

Customer Service operatives dread Black Friday and Cyber Monday

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It is widely reported that Black Friday weekend can bring out the worst in people determined to get themselves a bargain. Footage of irate customers fighting with each other to claim heavily discounted televisions in a supermarket aisle is commonly replayed on news channels alongside statistics of consumer spending over the promotional period.

Whilst these sensationalist images reflect some of the more extreme bad behaviours displayed during Black Friday and Cyber-Monday, there is a growing trend of negative behaviour towards customer-facing workers.

Figures in October from the Institute for Customer Service (ICS) showed people in public-facing jobs are experiencing an alarming rise in hostility and verbal abuse since the end of the Covid lockdowns. Half of all shop, transport, restaurant, hotel, customer service workers, and others dealing regularly with the public have experienced abuse in the past six months. This is a 6% rise over May's 44%.

The Black Friday weekend is likely to magnify these trends, as are people keener than ever to snap up a bargain and avoid missing out on heavily discounted goods. Most shopping will be done online this year, so it's likely that Customer Service Operatives could end up bearing the brunt of bad customer behaviour; so, what can companies do to protect their front-line staff?

Technology offers valuable solutions to alleviate the pressures and workload that Customer Service teams will experience over the Black Friday weekend. Implemented in the right way, services such as chatbots and voicebots can do the heavy lifting by responding to high volumes of general enquiries, freeing up time for operatives to focus on the more nuanced queries.

"Customer Service Operatives are often the face of a company, but we regularly see teams left to manage incredibly high volumes of customer queries without the right tools. Under-equipped teams will result in long call waiting times which adds to customer frustration, so that when they do get through to an operative, they are more annoyed than when they first called in" commented James Matthews, UK and Ireland Country Manager for CM.com.

At a time when companies in the UK have cut budgets and reduced team numbers due to the pandemic, leveraging the advantages afforded by technology can plug the gap and dramatically improve customer service for both consumer and team members. Without this change, promotional events like Black Friday will only continue to add to the pressures within customer service teams, and ultimately lead to burn-out and increased staff turnover.

[Research](#) conducted by CM.com in May this year, found that of the 200 Customer Service Representatives surveyed, over half (54%) said workplace stress was somewhat or much more stressful during the last year. The increase in workplace stress among customer service representatives is explained by several factors, chief among them being a growing workload and the impact of the pandemic bringing more customers online. Clearly, organisations need to recognise and address these challenges to protect the wellbeing of their employees and ensure there is no knock-on effect on their ability to provide good customer service

Retailers will be thinking about how to maximise sales over this coming Black Friday weekend, but with increased sales comes increase customer enquiries. Ensuring that customer service teams are well equipped to support this increase in activity is vital in not only giving customers a good service, but also protecting staff and their wellbeing.

Companies are starting to wake up to this issue as unemployment rates shrink and competition for talent increases, it's never been more important to put the right measures in place to support Customer Service staff and front-line workers.

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