday Traffic](#)
- [How to Provide Good Customer Service While Handling Multiple Chats](#)
- [How Omnichannel Customer Service Can Ensure Proactive Customer Engagement.](#)
- [Ticket Support System for Omnichannel Communications](#)
- [Better Agent Experience with Agent Workspace](#)
- [Customer Support Portal: All of your Customers' Inquiries in One Spot.](#)
- [Benefits of Outsourcing Customer Service](#)
- [Chatbots: The Business Guardian Angel!](#)

## Customer Communications

Proactive communication and immediate availability to answer customers' questions are essential during the busy holiday season.

### Offer a variety of communication channels

Give customers choices for how to contact you. Live chat, email, SMS, social media, email, website contact form, phone - the more ways, the better.

### Ensure effortless omnichannel experience

All of the ways to contact you we listed above must work together. Connect all channels and implement an efficient customer data system. When representatives speak to customers, they must have all the historical data to provide a personalized customer experience.

### Provide adequate customer service staffing

Hire more customer service representatives for the season, restructure your current workforce, or [outsource your communication department to a reliable company.](#) Implement around-the-clock customer service, if necessary.

### Use Bots (But Only Good Bots)

A chatbot can be a great substitute for human agents to answer simple customers' questions, especially after hours. If you do use a bot, make sure it is of high quality. There is nothing worse than wasting customers' time with a dysfunctional bot that does not recognize their answers or direct customers to the right place.

### Include relevant info on your FAQ page

Review your FAQ pages to make sure it contains information relevant specifically to holiday shoppers. If you receive multiple inquiries from customers with the same questions, add that question to your FAQ page.

# Challenge: Employee Engagement

**More than 37% of small enterprises outsource, mainly to improve efficiency**

Thrive My Way  
[Business Statistics Report](#)

## Why Employee Engagement is Essential for Company Success

### Engaged employees create happy customer base

Employee disengagement translates into poor work performance and subpar customer service.

### Front line employees represent the company

Employee-customer interactions affect customers' perceptions of the brand.

### Employees need to feel supported, heard, and growing

Recognition goes a long way; you wouldn't believe how far a balloon goes for an adult agent.

Ideas from [PACEACX21](#) event

As per Gallup's survey, only 20% of the global workforce is actively engaged at work. This explains the reason why employee engagement is a massive concern for businesses both small and big.

The greatest challenge small businesses face is the alignment of objectives. In a small business, it is not common for employees to have their personal career ambitions aligned with the organizational goals. They do not view their individual growth in terms of the advancement of the organization. It's up to the management to create that essential connection.

### **Small businesses can tackle this hurdle with an unconventional approach.**

Small businesses should foster an appealing work environment that is indulging for employees. Things to consider implementing:

- a positive work environment with empathy, gratitude, learning prospects, delegation, recognition, and respect for individuality
- massive scope for creativity and innovation that inspires employees to grow individually parallel to the advancement of the business.

### **Small businesses should engage their employees by valuing them, celebrating them, and appreciating them.**

Jessica Robinson  
[The speaking polymath](#)

Read More On Employee Engagement Topics

- [Remote Employee Engagement Strategies](#)
- [How to Motivate Contact Center Agents](#)
- [5 Ways to Make Employees – And Customers – Happy!](#)

# Challenge: Shopping Cart Abandonment

**The average shopping cart abandonment rate is just under 70%**

[Sleeknote Report](#)

Shopping cart abandonment might be one of the most common pet peeves among online retailers. During the holidays, online sellers might see even more of it as shoppers browse, price shop, and do their shopping in multiple sessions.

While shopping cart abandonment is as inevitable as window shopping, there are ways small businesses can lower the rates and bring shoppers back to complete their abandoned purchases.

## 9 Ways to Fight Shopping Cart Abandonment

### 1. Calculate Abandonment Rate Correctly

- Trace the same virtual cart over multiple shopping sessions.



