

Eight festive season survival tips for small businesses

 By [Daryl Blundell](#)

10 Dec 2015

For small businesses, the festive season might be their busiest time or an opportunity to regroup for the New Year. Here are eight ways to make the most of the holidays.



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1. **Make a staff roster**

Draw up a list of the employees available, the employees on leave and those who will be on call in case of a crisis or an urgent customer request. Distribute it to your team so that everyone knows which staff resources are available.

2. **Touch base with suppliers, customers and other contacts**

Check on your business partners' festive season schedule so that you can make other arrangements if, for example, your usual IT provider will be on holiday or a supplier you depend on will be shutting down. If you're a B2B company, perhaps give big customers a call to find out whether they anticipate needing your support. Also, thank your clients and suppliers for their support and wish them well for the holidays and New Year.

3. **Give advance notice of your holiday opening hours and delivery times**

Send emails to people with whom you do business to let them know if you are closing for the holidays, changing your operating hours, or adjusting your usual turnaround times for customer requests. You could also post this information on your website and social media accounts, or put it on customer invoices and statements. Ensure that your website and your voicemail detail which days you will be closed and how customers can contact you in case of an emergency.

4. **Prepare your customer service and social media employees**

If you have a consumer-focused business, the festive season is probably your busiest time of the year. It's a good idea to ensure that there's someone to answer the phones, reply to emails, and respond to social media during the holiday season. Brief them on frequently asked questions, such as your exchange policy or lead time for repairs.

5. **Invoice early**

Make sure you send out your statements and invoices on around 15 December so that you can chase collections early in January, if needed.

6. **Do something thoughtful for the staff members holding the fort**

If you have people working during the week from Christmas to New Year, they might appreciate a small gesture to thank them for working while their friends and families are celebrating. You could offer them a day of bonus leave, order a special meal or give them a small gift.

7. **Catch up on your admin**

Most small business owners get so caught up in the day-to-day rush of meeting customer deadlines and selling their services that it is easy to fall behind on admin. If the summer holidays are traditionally a slow time for your industry, why not use the breathing space to get up-to-date with your accounts, draw up budgets, tie up unfinished projects and do your filing.

8. **Get geared up for the New Year**

Make sure that you can start the New Year in high gear by drawing up your strategic plan for the year and setting up meetings with key partners, customers and suppliers. That means you will be two weeks ahead of everyone else as 2016 begins.

ABOUT DARYL BLUNDELL

As MD for Sage SSB (start-up and small business) Accounting South & Southern Africa, Daryl Blundell oversees the growth of the business and the development of solutions that help SMEs to grow and succeed. The Sage solutions under his watch are Sage One Accounting and Sage Pastel Accounting. Blundell brings 20 years experience in a range of sales, business development and management positions with organisations such as Ariel Technologies, Sun Microsystems, Systems fusion, Burlington Air Express, and Xerox.

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