

Pre-Peak Ops Readiness *checklist*

THE BACK END IS READY BEFORE THE VOLUME ARRIVES. MARKETING PLANS THE PROMOTION.
THIS IS THE HALF NOBODY PLANS, AND IT IS WHERE A RECORD PEAK BECOMES AN EXPENSIVE JANUARY.



A peak season that sells through is a marketing win and an operations event. Ticket volume runs three to five times normal for six straight weeks, the WISMO wave lands the moment carrier networks slow, and returns arrive in January when the team is already running on fumes.

None of that is a surprise. It is a schedule. This checklist works backwards from peak week so the back end is ready before the volume is. It assumes you already have a small team, because what breaks at peak is rarely headcount you never had. It is the two people you do have, at capacity by week one.

Pre-Peak Ops Readiness *checklist*

8 WEEKS OUT CAPACITY AND STOCK

- ☐ Forecast units at conservative, expected and sell-out cases, by SKU rather than by total
- ☐ Stock confirmed physically at the 3PL, not just on the PO, with the reorder cut-off dated
- ☐ 3PL notified of expected peak volume in writing, with your daily unit ceiling confirmed back
- ☐ Carrier cut-offs and the last guaranteed delivery date confirmed for every region you ship to
- ☐ Packaging and inserts counted against the sell-out case, not the expected case
- ☐ Support capacity planned at 3x normal for six weeks, not for peak weekend
- ☐ Weekend and holiday cover booked and accepted now, before the team makes their own plans

WHY EIGHT WEEKS

Anything that needs a person hired, trained or booked has to start now. An operator brought in during November is a cost, not cover, because they will still be learning your catalogue when the volume lands. Eight weeks out is the last point where extra capacity is still cheap.

4 WEEKS OUT THE ANSWERS

Everything a customer might ask at peak, answered before they ask it.

- ☐ Every product page carries a dated delivery cut-off for peak orders
- ☐ Shipping and delivery expectations updated sitewide, not only on the bestseller
- ☐ Gifting questions answered in the help centre: **gift notes, delayed delivery, ship-to-recipient**
- ☐ Returns window extended for gift purchases, and the extension published where buyers see it
- ☐ Support macros written for the top 10 predicted peak questions
- ☐ Refund, replacement and goodwill ceilings raised for peak and confirmed with the team in writing
- ☐ Escalation path agreed for peak-specific issues, with a named owner and a named backup

WHERE THE TOP 10 QUESTIONS COME FROM

Last peak's inbox, not this year's guesses. Export the tickets from the same six weeks last year and count them. If you have no export, take the ten most common questions on your bestseller and add the three gifting ones.

PEAK WEEK WATCH THESE FOUR

WATCH	CHECK EVERY	ACT IF
Ticket volume	2 hours	It passes 3x normal on two checks running. Pull in cover before the backlog forms, not after.
First response time	2 hours	It doubles. Volume has already won. Switch to macros and work the queue oldest first.
Inventory accuracy	4 hours	Store and 3PL disagree at all. Pause that SKU and reconcile.
Failed payments or checkout errors	1 hour	Any at all. Escalate immediately. Peak traffic finds every checkout bug you have.

1 WEEK OUT THE DRY RUN

- ☐ Place a real test order end to end, including the confirmation and shipping emails
- ☐ Test the tracking link on mobile, on the carrier's site and not only on yours
- ☐ Test a refund and an exchange on the test order
- ☐ Confirm inventory sync between store, 3PL and every marketplace you sell on
- ☐ Post the peak roster: who is on, what hours, what they own, and who covers the handover
- ☐ Confirm the support inbox is monitored from the first minute of the promotion, early-access hours included

PEAK +7 DAYS THE WISMO WAVE

This is when it lands. Plan for it rather than absorbing it.

- ☐ Proactive update sent to every peak order still in transit, before they ask
- ☐ Stalled-tracking alert active at 72 hours, with a named owner for the alert queue
- ☐ WISMO macros in place and personalised at the top line, naming the order and the item
- ☐ Any carrier delay communicated before customers notice it, with a new dated window

JANUARY THE RETURNS WAVE

The wave that arrives after your peak cover has ended. Nobody staffs for it.

- ☐ Returns capacity planned at 3x, staffed past the date your peak cover finishes
- ☐ Exchange offered before refund on every return that can be exchanged
- ☐ Extended gift-returns window honoured without argument, and the macro says so plainly
- ☐ Peak tickets tagged and reviewed in the first week of January, so next year's checklist writes itself



THE ONE LINE TEST

If peak runs three times what we expect for six weeks straight, who is answering the inbox in week four?

Answer it before October. If the answer is you, that is the item to work on next.

NeoScope holds a limited number of Q4 surge pods each year, allocated by the end of September.