### 2. Analyze Shoppers' Behavior

- Find out reasons behind the abandonment and address them.
- Evaluate factors: traffic per page, the exit pages, devices used, etc.
- Create exit popups and collect feedback from customers

### 3. Tailor Reminders to Products

- Products-specific reminders can show personal touch and serve as helpful reminder to return to the cart



### 4. Incentivize Order Completion

- Offer free upgrade, a discount, or something else of value as an incentive to complete the purchase immediately

### 5. Make Checkout Easy

- Use digital payment methods
- Use info stored in customers' browsers to speed up process
- Implement one-click checkout



### 6. Send Personalized Texts

- Short, to-the-point texts can help bring busy shoppers back



### 7. Use Remarketing Tactics on Social

- Use social media ads to target customers who abandoned their carts



### 8. Send Follow-Ups

- Craft multiple email campaigns
- Structure emails with bullets
- Offer money-back guarantee
- Provide a link to return to cart

### 9. Get Creative

- Experiment and see what works best for your audiences

To read more about these topics check out: [Shopping Cart Abandonment: Prevent It, Manage It, Reduce It](#)

# Challenge: Fast Pace World of Marketing

Clutter is everywhere.

Everyone with a laptop and a brain can produce content and compete for your customers' attention.

This means taking risks is the only safe thing to do.

Focus your attention on one specific campaign, go to the edge of the map. Seek those butterflies in your stomach and don't try to make everyone inside the company happy. The most successful marketing campaigns were hated by most.

Louis Grenier

Host of "Everyone Hates Marketers" podcast

Ways to appeal to the consumers through marketing change as quickly as customer preferences. Marketers face challenges such as stiff competition, consumer information overload, and limited marketing budgets any time of year, but even more so during the holiday season.

It's important to stand out to reach the consumers.

**A small business will generate 126% faster lead economic activity if they include a blog on their website.**

**75% of small companies use paid advertising**

Thrive My Way  
Business Statistics Report

## Marketing Tactics to Help Small Businesses Stand Out

### Engage Your Audiences

Be creative and think of an authentic way to communicate and engage with your audience. It's an effective and inexpensive tactic to increase engagement and promote your business.

Interactive games and contests are a good way to get your busy customers' attention. Even during the holiday season we all have a second to play.

### Looks for New Avenues

If you run a local business, it might be a good idea to attract more customers by promoting your company/product/service with the help of offline marketing (ex. billboards)

Think outside the box, do your research, look for inspiration online, and always keep your customers in mind.

### Get Your Team Involved

Never underestimate the power of your team. Brainstorm together. Your teammates understand the values and goals of your company as well as your unique selling points.

Use it as a stepping stone to create a unique marketing strategy for the holiday season.

Ideas from Divya Shankar  
Email Outreach Specialist at Digital Olympus

# Get Ready to Meet Your Customer's Needs. Whatever it takes.

## Small Businesses Holiday Preparedness Checklist

- ☐ Identify customer personas and needs
- ☐ Implement plan for shortage supply
- ☐ Update website with current holiday info
- ☐ Update FAQs with current info
- ☐ Identify online communication needs
- ☐ Hire additional staff or outsource
- ☐ Set up live chat and SMS communications
- ☐ Set up communication automations (bots)
- ☐ Implement shopping cart abandonment strategy
- ☐ Identify new marketing needs
- ☐ Set up marketing automations
- ☐ Identify employee engagement needs

“It feels like a race between technology and customer expectations for what changes fastest. Either way, companies must not only meet the demands of their client base but anticipate them to stay ahead.

Faster and smoother communications, omnichannel options for effortless conversational messaging, and rapid troubleshooting are just some requirements of an outstanding customer experience that will differentiate your business from all the rest.

The holiday season is the perfect time to showcase your customer care.

Jason O'Neill  
Chief Operating Officer  
LiveHelpNow

