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Peak Season Checklist

Is your delivery operation scaling, or just surviving?



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The waiting game: when is the right moment?

A successful peak season begins months before sales surge.

When demand is stable, inefficiencies are easy to ignore. In peak periods like Black Friday and the holiday season, they become glaringly obvious.

If customer experience goes downhill because of volume, shoppers blame the brand, not the logistics.

Take the self-assessment quiz →

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Strategic self-diagnosis

Check off the points that you can back up with data.

Then add up your points to get your result.

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Capacity design and planning

- [ ] We know exactly how much additional volume we can absorb without adding vehicles
- [ ] We've simulated surges in demand (+15% / +30%)
- [ ] Route planning is systematic (doesn't depend on a "key person")
- [ ] We can replan routes in minutes when unforeseen issues arise

If your response is "it depends", that's luck rather than control.

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Real-time visibility and control

- ☐ We have real-time GPS visibility of our own fleet and third parties
- ☐ The system highlights potential delays before they become a problem
- ☐ We can identify which deliveries are at risk at any given moment
- ☐ We measure service levels daily by client and by route

In peak periods, reacting late is as disruptive as not reacting.

Customer experience

- [ ] Clients receive a reliable dynamic estimated time of arrival (ETA)
- [ ] Status updates are automatic (no more phone calls and emails)
- [ ] We notify customers proactively when plans change, before the customer complains
- [ ] We stick to time windows even when orders surge

Proof of delivery

- [ ] 100% of deliveries come with digital proof of delivery (POD)
- [ ] We can respond to delivery complaints within ten minutes
- [ ] We have traceability for each delivery via photos or signatures
- [ ] We analyse the causes of failed delivery to prevent future incidents

Without digital evidence, each claim is a lost sale.

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Scalability and reliability

- [ ] We can accommodate 25% more orders without hiring more staff
- [ ] The planning workload doesn’t grow at the same rate as sales volumes
- [ ] Our processes are standardised and documented on one platform
- [ ] We know exactly how much rescheduled deliveries are costing us

If increased volumes cause chaos internally, that's waste, not growth.

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Delivery maturity score

0-8 Reactive operation

High risk of disruption. Peak will amplify each friction point until deliveries break down.

9-16 Functional, but vulnerable

You're operating well today, but hidden costs will impact profitability when you're under pressure.

17-21 Future proof

Operations are designed to scale. Peak is your opportunity to compete.

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Hidden cost of improvisation

Losing control during peak puts the bottom line at risk.

Rescheduling
Redeliveries eat into margins.

Penalties
Fines for missing service level agreements (SLAs) with retailers.

Customer churn
One bad experience impacts loyalty.

Employee churn
Attrition as staff tire of being in “firefighting mode”.

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Go from guesswork to control with last-mile delivery solutions from Descartes

Intelligent optimisation

Scalable planning that maximises fleet utilisation.

Total visibility

Fix exceptions and disruptions before they arise.

Proactive customer experience

Automated communication gives customers confidence.

Expert advice

Benefit from 40+ years of logistics experience with fleet operators globally.

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Will your operation survive or thrive this peak season?

Don’t wait for sales volumes to catch up with you. **Book an expert consultation** to turn peak season into the best time of the year.

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