

Avoiding Peak Period Blues

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In any call center organization, there are times when we are very busy and times when we are very slow. When it is hectic, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Don't despair. There are some things that you can do as a manager that will help you survive.

1. Start by preparing your reps weeks in advance. If they will be working longer shifts or more days, advise them to make appropriate arrangements.
2. Talk to them about what they can expect from their customers.
3. Consider role-playing at a staff meeting so they can pay attention to how they might respond when under pressure. Debrief the role-play. Ask for feedback from as many people as possible. Make sure your newest reps participate in the role-playing.
4. Talk about being friendly and treating the customer with respect. Remind them to put themselves in their customer's shoes.
5. Make sure the reps know how important this peak period is to the organization. Their jobs may be at risk with poor performance.
6. As the manager, be visible. Don't bury yourself in paperwork. Your reps need to have quick answers. They need to have someone to talk to when they are upset. They need a cheerleader.
7. Ahead of time, as a group, talk about ways to handle stress. Are there stress relievers that the company can provide?
8. Post motivating slogans on the walls and in the break rooms.
9. While it is wonderful to bring in treats, donuts and candy are not good when people are under stress. If you are going to provide addi-

tional snacks or lunches, be sure they are high in protein.

10. Set markers. When the peak period is over, how will you celebrate? How about at the close of the peak period? Will there be a special dinner or luncheon?
11. Give your reps rewards or recognition for their extra efforts. The more you applaud people, the harder they will work. If there is a newsletter, be sure to publish their success stories, particularly those with the customers from hell.
12. Have periodic pep talks from staff members who have gone through these peak periods before.
13. Use a buddy system. Partner your inexperienced people with experienced reps so that they can get immediate answers.
14. Give your staff feedback on how they are doing.
15. Be sure as the manager that you are taking care of your self also.

Question: *We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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