THE COMPLETE SEASONAL HIRING PLAYBOOK

How to break barriers and beat the competition for your best holiday season yet.



Talroo®

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INTRODUCTION

In the HR space, we hear about new technology all the time. AI promises to help employers hire better and faster, and automation promises higher productivity and lower operating costs. Technology promises great things, but is there a risk of losing the human element?

Customer service is still an essential driver of business. Customers are swayed, sometimes permanently, by service interactions, both positive and negative. Companies that deliver good service win, and those that don't lose customers to competitors who do.

Retail, restaurant, and customer service jobs contribute trillions of dollars to the U.S. economy, and a lot of that activity happens during the holiday season. In 2025, U.S. holiday retail sales passed $1 trillion for the first time.

To get fully staffed for the busiest and most economically important season of the year, you need every advantage you can get. Just as service wins with consumers, the human touch also helps you land the best candidates. This playbook brings together everything we know about volume hiring during crunch time, updated with the latest data.

We hope you enjoy it!

SURGE IN HOLIDAY SHOPPING





At the end of the 2025 holiday season, Americans spent

$1 TRILLION+

the first time U.S. holiday retail sales passed $1 trillion. Sales from November 1 to December 31 grew 4.1%, near the top of the NRF's 3.7–4.2% forecast. These numbers don't even include restaurants, auto dealers, or gas stations.



Shoppers stayed resilient but value-conscious: a record 202.9 million people shopped over Thanksgiving weekend 2025. For 2026, the NRF forecasts total retail sales will grow 4.4% to $5.6 trillion.



There is a lot of money available to be spent by consumers, and for retailers to gain a larger share of the consumers dollars, it is critical that companies hire an adequate number of employees to keep up with the demand and maintain optimal customer service.

DEFINING THE HOLIDAY SEASON



How does NRF define “Retail Industry Sales?”

Retail industry sales include most traditional retail sales categories such as discount stores, department stores, grocers, specialty stores, and non-store sales but exclude sales at automotive dealers, gas stations, and restaurants.

What does NRF classify as the “Winter Holidays?”

NRF tallies total retail industry sales from November to December – 61 days – to determine holiday sales.

What percentage of annual sales do the holidays represent?

For some retailers, the holiday season can represent as much as 35% of annual sales, with jewelry stores reporting the highest share. In 2025, total holiday sales passed $1 trillion for the first time.

Is Black Friday the busiest shopping day of the year?

NRF does not monitor or track sales by day through the holiday season or annually. However, ShopperTrak, which counts foot traffic at malls, reports that Black Friday is the busiest shopping day of the year, followed by “Super Saturday” and the Sunday before Christmas.

What is “Black November?”

Black November is a term coined by retailers who are offering Black Friday deals as early as November 1st throughout the entire holiday season. Retailers are participating in this action by offering special deals on key holiday gifts such as toys, home electronics, consumer electronics, apparel and much more. These deals can be found both online and in stores.

Why are retailers taking advantage of Black November?

Holiday shopping starts earlier every year, with retailers running deal events as early as October. Plan to win the whole season, not just Black Friday, by staffing up before the first promotions hit.

WHERE ARE THE SEASONAL JOBS?

As consumers spend more, companies must maintain adequate staffing to meet deadlines. This is especially true around the holiday season, as consumers ramp up their spending and the retail and restaurant industries become busier than ever.

RETAIL

With the increase in shoppers during the holiday season, the sector with the most dramatic increase in positions in the 4th quarter is in the retail industry. From customer service associates, cashiers, overnight stock associates, loss prevention officers, security guards, and in-store display decorators, retail stores will have a substantial growth in employee needs.

MANUFACTURING

The impending increase in holiday shopping requires extra workers to create more inventory. Manufacturers will need to bring on additional staff to keep up with customer demand driving holiday spending. In manufacturing, seasonal positions will be for assembly line workers, forklift operators, and other general manufacturing positions.



WAREHOUSE

More manufactured goods will also require more warehouse space and more people fulfilling orders. Therefore, it is essential for warehouses to add additional staff as well. Around the holidays, warehouses add receivers/unloaders, order pickers, order packers, shipment preparers, and other general support staff to keep up with the growing e-commerce demand.

SHIPPING AND LOGISTICS

U.S. carriers handled about 23.1 billion parcels in 2025. Amazon Logistics delivered an estimated 6.7 billion, USPS 6.6 billion, UPS 4.4 billion, and FedEx 3.6 billion. With these volumes, shipping companies add drivers, driver helpers, package handlers, sorters, and customer service staff during the holidays.

CALL CENTERS

The busiest time of the year for call centers is during the holiday season. To keep customers happy, call centers must increase their staff to shorten wait times. These positions will primarily be customer service associates; however, many companies will hire quality control associates to monitor calls, and IT support staff to make sure everything is working as expected.

2026

WHO IS HIRING THE MOST WORKERS?

Retail seasonal hiring is projected to dip again in 2026. As of early October, the biggest retailers had not published 2026 headcounts, leaning first on current staff, on-demand pools, and returning workers. Here's what we know so far.

UPS

No 2026 target yet. Hired 125,000 seasonal workers in 2024 and shared no number in 2025.

Amazon

No 2026 target yet (usually announced mid-October). Hired 250,000 in each of the last three years.

Spirit Halloween

52,000+ seasonal associates for 2026, a company record, across 1,575 U.S. and Canadian stores.

Macy's

Hiring now. Opened 2026 seasonal hiring with the first of three nationwide hiring events on Sept. 24; no headcount shared.

Target

Hiring now, no 2026 target. Has kept seasonal hiring to about 100,000 roles in past years, plus a 43,000-person on-demand team.

Kohl's

Hiring now, no 2026 target. Has hired roughly 90,000 seasonal workers for most of the past decade.

U.S. Retail

About 450,000 retail seasonal hires projected for Q4 2026, down 2.5% from 461,500 in 2025, the smallest since 2008.

Dick's

14,000 seasonal hires across Dick's Sporting Goods and Foot Locker in 2025.

Fewer public targets doesn't mean less competition. With big employers filling shifts from their own pools first, fewer strong seasonal candidates are left for everyone else, so expect your best applicants to weigh more than one offer.

IDEAL SEASONAL CANDIDATES

Now that we know where the jobs are, it is important to understand who your target candidates are. The most important thing to remember is that your ideal seasonal candidate will look different than your permanent employees. They will most likely not meet the qualifications you require for your year-round part-time and full-time hourly positions. And that's okay!

Your seasonal employee can't or won't work for you year-round. They might be college students hoping to earn some money for college while school is out, stay-at-home-moms who want to make extra money or snag a discount for the holidays, retirees looking for supplemental income, or people who are recently out of a full-time job that need to make ends meet until they can land another full-time job. They are attracted to your seasonal position for a variety of reasons.

YOUR IDEAL SEASONAL CANDIDATE WILL LOOK DIFFERENT THAN YOUR PERMANENT EMPLOYEES. THAT IS OKAY!



