

VocoVo

How to guide

How to prepare seasonal workers for the festive period



Introduction



The festive season brings with it the gift of peak customer spending and increased footfall for retailers. The preparations ahead of the festive rush almost always include hiring temporary staff to support existing colleagues and ensure a great customer experience is maintained. This year will be no different. The extra help will be more than welcomed by many shop floor colleagues as they continue to struggle with noticeable labour shortages post-pandemic.

To ensure new seasonal starters are able to support longer-standing colleagues during this busy time and to encourage them to perhaps remain on a more permanent basis, retailers must make the onboarding process as smooth as possible. Training and knowledge-sharing cannot slip away in peak times, and now more than ever in smart stores, this must include training on the varied technologies and solutions in use.

This e-book will discuss the practical tips for retailers to improve their training effectiveness for new starters and ensure easy access to knowledge, drawing on the recent findings from VoCoVo's survey of 1,003 in-store employees and 258 senior retail decision makers with over 100 stores across the UK, the USA and Germany. **The e-book will offer advice for retailers on how they can best optimise smart technology available to them during the festive season to upskill seasonal workers and maintain high working standards.**



Five ways to stay on top of the festive rush

1 Train new starters on the job



One of the biggest challenges for retailers ahead of the festive period is finding the time to train seasonal workers. Removing an experienced colleague from the shop floor to facilitate training can impact team productivity and make the shop floor consistently short-staffed as new hires often arrive at different times. Whilst retailers might be tempted to conduct a three-hour long training session for a few new starters at the same time, there is no value in doing so. Such training methods are ineffective and disengaging, if not boring, with new starters remembering little information afterwards, and leaving them more likely to make mistakes or lose confidence to resolve customer queries.

Training seasonal workers on the job is far more effective than a classroom session as it engages new colleagues from the start. It helps them better adopt in-store technology, such as connected headsets, and utilise all its functionality to improve internal communication and customer service.

With in-store smart devices, retailers can avoid removing more experienced colleagues from the already short-staffed floor as they can perform their usual tasks whilst simultaneously explaining them to new recruits. By leveraging portable voice communications technology such as headsets, seasonal workers can easily ask longer

standing colleagues for help whenever they're unsure about something, whilst experienced colleagues can answer questions remotely without having to pause their own work.

Creating a single, open channel of communication with smart technology will build an effective onboarding programme and an engaging learning environment for any seasonal worker. However, retailers shouldn't make assumptions that the seasonal workforce will be properly inducted into using smart devices available to them, so providing clear guidelines and best practice is essential.

A way to address this is to select particular colleagues who have high levels of confidence in leveraging existing solutions to be 'tech champions' within the store. These tech champions would take on the role of upholding best practice for both existing colleagues and new festive hires and provide a source of knowledge for any queries.

30%

of shop floor colleagues say they **haven't received sufficient training to confidently use smart technology**

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2 Get answers for customers sooner



Tracking down information for customers can be a major cause for inefficiency on the shop floor, particularly for new hires who might not have the answers to common questions. Connected technology solutions, such as two-way headsets and handheld tablets, can be a great aid for all colleagues to access knowledge at the touch of a button, meaning customers can be served quickly, and with confidence.

As part of the on-the-job onboarding, seasonal hires should be shown how to leverage existing solutions to contact more senior colleagues for advice, saving them tracking someone down and leaving customers without answers and potentially frustrated. New hires might be reluctant to ask for help for fear of being a nuisance, however, leveraging smart technology can easily solve this problem.

For retailers who aren't yet leveraging the benefits of connected technology solutions, there are a few key elements to consider to ensure maximum return on investment when it comes to harnessing in-store efficiency gains. The main and most important one is ensuring smart devices are not being brought into the stores just to provide one single functionality. There are multiple integrations that can be facilitated between different smart technologies to improve the performance of colleagues and offer five-star customer service.

A good example of this is connected headsets, which can provide a full-duplex, two-way communication that feels as natural as face-to-face, and also, can sync to the in-store telephone systems to allow colleagues to pick up the phone from wherever on the shop floor. Whether it's customers phoning to ask about the Christmas opening hours or check in on expected deliveries, they'd be delighted to get their questions answered in a speedy manner, every time.

retailers have already implemented a multitude of different smart technologies in their stores to aid with delivering an optimum customer experience, including

31%

smart touch
tablets

28%

smart video
technology

27%

portable voice
communication

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3 Support checkout colleagues



All too often, customers get frustrated at the sound of a self-service checkout as it loudly plays a message stating “Assistance is coming” – and assistance is nowhere to be seen. Delays at checkout are a common problem but can unfortunately occur on a more frequent basis now as staff shortages continue and customer footfall increases during the Christmas period.

