

## Prepare for peak summer demand

**Summer offers great opportunities, as well as challenges, for your business as better weather draws people outside and tourists explore new areas across the country. This change in season can introduce new customers to your products and services, and generate income to offset slower periods. But the warmer weather can also mean increased demand, requiring you to work longer hours, manage larger crowds, and train additional seasonal help.**

Below are some suggestions to help you make the most of this busy season, while minimizing pressure on you and your staff.

### **Plan ahead.**

You will need to begin planning early to help manage the summer rush. One great way to start is by evaluating all the demands that were placed on your business last year. To plan your resources, identify when you experienced peak cycles for sales and staffing requirements — and when extra cash flow was needed to cover increased wages, supply orders, or other seasonal costs. Once you've determined this, set up a cash reserve to help cover rapid growth or unexpected costs.

As for staffing, you'll be in a good position if you hire and train your seasonal staff ahead of the rush. Outsourcing some of the duties you or your staff normally handle can also free your time to take care of your customers' needs.

Also, consider what tasks could be handled offsite. Using a virtual assistant, a person who works remotely from home, can provide you with administrative or technical support, such as processing service enquiries. Or, hiring a bookkeeper can help you keep your accounts up-to-date and allow you to focus on increased sales.

During high-volume sales periods, running out of inventory can be a concern. To be prepared for the rush, stock up on non-perishable products. If you don't have enough storage space, or you need to order fresh food products regularly, you can still set up your accounts with any seasonal suppliers ahead of time to arrange for quick delivery.

When you're looking forward to a busy summer, you can also make plans for contests and promotions. And working with other local businesses, through your Business Improvement Association or Chamber of Commerce, will enable you to plan cross-promotions that will appeal to your customers.

### **Make sure customers can reach you.**

You will also want to ensure customers can easily reach you, and that you continue to provide timely processing of phone and Web orders during this season of increased demand. You may require additional phone lines, voice or data services. If so, Accelerated Delivery\* from Bell can get you connected quickly and conveniently. You can order services and get them installed as soon as the next day. If you would like more information on this service, call 310-Bell (310-7070 in Québec) or speak to your Bell representative.

In a season that often involves more business and leisure travel, use Business IP Voice from Bell to ensure customers and suppliers can always reach you. The "Find me/Follow me" feature provides your clients with a single number to reach you at several locations based on your call forwarding schedules, so you won't lose business opportunities. You can also forward your calls to one or several numbers using Single Number Reach from Bell.

### **Online ordering and bill management.**

Processing orders through your Web site provides convenience for customers who may also be busy or traveling during summer. Bell provides a complete range of Web services, including Web site hosting, ecommerce and Web site design services — everything you need to get your Web site online and to begin selling your products and services, quickly and easily.

You can save time by managing your business IT and telecommunication accounts electronically. Online Bill Manager service from Bell allows you to view your Bell IT and telecommunication bills, make payments online and provide your company with detailed record keeping. You can also integrate these records with your accounting system to save additional energy and time.

Smart use of available technology and time can help make this summer a great season for your business. With your seasonal plan in hand and the right tools to support your business, you will be better prepared to take advantage of new business opportunities and provide great service to your customers.

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