Each one of these applicants has a resume that will look different than your full-time hourly employees. There may be many gaps in employment, lack of experience in the field they are applying for or past job titles that don't seem relevant. These resumes might ordinarily be tossed aside. However, when hiring temporary seasonal workers, it is more important that your employees have interpersonal skills and other soft skills that cannot be taught.

> **IT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAT YOUR EMPLOYEES HAVE INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND OTHER SOFT SKILLS.**

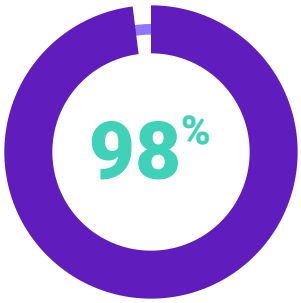
SKILLS TO PRIORITIZE FOR SEASONAL HIRING

- Communication (speaking/listening)
- Flexibility
- Friendliness
- Confidence
- Outgoingness
- Proactivity
- Ability to multitask
- Positivity
- Patience
- Respectfulness

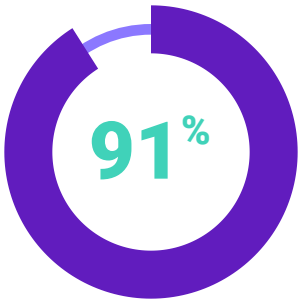


MOBILE AND SEASONAL RECRUITING

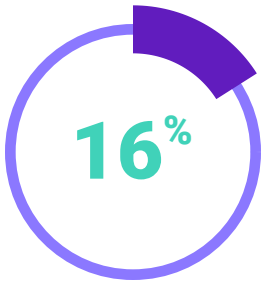
FAST MOBILE RECRUITING FACTS



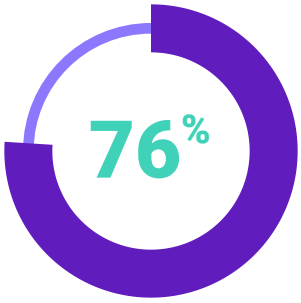
of U.S. adults own a cellphone of some kind.



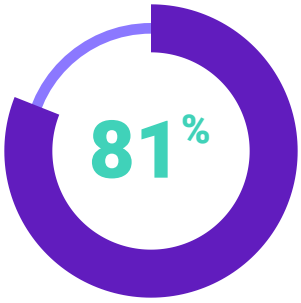
of U.S. adults own a smartphone.



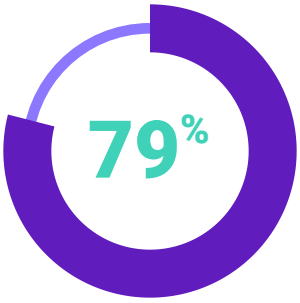
are smartphone-dependent: a smartphone but no home broadband.



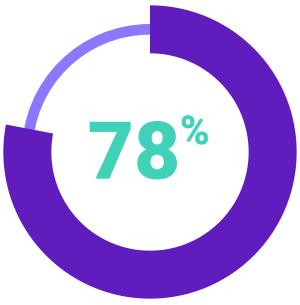
of retail job applications came from mobile devices.



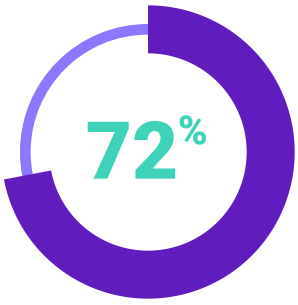
of warehousing and logistics applications came from mobile.



of food service applications came from mobile.



of hospitality applications came from mobile.



of customer service applications came from mobile.

Sources: Pew Research Center, Mobile Fact Sheet (2025); Appcast, 2026 Recruitment Marketing Benchmark Report (2025 data).

SPEED MATTERS

5.37%

apply rate when an application takes 1–5 minutes

3.09%

apply rate when it takes 16 minutes or more

Source: Appcast, 2026 Recruitment Marketing Benchmark Report (2025 data).

IF YOU'RE NOT MOBILE FRIENDLY, YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG

Use these statistics to your advantage and take the opportunity to engage your candidates where they spend their time. If you utilize digital ads on social media channels you can funnel people to your careers page and draw them in with your culture and incentives, then funnel them to your online apply process. And if your application is easily completed online, you've created a seamless path from discovery to application and will likely see an increase in applicants for your seasonal positions.

DON'T NEGLECT TECH

Adopting technology for your application process is another must when recruiting for seasonal workers. Allow candidates to apply online, share videos and images of your current employees online, and make sure your LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and other online presence is accurate. Make sure that your company website and every aspect of your application process works on mobile.

ATTRACTING TOP SEASONAL TALENT

So how do you attract these ideal candidates?

Unemployment rose to 4.2% in September 2026, so more people are looking for work. But many large employers now fill holiday shifts with current staff and on-demand pools first, and strong seasonal candidates still weigh multiple offers. Roles with an end date in sight are a harder sell, so companies must offer incentives and set themselves apart to recruit applicants.

HOW DO YOU SET YOURSELF APART

when everyone is trying to set themselves apart?

LAGOON, a summer fun park in Utah, offers an end-of-season bonus to attract seasonal employees and offer loyalty bonuses to returning seasonal staff.

ABOVE & BEYOND ALASKA, a company that organizes trips in the wilderness, explains that most seasonal positions require 6 or 7-day weeks, but that they try to balance work and life for their seasonal employees by offering a more traditional 5 days on and 2 days off back-to-back.

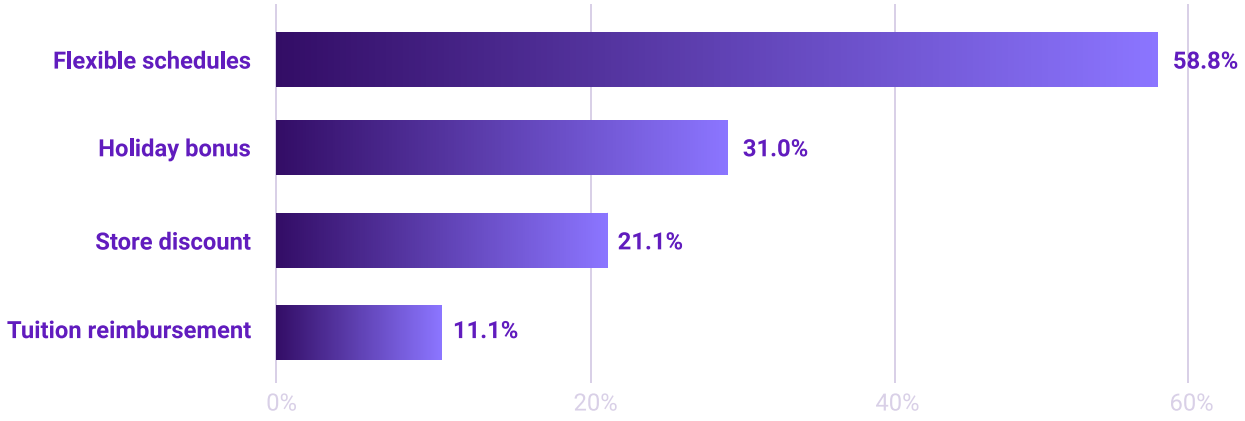
UPS locations offer part-time employees in college up to $25,000 in tuition assistance through the company's Earn and Learn program.