40%

of shop floor colleagues say that **current labour shortages are the biggest challenge**

As a result, over three quarters (76%) have to fill in different roles and responsibilities every day, so it's highly likely that seasonal workers will be asked to wear multiple hats as well.

Checkouts are usually separated from the rest of the store, which could make it harder for new hires to get help when something goes wrong, for example the till gets jammed or there are multiple purchases to authorise. This can be a stressful situation for a colleague especially if they see a customer visibly getting frustrated. The last thing they'd want to do then is to leave their position in search of help.

Greater support for checkout colleagues can be provided by enabling better communication between all shop floor workers, for example through smart technology like checkout keypads. These allow colleagues to swiftly call for help without having to leave customers unattended and angry. Here's where integration with headsets can prove crucial as colleagues can send a message from the keypad to all nearby headsets, reporting their location and the problem.



In addition, headsets could allow colleagues to **authorise multiple self-checkout purchases** from a single location with a unique code. With the use of smart technology, only one colleague can stay at the checkouts to oversee the area, freeing up others to work elsewhere.

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4

Streamline Click & Collect



Click & Collect and Curbside Pick-Up services have become increasingly popular in recent years, with almost half of shoppers planning to use them this Christmas. Click & Collect was definitely a big winner during the pandemic, but its enormous convenience will see more and more customers expecting it as a standard option from retailers.

Retailers must therefore ensure they offer the best and the most efficient service as possible, without disrupting other in-store activities. Smart technology, such as smart lockers, can help new starters create a smooth Click & Collect experience, even if they never covered this area of the store before.

Armed with connected devices like headsets, seasonal staff can ask more experienced colleagues for advice or check on customer orders without visiting the stockroom. Moreover, if retailers facilitate telephony integration, Click & Collect colleagues can pick up the calls from customers who wish to check on their order status and transfer them straight to the stockroom. During the busy period, it may be that Click & Collect desks are temporarily unmanned, with colleagues needing to step away to other parts of the store. Implementing two-way customer call points can allow customers to go to designated collection areas and speak to

a colleague for assistance, even if they are not at their desks. Such smooth communication and great collaboration will help create great Click & Collect experiences during the busy festive period.

45%

of shop floor colleagues say that smart technology makes their job easier and 34% say it helps them improve performance



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5 Make new colleagues feel welcome

Onboarding isn't just about showing new hires the ropes. It's about making them feel like a valuable member of the team from the very first day. Teamwork and a sense of belonging at work are incredibly important to a colleague's success.

Studies have shown that **effective team communication can improve employee retention** by up to,

4.5 times

That is an incredibly important goal for retailers to keep in mind in the face of current labour shortages as those seasonal workers who are onboarded properly will be more likely to join the team on a permanent basis. As the festive shopping season is a stressful one, particularly for new hires, putting measures in place that support their wellbeing and make them feel connected to other members is vital. Especially when 12% of colleagues consider abusive customer behaviour their biggest shop floor challenge.

With smart technology at their disposal, no colleague will feel alone or isolated on the shop floor and will be equipped with the necessary tools to alert security or emergency services in a discreet way should they ever need to.

On the flip side, new starters need to feel a sense of independence and some prefer to learn at their own pace which retailers should respect. Whilst guidance is important, new hires shouldn't feel smothered as that could affect their performance. Using smart devices, they can collaborate more effectively during busy festive periods when it's hard to find time for a team huddle or extracurricular bonding activities. Being connected at all times can also help keep the festive team spirit alive, even when colleagues are working on the opposite side of the store.



Ready for the festive fever



To conclude...

As the golden quarter is just around the corner for retailers, it can put a lot of pressure on already thinly stretched colleagues. Hiring seasonal workers will offer a huge help, but only if head offices put a good onboarding programme in place which includes on-the-job training and encourages adoption of smart technology in stores to streamline tasks.

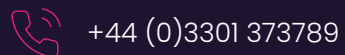
Thanksgiving and Christmas present the perfect opportunity to delight shoppers, help them get into the festive spirit and build longer-term loyalty. It's key, however, retailers are able to take the momentum of the festive season and maintain it throughout next year. So, how they prepare now ahead of the busy period will be key.



About VoCoVo

Established in 2016, VoCoVo drives transformation in retail communications to maximise operational efficiency and enhance customer experience for leading global retailers. Now connecting over 100,000 colleagues in 21 countries through voice, their retail-ready hardware, software, and smart integrations power store teams across Grocery, Home Improvement, and Fashion.

VoCoVo is growing fast and is trusted by household names in the UK, Europe, Australia, and North America. The company has a list of accolades, from regional Business of the Year and Innovation awards to 5th place in the Sunday Times Tech Track 100.



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