

# WFM for the Holidays

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## Holiday Forecasts

The holiday seasons bring special seasonal patterns at the monthly and quarterly forecasting levels, but don't stop there! If you drill down even further you will find that holidays also affect your normal day-of-week patterns. This means that you should replace the week before, during, and after the holiday occurrence with a special trend that most closely represents the holiday behavior of your customers.

These special patterns become even more special on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve; the time-of-day pattern is disrupted because consumer calls tend to drop off around lunch time and never really pick back up.

**2010 is going to be a very odd year** where these "eve" days fall because the US Federal Holiday Calendar is calling for Christmas Day to be observed as the day off on Friday, 12/24/10. This means that you cannot use a "Friday Christmas" holiday pattern, because the eve day for 12/23 will not follow the traditional eve patterns. The same thing happens with New Year's Day, which is actually being observed on Friday, 12/31/10 this year, even though it's being counted as part of the total 2011 holidays.

## Holiday Schedules

When it's time to generate holiday schedules, pay special attention to any remaining vacation that needs to be taken before the end of the year. Sometimes employees believe that their vacation will automatically be carried over into the next year if they do not schedule it in the current year. The workforce manager role is the perfect place to keep track of these company policies so that the schedules they create are in full compliance with time off and attendance rules.

Holiday weeks are a good time to experiment with longer lunches and schedule flexes because call volume distribution is abnormal and this is a great way to use that to your advantage. Longer lunches are nice because it allows people to shop and also allows teams to have special celebrations. If there is a push from HR for annual open enrollment of benefits, these longer lunches can be staged to coincide with these meetings so that you still get optimum occupancy rates from your schedules.

A weird item that can create a small headache is dealing with holidays that fall on a regularly scheduled day off, or a holiday in the middle of a family/medical leave of absence. Check your internal policies before it happens so that you are treating all of the holidays fairly to everyone.

## Key Holiday Metrics

The key metrics to watch during the holiday season include:

- \* Schedule adherence, because it's important to explore extra capacity during lower volume times and take advantage of that with off-phone activities that can occur between calls
- \* Shrinkage assumptions, particularly before/after a holiday, because people like to extend holidays with vacation and personal time off and you don't want to be caught off guard with too many people out at the same time unexpectedly
- \* AHT, especially if you use seasonal help since less experienced employees may drive the handle time curve up.

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