AMAZON offers health care benefits, signing bonuses, increased wages, and the possibility to become a permanent employee.

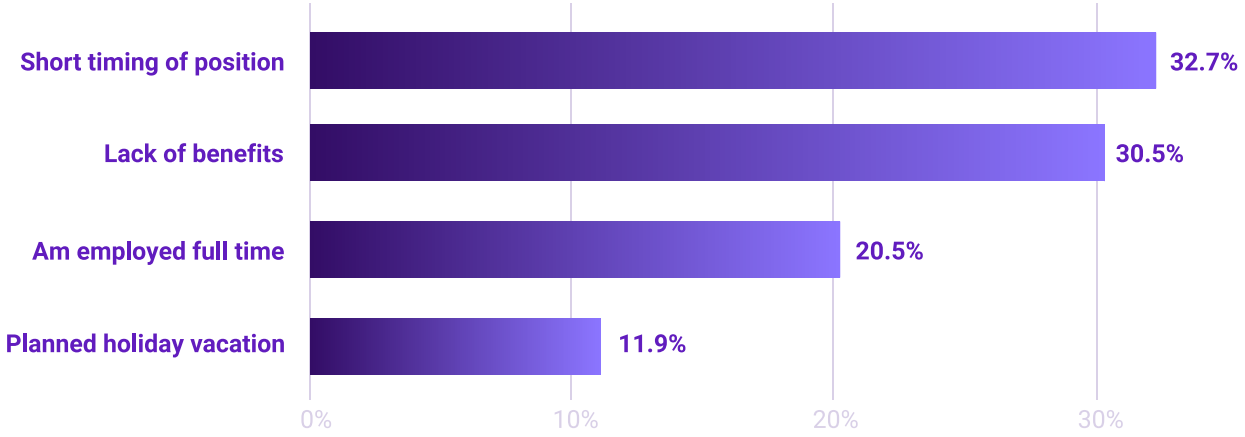


GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT

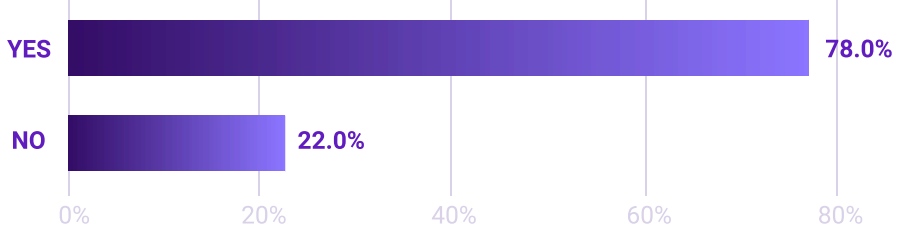
What are some benefits that would cause you to consider a seasonal position?



What are reasons you would not accept a seasonal position?



Would you be more likely to consider a seasonal position if it leads to a full-time position?



OFFER POTENTIAL FOR FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT

While not all seasonal employees are available to work a full-time position year-round, many people view seasonal positions to get their foot in the door with a company hoping to ultimately become a permanent employee. In a survey of 500, Talroo found that 78% of people said they would be more willing to accept a seasonal position if there was a potential for it to become full time.

UNIQUE HIRING METHODS

With unconventional applicants, the recruiting techniques to reach them must be unconventional as well. When recruiting seasonal employees, UPS recruits on college campuses and at NCAA college football games, knowing that one group attracted to seasonal positions are college students. Kohl's hosts a seasonal hiring day at hundreds of locations where interested candidates can stop in, interview, and potentially receive a seasonal job offer the same day.



HIRE YOUR OWN CUSTOMERS

A common complaint from hiring managers is that seasonal employees don't show loyalty to your company and will often end up a no-show. A way to combat this is to recruit your own customers. These individuals know your product, they are invested in your goals and success, and will share their enthusiasm for your company in all their interactions with holiday shoppers. They are also more likely to consider working a seasonal position at your store just to snag a solid discount, so make sure to offer the perks they want.

Workology founder Jessica Miller-Merrell recommends posting a sign with a code that customers can text to learn more about your seasonal jobs, slipping "We're Hiring" flyers into shopping bags, and posting signs in your store, in the window, and outside of your store by a trafficked road if possible.

DESIGN TIPS FOR BETTER FLYERS AND SIGNAGE

Creating flyers and advertisements for hiring might sound tough or expensive, but it doesn't have to be. Follow these tips to make the design process as easy as easy can be.

Use Stock Photos: There are free stock photo sites out there to add some oomph to your design. Just make sure to choose a large and high-resolution picture so you don't end up with a pixelated image.

Use Simple Fonts: Stick to a simple font such as Helvetica or Montserrat. These fonts are easy to read and won't distract from your design.

Keep Your Message Short & Sweet: Plan your message, test it internally, and simplify until it is clear and concise.

Make it Easy to Read: Make sure your words are legible on your image and advertisement. If you have even the slightest trouble reading it, so will everyone else.

Save Time and Use a Design App: Use free tools like Adobe Spark and Canva to help you build your advertisements. These make it easier than ever to create flyers and advertisements.





8.5 in. X 11 in. is letter size, perfect for printing.

GET SOCIAL

Consider taking your search to social media platforms. Most of your ideal seasonal candidates are active there. Reach them by sponsoring or promoting posts and highlighting benefits. YouTube and Facebook remain the most widely used platforms in the U.S., and 84% of adults use YouTube. Social is great for reaching people who aren't actively job hunting yet, and its low cost compared with traditional marketing means a higher ROI.

PERKS PLEASE

What do your potential candidates want? Figure that out and then give it to them. In our survey, we found that almost 60% of people would consider a seasonal position knowing that they would have the ability to work a flexible schedule. Other commonly requested benefits are health care, meals and snacks provided during shifts, gift cards as a reward for positive performance, referral programs, and generous employee discounts.

MONEY TALKS

Bonuses and competitive pay are surefire incentives to get applicants to your position. In order to entice a seasonal worker to choose your company over a competitor, the decision often comes down to whoever is willing to pay more.

31% of surveyed job seekers stated that they would consider accepting a seasonal position if they would receive a bonus. Providing a bonus for employees that complete a holiday season is a great incentive to get employees (and get them to stay).

GET IN FRONT OF MULTIPLE AUDIENCES

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in one basket, right? Don't rely on a single talent attraction site or post your job on only one website. Get your job in front of as many audiences as possible. Break your budget into pieces and divvy them up between websites, social platforms, and job boards. Consider using a solution like Talroo to get your job in front of millions of monthly users. Focus on platforms and sites that manage your budget well, keep you updated along the way, and provide you full concierge-level service.

START EARLY

One of the most important steps to effective seasonal hiring is also the simplest: start early. With intense competition for talent and your company's success on the line, getting started months in advance is key. Quickly lock in the best people that know in advance they want to work a seasonal position.

Start with a smaller budget for your seasonal positions and ramp up spend as you get closer to your hiring goal dates. This will allow you to figure out what works and what doesn't and will put you in the best position for when you are ready to flip the switch and release all of your seasonal positions.





HIGH VOLUME HIRING DONE RIGHT

VOLUME HIRING

High-volume recruiting is defined in several different ways. For highly specialized positions, 20 requisitions a week might be a lot. For call centers, warehouses, and hospital systems, high volume may mean hundreds of hires per week. And for retail, shipping & logistics, manufacturing, warehousing, and call centers entering the holiday season, high volume could mean thousands of hires.

FINDING THE BALANCE BETWEEN SPEED, COST, AND QUALITY

Recruiting top talent is a challenge no matter where you work. From creating the perfect job posting, to screening qualified applicants, to interviewing, hiring, onboarding, and training, hiring one person can take a substantial amount of time and energy. Multiply this by hundreds or thousands and you have high volume recruiting. If you are looking for cheap and quick, you will fall short on quality. If you want quality hires quickly, it'll be more expensive. If you want a quality candidate but have a small budget, it will take longer. Hiring magic happens when you find a balance between cost, quality, and time to hire. This balance isn't always easy to manage, but it is worth it to get high quality candidates, in a reasonable amount of time, and at a reasonable cost.



KEEP QUALITY HIGH

COMMUNICATE

Hiring involves multiple stakeholders, especially at larger organizations. Make sure you get what you need from everyone up front. Use a kick-off meeting to assess everyone's needs. Having all stakeholders in the same room minimizes the need for countless emails and the possibility of mixed messages.

UNDERSTAND THE ROLE

Sometimes recruiters and hiring managers have a narrow focus on what they want when they see resumes come in, and they don't like what they see. Getting a clear idea of what you want at the very beginning will save time later on. Look for examples from previous resumes. Although it's tempting to shoot for the moon and try to land a purple squirrel, limit "must-have" criteria. Ever heard the phrase "if everything is urgent, then nothing is urgent?" The same applies to job descriptions. If everything is a must-have, then nothing is a must-have – and all you get is a ton of resumes to go through that may not yield any qualified candidates.

ASSESS YOUR TALENT

Because time is money just like talent is money, it's critical to have an efficient means of assessing your talent. That can happen in a few different ways. Structured interviews, guides, manager training, and leveraging different tools and technologies are all strategies you can use to help make hiring consistent and easier. Tools and technologies like a structured interview guide for managers, by position, can be particularly important when it comes to scaling your talent efforts. This allows for a consistent candidate experience and hiring process for every candidate across the board. Hiring assessment technologies can also make it easier to ensure that your candidate is the right fit for the role and the larger organization. These assessment tests give the hiring manager insights into the candidate in a way beyond the interview, providing them a more holistic candidate view, yielding a better quality of hire and lower turnover rates.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Sure, credentials are important. They're often a predictor of success, but they can also disqualify applicants who can succeed in the role. Does the role really require a four-year degree to be successful? Consider appending "four-year college degree required" with "or equivalent work experience." This will let current part-time students or veterans know that they're invited to apply as well, and that their experience matters. Update your job postings and descriptions to reflect these position and skill requirement changes.

AUDIT YOUR APPLICATION PROCESS

According to Talent Board, 43% of candidates spend 30 minutes or more on the average online application, and 10% spend an hour or more. That's asking a LOT of patience from candidates. You may also be asking for sensitive information too soon. For example, a CareerBuilder study found that approximately 5% of employers require a social security number to apply. Almost 90% of job seekers were not willing to provide one. So you're losing more than 4% of your candidates just because you asked for one piece of information you don't really need. Limit your required fields and see your conversion rates shoot up.

MAINTAINING SPEED

AUTOMATE

Automate anything you can. Worried that the candidate experience will suffer? It won't if you do it right. Personalization and automation are not mutually exclusive. You can use automation to schedule phone screens, send custom rejection emails, and even check references. Another huge benefit, in addition to time and cost savings, is that automation can actually improve the quality of your hire. Startup company Pymetrics claims that automation can reduce bias in hiring by using data, not "gut instincts" – showing there's more to automation than just increased efficiency. Pro tip: Consider adding a link of frequently asked questions to your application acknowledgment email to help address them right out of the gate. You might also consider adding that same FAQ list directly to your company career site to help candidates learn more about the organization before they even apply.

GET TO KNOW YOUR ATS

Is your ATS made for high-volume recruiting? If not, it may be time to reconsider. Many applicant tracking systems are specifically created for bulk management (think Taleo, Kenexa Brassring, iCims). If volume is a top concern, make sure your technology fits your pain points. Already have an ATS that's made for high volume? Make sure it's being used to the best of its abilities. Purchasing the software is just the first step – it's only as good as its configuration. Whether you need to work with a consultant or dedicate internal resources to optimize your ATS, it can save you a ton of time if it's set up the right way.

CULTIVATE

When you need to hire talent now, your first instinct is probably to hunt—to pull out all the stops to land those candidates ASAP. But hunting doesn't scale up—farming does. Find out where your ideal candidates spend their time. How do blue collar and white collar candidates differ? Do your candidates use their mobile phones as their primary device? Do they live on social platforms, or do they resent being approached on social media? Do they attend professional development events, or swear by a certain website? Who caters to your market specifically? Do the legwork to find out, and it will pay off.

Personalization and automation are not mutually exclusive.

KEEPING BUDGET DOWN

PAID SOCIAL

Social networks drive a ton of traffic. YouTube and Facebook are the most widely used platforms in the U.S., and Facebook's ad targeting lets you drill down by location, age, interests, and more, or advertise to a custom list. When you know exactly who you're targeting, ad spend waste stays low. One caveat: make sure you know how your audience feels about social job ads. Social works best for building a pipeline of passive candidates, while search and job boards drive faster applications.

BUILD A TALENT FUNNEL FOR THOSE EVERGREEN POSITIONS

Create opportunities for talent to find you, especially with those evergreen or hard-to-fill positions. A simple presentation for updating your resume and/or LinkedIn profiles can be used at college and university campuses, not to mention online using a landing page that targets specific candidates and communities. Work with your location managers to host events that support relationships with local job seekers and students.

DISCUSS THE IMPACT OF NOT FILLING THE POSITION

Having an open position may cost a company more than you think. It's important for all stakeholders to get on the same page about this. For instance, will having the position vacant for months negatively affect your revenue? Will it cause customer service to suffer or risk having clients drop off? If so, it may be worth paying the ideal candidate more than you'd like to, rather than having the position vacant. Can't pay more than you need? Then you may want to ask yourself how important quality is. If time is of the essence, maybe this isn't the time to hold out for that unicorn. Have these conversations up front, and it may help your budget.

OPTIMIZE YOUR JOBS FOR GOOGLE

Over 70% of job seekers start their search on a search engine, so make sure Google can find and understand your jobs. Add structured job-posting data to your career site, submit your sitemap to Google, and match job titles to the words candidates actually type. You'll benefit from free traffic to your job listings.

USE YOUR BEST ASSETS – YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYEES!

Most recruiters will tell you that employee referrals are still the top source of hire. In fact, 88% of employers said that referrals are the best source for above-average applicants. It's a tall order for any traffic source or new technology to unseat employee referrals from their #1 spot. And the best part? Employee referral programs will help not just in keeping costs down, but also in speed

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best employee referral programs will incentivize not just applicants, but hires. Make sure to reward a current employee for their referral after the new hire has started. Or even better, after 90 days of employment. This way, the referrer has a vested interest in the quality of the candidate.

KEEPING BUDGET DOWN

USE PAY-FOR-PERFORMANCE PARTNERS

Until recently, most online recruiting strategies could be described as “post and pray.” This is when recruiters place duration-based job ads on various job boards and hope they get enough applications to make a hire before time runs out. But that’s a huge risk – what if you blow your budget and no one applies to your jobs? Some partners, Talroo included, offer a different business model. You can post as many jobs as you want, and only pay when a candidate clicks on your ad – OR when a candidate applies. You can choose whichever way works best for your jobs specifically.

The guarantee of eyes on your jobs and applications sent makes this a risk-free way to try a new partner.

CRAIGSLIST AND OTHER FREE JOB POSTING SITES

Whether paid or free, Craigslist continues to drive placements for your high-volume hires. To increase impact, consider customizing your posting. Use HTML to make an impact with buttons and graphics. Then A/B test frequently to see which calls-to-actions, button colors, and job posting categories are producing the highest quality candidates for your open positions.

KNOW THE FREE RESOURCES AVAILABLE

There are plenty of free or low-cost avenues for reaching candidates. Check out local schools and see if they have career fairs, or if they’ll let you post jobs for free on their sites. Craigslist is free or has only a nominal fee. There are also several Chrome extensions that allow you to hunt and source for free or nearly free.

Most importantly, high-volume recruiting is a marathon, not a sprint. It’s a challenge to balance the reactive recruiting activities needed to fill immediate openings quickly with the more proactive activities such as building talent pipelines, creating opportunities to measure and assess what’s working and what isn’t. Focusing on strategies that allow you to keep quality, speed, and cost where you want them will move your high-volume recruiting efforts forward.



5 METRICS YOU MUST MEASURE WHEN RECRUITING HIGH VOLUME

While recruiting metrics are always important for HR professionals, they're even more crucial when it comes to high volume recruiting. Particularly in industries like technology, healthcare, and retail, there are specific metrics that can help you better understand what is and what isn't working in your hiring process.

Each time you interview someone, you collect information. When you conduct dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of interviews, you have a massive amount of data you can use to assess your hiring efforts – if you use it correctly. Using what you learn will help you streamline your process and can potentially save you thousands of dollars per employee. Some of these metrics are old standards, and some might surprise you. Master which ones work for you and use that knowledge to optimize your hiring process.

1. QUALIFIED CANDIDATES PER HIRE

Formula: number of qualified candidates/number of hires

Qualified candidates per hire measures the number of candidates who made it past the first stage of your hiring process. This metric shows how effective your sourcing, advertising techniques, and job descriptions have been at attracting the right candidates to your job postings.

If the number of candidates interviewed before someone is hired is too high, it indicates that your hiring process is not focused enough. For high volume positions, a hiring manager should only need to see two to three people before making a hire. Shoot for four if it's a unique, critical, or senior-level spot.

2. SOURCE OF HIRE

Formula: recruiting source/number of applications by specific recruiting source

Tracking source of hire will help you distribute your hiring resources to the most effective recruiting channels. Calculate this metric by dividing your recruiting source yield by the number of applicants from that source. Use this metric to determine which job boards, websites, social channels, referrals, direct sourcing, etc. are most effective for hiring for your business.

It varies from one ATS to the next, but you should be able to see where a candidate entered your pipeline. Create and review a report to see the distribution of candidates and hires among different sources. You can also collect this data from candidate surveys or using a drop-down self-selection menu as part of the application — although user-reported data is never as good as

you allocate your recruiting budget more effectively and direct more resources to the most effective channels.

One example: According to an iCIMS survey, more than 65% of employers agree that employee referrals fit better with their company culture. If you discover through data that referrals represent a significant percentage of hires, it might be worthwhile to increase your employee referral bonus.

3. TIME TO FILL

Formula: total days of open requisition/number of positions

Time to fill is defined as the time it takes from a hiring manager to submit the request for a new hire to the time the job offer is accepted by a qualified applicant. The faster the speed of hire, the shorter the time to fill.

Why does this matter? Top talent is in demand and high demand candidates find jobs faster. Vacant positions, especially for customer-facing and revenue-generating jobs, result in financial loss to the company. Currently employed individuals must be recruited quickly, otherwise they may receive counter-offers or incentives to stay in their current job.

If time to fill is a challenge, recruiting teams can break down the average time to fill by varying stages from application, qualifying, final interviews and first date. Recruiting teams can try to uncover where hiring bottlenecks exist by breaking down the information even further by department, division, or hiring manager.

4. OFFER ACCEPTANCE RATE

Formula: total number of accepted offers for time period/total number of offers

This measures how often candidates accept an offer after you've invested the time and money to get to that point in the hiring process. This can help you understand where the process is being derailed for candidates who decline an offer. Calculate this metric simply by number of offers accepted divided by number of offers made.

If this percentage is low, talent acquisition teams may need to rethink what candidates want or how competitive their job offers are. This is incredibly important to evaluate by geography and by position. If candidates aren't buying what you're selling, then you have a mismatch between expectations, a poor culture fit, or they accepted an offer from a competitor. Keep tabs on where you lose candidates and find ways to improve those areas.

On the other hand, if you are interviewing a lot but failing to extend offers, it's time to reevaluate your vetting process.

5. INTERVIEW TO HIRE RATIO

Formula: number of interviews completed over period of time/number hires over period of time

Interview to hire ratio measures the number of conversations your hiring staff has with prospective employees, whether they are phone screens or in person interviews. When companies have a high interview to hire ratio, it usually means they are spending valuable time interviewing which could result in interviewing too many candidates for each job.

While it is important to interview several viable candidates to find the best person for each open position, it is equally important to be able to identify the top few candidates before interviews begin. When recruiting high volume, it's crucial to implement a screening process that ensures you effectively filter out candidates that are poor fits.

This can be done through online assessments, a tool that pre-screens resumes for specific keywords, or phone screens. Companies can also re-evaluate their minimum job posting qualifications or communicate the details of the position better. Taking some time at the beginning of the process will save time for your hiring managers, bypassing unqualified candidates.

HIGH VOLUME HIRING MUST BE A WELL-OILED RECRUITING MACHINE

High volume means high performance for recruiters. In high-performing HR departments, leaders do not rely merely on HR best practices or administrative standard operating procedures as key drivers. They rely on data-driven practices that are tied to their organizations' business strategies. This allows them to make data-based decisions about human capital management that will positively impact the bottom line.

HIRE FASTER

Applicants for seasonal positions are most likely going to accept the first position that is offered to them. Because of this, your process for hiring seasonal employees needs to go much faster than your process for permanent employees. According to the Wall Street Journal, the average interview process takes 23.8 days, and the entire process from application to onboarding takes an average of 43 days. In a study done by Ajilon, 58% of respondents believe that the hiring process should take two weeks or less. This means that the current hiring process takes twice as long as applicants think it should take.

With the limited candidate pool of people interested in seasonal work, when you get a qualified applicant, you need to offer them a position as quickly as possible. This is why companies like Kohl's and Target have hiring days or open interviews for seasonal positions.

ONLINE INTERVIEWS

Knowing that the most important consideration for seasonal employees is flexibility, offering a flexible interviewing process is also important. Consider embracing online interviews to allow candidates who are currently limited in their availability to interview, to speed up the interviewing process, and eliminate unnecessary stages.

Many hiring processes include a phone screen and multiple onsite visits for interviews and testing. Consider a video tool like Google Meet, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams, or a recorded (one-way) video interview, to cut hiring steps and make scheduling easier. Macy's, for example, lets 2026 seasonal applicants submit a recorded interview. Video also lets you see your candidate's expressions, not just hear their voice.

VIDEO INTERVIEW MUST-DO'S



Location, location, location

Where will the interview take place? Consider showing off some of your company culture, but also consider background noise and distractions. Set yourselves and your candidate up for success when selecting your environment.



Test your tech

Make sure your camera and microphone are working correctly. Just as you expect your candidate to be ready to go, you should be also.



Set expectations

Don't let your candidate hang up without having a clear understanding about what the next steps will be. If another online interview is needed, schedule it now. If you wait too long, your candidate could accept an offer from another company.

HOST A HIRING DAY

One of the most efficient ways to hire for seasonal positions is to host a hiring day where candidates can walk in, apply, interview, and possibly even receive a same-day offer. With plenty of social media advertising, online advertising, and in-store advertising, you can reach your target candidates and invite them to attend. In just a few hours, you can have a large portion of your available seasonal jobs filled when organized and run correctly.

OPEN HOUSE MUST-DO'S

1. PREPARE

Candidates apply online before the event or walk in the day of and complete an application. To manage walk-in applicants, consider having multiple iPads or computers available. Once applications are completed, they can hop into the interview line. Have current employees walking around to help as needed or answer any candidate questions.

2. INTERVIEW

Have any managers and assistant managers from the stores you're hiring for present to conduct interviews. Create a bank of possible interview questions and allow your managers the flexibility to pick and choose. Also consider creating a score card for the skills you most value in your seasonal employees. Keep interviews short, about 10 minutes per candidate, and have candidates interview with at least two managers/assistant managers. Other options are group interviews or panel interviews, which can be more efficient, but could result in a less personal interview process. Consider your needs and pick the interview style that works for you and your company's goals.

3. ASSESS

Once all the interviews have been conducted, gather your team together and review the score cards. Have a predetermined score that is your minimum, and a score that means an instant hire. Set aside any cards that don't meet your minimum requirement and offer positions to those that exceeded your "instant hire" score. For any candidates in the middle, consider inviting for another interview or offering a position depending on your needs.

OPEN HOUSE MUST-DO'S

4. OFFER

To quickly send out job offers, consider using a program like DocuSign. Your applicants will receive the offer via email and can complete all their new hire paperwork and document submission digitally. This eliminates a lot of the back and forth that can happen with a paper process.

5. ONBOARD

Once you have an employee signed on, continue to engage them and get them started on training as quickly as possible. Adequate training can make it or break it for your company. Also, try to group multiple new hires on a single day for training. This will build camaraderie among teammates that will likely last throughout the season.

6. OPTIMIZE

Additionally, consider utilizing a tool like Workday to onboard your new hires. Any courses that can be completed virtually can be completed in advance to allow your new hires to get in and get hands on training sooner.



IS YOUR CANDIDATE A CULTURAL FIT?

To guarantee success for your company and for your employees throughout the holiday season, one of the most important things that you can do is hire only those candidates that are a cultural fit. Talroo is a great example of a company that hires only those who pass a value alignment interview. No matter which strategies you use to achieve your hiring goals, you should consider the effect every employee will have on your company.

Why is this important?

When your company has a clear set of values and you hire only those that closely align with those values, your new hires will add to your company culture. By hiring the right people, you can eliminate unnecessary drama between employees and guarantee that every person working for you will represent your company and brand well when interacting with customers and coworkers.

CULTURAL FIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



What gets you excited to come to work?



How do you handle stressful situations at work?



Tell me about a time you worked as a team?



Give an example of a time you didn't know how to do a task. What did you do?



What motivates you to do your best work?



How do you respond to constructive criticism?

OPTIMIZE YOUR JOB ADS

Your job posting is essential when looking to hire. This is an opportunity to sell your company and convince a job seeker to apply for your position. Your posting is even more important for seasonal positions when you show up in a long list of results for “holiday job” or “seasonal job.”

USE RESEARCH IN YOUR FAVOR

Appcast's 2026 Recruitment Marketing Benchmark Report analyzed more than 302 million clicks and 27 million applications from nearly 1,200 U.S. employers in 2025. Here's what the data says, and how to use it in your job ads.

MOBILE STILL RULES FRONTLINE HIRING

Mobile drove 76% of retail applications and 81% of warehousing and logistics applications in 2025. Ask fewer questions, skip resume uploads people won't have on their phones, and keep the application under 5 minutes.

SHORTER APPLICATIONS CONVERT

Applications that take 1–5 minutes converted at 5.37%, versus 3.09% for those taking 16 minutes or more. Move non-essential questions later in the process.

COSTS ARE CLIMBING

Median cost per click rose through 2025 to about $0.95, and median cost per application reached $19.32, even in a softer labor market. Cost per hire also spikes around October as seasonal hiring peaks, so managed, data-driven bidding matters more than ever.

SHORT, FOCUSED TITLES WIN

Titles of 4–6 words had the highest apply rate (4.80%), while 13+ word titles dropped to 3.83%. Use the words job seekers actually type into the search bar.

SHOW THE PAY

Ads with a salary range had a 5.03% apply rate in 2025, versus 4.51% without. List pay and your top benefits, such as flexible schedules, bonuses, and discounts, up front.

POST EARLY, REFRESH OFTEN

53% of an ad's applications arrive in its first 10 days, and Monday brings the most applies (19%). Post early in the week and refresh ads when volume plateaus.

TOP 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL SEASONAL HIRING CAMPAIGN

TIPS FROM OUR CLIENT SUCCESS TEAM

I know what you're thinking: "Not another sales person telling me how to run my job postings just so they can sell me on using their platform." But guess what? This will be nothing like that. Instead, this will be a sexy and sleek "Top List" to help you successfully advertise a seasonal job posting, including action steps you can take today. Yes, today! (insert game show host voice here).

IMAGINE STARTING OFF YOUR CAMPAIGN ON THE BEST FOOT

You are getting ahead of the holiday hiring rush, you're funneling in candidates and you are getting quality hires in a cost-effective manner. This is what the process looks like when you are efficiently advertising your jobs and wording your postings.

But is this what it really looks like for you?

Our Client Success team sees the same issues year after year when advertising jobs — especially in regard to seasonal hiring pushes. Hiring managers are short on time, talent, and budget. They want candidates tomorrow, so they can start hiring and training just in time for the holiday season. However, with limited resources this can be a challenge.

So how do you fulfill all your hiring needs during the busiest time of the year? How do you specifically target individuals that can fill these desperately needed open positions?

Well, the name of the game is VOLUME (didn't see that coming, did you!?)

After working on seasonal hiring campaigns for years, I know one thing for sure — a high volume of traffic is crucial. In this ultra-competitive time, employers are competing for the same (small) talent pool, making it a challenge to fill open positions. It is safe to say it's not going to get any easier. Whether you're targeting new job applicants or even returning employees, the same principles hold true: volume is everything! Traffic doesn't like to self-identify — a little HR joke there for you.

1. CAPITALIZE ON YOUR BRAND NAME

If you're advertising with a large recognizable brand name, it can help drive traffic to your job posting. If job applicants see a job they want to apply for from a company they already know, like and trust, this can go a long way! For optimal success, we recommend adding your company name to your job title, and if possible, at the very front. Many people search for jobs by first searching large companies they are familiar with. Leverage this by including your brand in your posting to guarantee that your seasonal position shows up when someone searches your company name.

2. INCLUDE BENEFITS

Benefits are a powerful tool to include in your posting. Whether you have a known brand name or not, people care about what they will receive if they work for your company. Include things like hourly pay, seasonal bonuses, flexible schedules, hours guaranteed per week, company culture, or even if holiday cookies are provided (please tell me cookies are provided!). Regardless, make your job stand out with some incentives!

3. SET A COMPETITIVE COST PER CLICK BID

When recruiting for the holiday season, you will be competing for the same candidates as a lot of other companies. With everyone looking for the same talent, setting an aggressive cost per click (CPC) can ensure your job posting appears on the first search page and reaches the right audience.

Important note: Remember that not all job postings are created equal. A CPC in Austin, TX may be completely different from one in Denver, CO.
Reach out to our Client Success Team for assistance here—we live and breathe this stuff!

4. SIMPLIFY YOUR APPLICATION PROCESS

The easier and faster you make the application process, the more job applicants you will have to sort through. Again, VOLUME is key to a successful hiring campaign. It can be tempting to provide more hurdles to ensure you're getting the highest quality candidates, but in this high traffic scenario, more hurdles do not equal better candidates.

5. WRITE A CLEAR, CONCISE JOB DESCRIPTION

Conveying a simple and clear message in your job description is key. What makes your job different than the others? And what are the top things you need the applicant to know before applying?

By making all necessary information easily available for candidates, they can pre-qualify themselves, saving you time. You can focus on candidates that are truly interested, and you will have more time for baking those cookies we talked about!

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Timing is crucial, getting out in front of the giant rush can make or break your campaign. With the limited talent pool for these positions, potential candidates start the seasonal job search at specific times of the year. For seasonal hiring campaigns we always suggest starting at least 2-3 months prior to when your hires would start.

So, when preparing for your upcoming seasonal push, ensure you are ready for a large volume of traffic by expertly crafting your job titles and descriptions, setting competitive CPC bids (which we will happily recommend based on our industry data) and optimizing your candidate funnel.

Don't be afraid to reach out to your representative at your hiring solution for help. At Talroo, we have a Client Success Team filled with job advertising experts eager to help clients successfully run campaigns this holiday season.
No matter your talent acquisition software, someone is willing to help!

GOOGLE TRENDS: WHAT JOB SEEKERS ARE SEARCHING

"Holiday Job" – Peaks November 5 - November 11

"Seasonal Job" – Peaks November 12 - November 18

"Holiday Position" – Peaks mid-August and again mid-November

It is more common for job seekers to start their search using a company name and adding "seasonal" as their search term. These searches peak around mid-October.

RETAINING SEASONAL TALENT



WHY RETAINING TALENT SHOULD BE A PRIORITY

IT'S CRITICAL TO RETAIN TALENT FOR TWO MAIN REASONS:

ECONOMICS

Investing in and growing existing talent is far more economical compared to the time and cost it takes to recruit, hire and bring newbies up to speed. After all, the existing talent has already been invested in with time, money, skill development, knowledge transfer, etc. When that person leaves, that investment is lost.

Employee turnover costs way more than many businesses and HR leaders realize because of hidden cost variables. Those include recruitment advertising expenses, lost productivity due to hours of application review and interviewing time and new hire training and onboarding time.

There could also be a trickle-down effect. If someone leaves for a higher paying job, that could cause remaining staff (who are still friends with that ex-employee) to consider interviewing for their own higher paying job elsewhere.

Additionally, with new hires, there is a drop off in the level of service and productivity since they are still new to the company and do not have the requisite knowledge and training yet to be as effective as their predecessor. This drop off in knowledge and service impacts customer satisfaction, sales, and total team output.

COMPANY REPUTATION AND BRAND

The best companies all share one common understanding that makes their culture great: employees are their most powerful brand promoters. Employees are the "public face" of their company to their friends, social networks, family, alumni groups, etc. Happy and engaged employees will spread the word about how proud they are to work there. They will refer other top talent to join their team. They are more likely to give glowing reviews of their company.

If there is no focus on retaining and growing that talent, then they will gladly move on and be somebody else's brand promoter. This not only causes a loss of that singular talent, but it also can negatively impact the morale of the remaining workforce, who in turn may become less engaged and less likely to put extra effort into being good brand ambassadors for the company.

STRATEGIES TO HELP RETAIN SEASONAL EMPLOYEES

Seasonal hiring works best when it's repeatable. Teams that do it well partner closely with leadership and follow a few consistent practices:

CAST A VERY WIDE RECRUITING NET

Many employers rely on high school and college students to fill seasonal openings, but their availability can be limited. Posting openings online and with local workforce centers widens the pool and raises response rates, so you can be more selective and hire the best of the best.

CREATE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Many companies view seasonal employees simply as expendable, short-term assets. Instead, show seasonal employees that they are truly valued by getting to know them, talking with them, sending birthday cards, inviting them to staff parties, and showing them the same level of respect that you give to the rest of your workforce. By doing this, those seasonal employees will want to return the following season and work for you. This means fewer vacant positions to fill and less training of new workers each season.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Each season be sure you know what your competition is offering for wages, benefits, perks, and other compensatory factors for seasonal employees. This will ensure you remain competitive and will help strengthen your company's reputation. Seasonal employees talk to each other as well as to people in their networks, social groups, families, etc. They will know which companies pay more and offer more benefits. Be in that company.

CONSIDER YOUR TURNOVER RATE

With the short nature of seasonal jobs, many companies might not give turnover statistics much thought. This is a mistake as seasonal employees are less loyal than your permanent employees and can often leave mid-season. Staying on top of 'what' and 'why' as it relates to turnover can help you adapt to improve seasonal employee retention.

RESULTS OF NOT BEING PREPARED



RECRUITING OBSTACLES TO AVOID

There are many consequences for entering into seasonal hiring late in the game or without a thorough plan. Waiting too late to begin looking for seasonal employees could result in your company being understaffed at a critical time, employees with inadequate training, or settling workers that are not qualified. Entering without a plan has similar results and leads to chaos and long hours for human resource employees, store managers, and anyone else that has a role in the hiring process at your company.

Seasonal hiring keeps starting earlier. In 2025, Kohl's was one of the first department stores to open seasonal hiring, and in 2026 Macy's, Inc. held the first of three nationwide hiring events on September 24. Employers with a plan open roles early so they can hire and train in time, while many others underestimate the time and challenge seasonal staffing requires.

The following are possible consequences of not being prepared for seasonal hiring.

> **ENTERING WITHOUT A PLAN WILL LEAD TO CHAOS AND LONG HOURS.**



EXPENSIVE HIRES

Waiting too long can be an expensive mistake. If you start your seasonal search late, the available talent pool (already small) gets even smaller, and many companies that can't fill positions in time turn to staffing agencies and pay a steep markup. That's budget that could have gone toward higher wages or seasonal bonuses.

This markup can quickly drain your budget and result in you being understaffed at a critical point in time or in you being significantly over budget. Neither of these situations are ideal and will negatively impact your ability to be successful in achieving the maximum profit possible during the holiday season.

LACK OF TRAINING

If you don't get your seasonal employees hired early enough, the already shortened timeline for training will become even shorter. When employees don't receive the necessary training to handle customer requests and problems they will quickly become overwhelmed and customer service will suffer, or your employees might stop showing up for shifts.

SETTLING FOR LOW QUALITY CANDIDATES

Naturally, if you enter the game late, the highest-quality candidates will have been already offered positions with other companies. Because of this, you will have to settle for candidates that are of lower quality and will require more training to be successful (or might not be successful at all.) With the substantial time and money that goes into hiring each employee, it is important that they be good hires. Every employee should help move your company toward their goals.



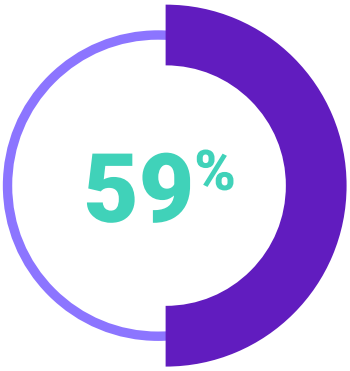
BAD CUSTOMER SERVICE

According to research conducted by TrueList, about $1.6 trillion is lost annually by companies providing poor customer service. This money is lost to their competitors – those providing better customer service experiences. Customers have high expectations for the service they receive, and with many other options, there is little incentive to continue purchasing from a company that provides poor quality service.

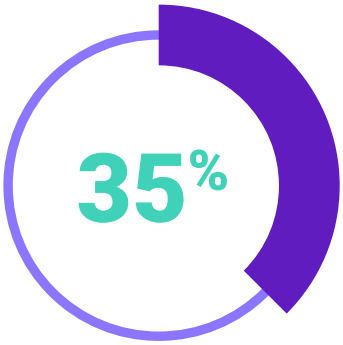
HOW DO CUSTOMERS REACT TO A BAD CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCE?



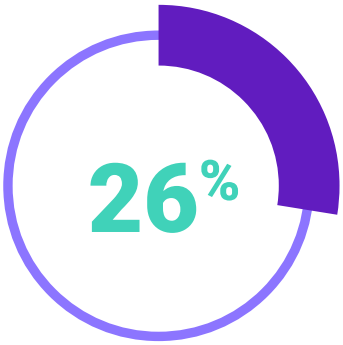
said they would never use a company again.



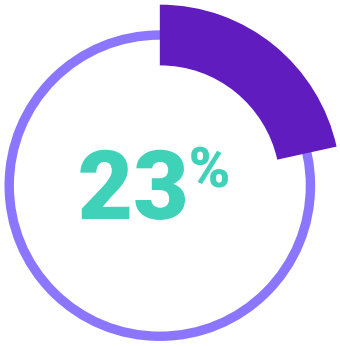
would try a new brand or company.



write a complaint email/letter.



tell friends and colleagues not to use the company.

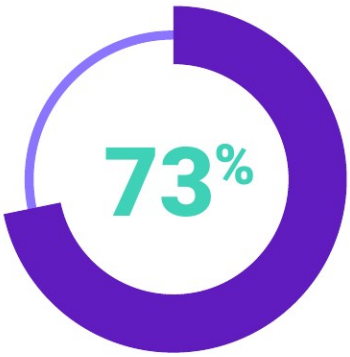


would post an online review.

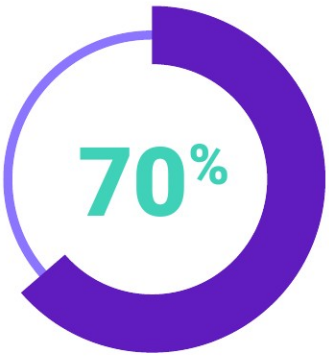


would complain publicly on social media.

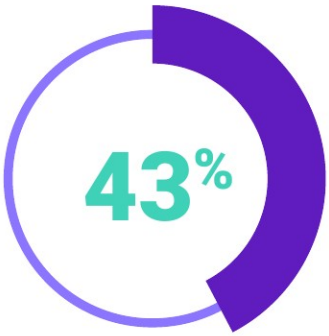
IF A BUSINESS HAS GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE...



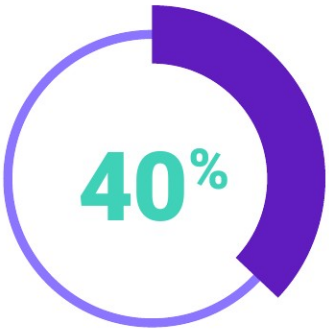
would be more loyal.



would recommend businesses to others.



would use businesses more frequently.



would spend more money.

During the holiday season, customers are at their most demanding. Expectations for service increase, but so does the number of people that require service. So how does a company maintain good customer service during a high demand time?

- Hire seasonal employees with great people skills — it's hard to get mad at someone who is kind and listens!
- Train your staff how to handle all possible customer scenarios (no matter how out there) so they are ready for anything.
- Hire enough seasonal employees to meet demand. Hire as many as it takes to keep wait times for calls, lines, etc. as quick as during non-holiday season times.
- Keep your employees happy—happy employees will work harder for you and your customers will absorb that positive energy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The most important things to take away after reading this book follow:

- Start early
- High volume strategies are key
- Distribute your jobs to as wide an audience as possible
- Maintain a reasonable cost per click for your industry and location
- Consider unique recruiting and hiring methods
- Create a clear, concise job description
- Know the kind of candidate you are looking for
- Embrace technology in your hiring process
- Offer incentives to set yourself apart
- Provide competitive pay
- Interview for interpersonal skills and culture fit
- Provide adequate training for seasonal employees

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