

CASE STUDY

KEEPING THE ASSOCIATE EXPERIENCE UP WHILE SCALING DOWN



As a people-first organization, we believe in treating associates just as well on the way out as you do on the way in.

When one of our national e-commerce clients struggled to fill open positions, we discovered that a dip in its local reputation was adversely affecting our ability to fill.

A few focus groups later, we realized that the care and pride we took when onboarding associates wasn't matching how they were treated when the time came to scale down their seasonal assignments.

Our goal was simple: To prioritize our clients' scaling-down processes just as much as their scaling-up approaches so the associate experience was always central.

Our reasons for addressing the scaling-down processes stemmed from a couple of prominent issues.

THE CHALLENGE: BAD EXPECTATION SETTING

The first was frustration among our associates regarding the lack-of-work (L.O.W.) protocols they encountered at the end of peak seasons. When consumer demand declined, clients made quick decisions to inform associates of a lack of work, leaving some feeling blindsided when they were let go. That poor communication created a negative brand experience, which made it harder for them to fill vacancies during future hiring surges.

Plus, there was a lack of clarity about which associates would (and would not) transition to full-time roles. Some clients hired seasonal employees, who assumed that a full-time opportunity would materialize later. In reality, only a small percentage of our associates actually got full-time positions. Ultimately, this left the majority feeling disappointed and misled.

In both cases, a lack of clarity from our clients left associates feeling confused and upset. Offboarding means just as much to the associate experience as onboarding, and we wanted to prevent those communication lapses from negatively impacting the associate experience.

THE SOLUTION: SCALE DOWN – DON'T LET DOWN

The associate experience should be positive from the first day to the last. Here's what we did to improve that experience for everyone involved:

1. Build a Ramp-Down Plan

To minimize communication lapses and keep the associate experience consistent throughout, we decided to build a scaling-down process for seasonal associates.

To start, we looked at the departments and shifts most often affected by demand drops. We then put steps in place to keep those associates on for longer periods. For example, we advised retailers to move inbound associates to returns departments to cross-train them on new skills and keep efficiency high.

Of course, sometimes scaling down is unavoidable. In these cases, the ramp-down plan should include identifying the best performers and preparing seasonal employees for the possibility that their assignments will end.

We created a pre-L.O.W. email to send to seasonal workers that detailed what they could expect as their assignments wound down. We offered résumé assistance and contact information for local recruiters who might have job leads going forward.

A ramp-down plan shows associates that you are realistic about the assignment timeline and that you value their time and effort. And when associates feel cared for — even when being let go — it reflects in their experience.

2. Delegate Responsibilities

With a process in place, it's time to put people in place to carry those duties out with empathy and clarity so associates feel supported.

Members of our team collaborate with the client to schedule a L.O.W. meeting, ensure the associates who need to be there are in attendance, and help facilitate the conversation so nothing gets lost in translation.

Before the meeting, we work with the client to have enough team members available to answer questions, provide emotional support, convey any next steps, and continue to address lingering issues that might arise. Our team then coordinates with the client to make sure L.O.W. associates have enough time to clean out their lockers and turn in their security badges. We also reiterate the company's gratitude for all of their hard work.

By having extra bags and enough personnel resources handy for associates to help make last-day logistics simple, you're ensuring that employees can end their assignments with dignity. And they'll remember the gesture.



3. Create a Safe and Informed Space



Once we have the people who will relay the news, we want our in-person associates to have as much support and information as possible when discussing L.O.W.

We invite associates together in a room, taking note of any personal belongings or responsibilities that might bring them back to the floor. From there, we sit everyone down and run through the necessary information.

Though the tenor of the news isn't positive, it's important that associates feel comfortable with the manner and tone used to deliver that news. Being thoughtful throughout the process helps position your company as a caring brand that values current (and former) associates.

4. Conduct a Positive and Productive Downscaling Meeting



The downscaling discussion is uncomfortable, which is why we lay it out as a positive and productive talk of 15-20 minutes. We follow a standard L.O.W. script that covers all of the necessary bases while still coming across as personable, empathetic, and sincere.

Each associate receives a handout with a "thank you" letter and some FAQs from the HR team. The senior client leader then addresses the room to express verbal appreciation for everyone's work.

Once the conversation concludes, the senior agency manager offers a handshake and sincere thanks to every associate. Then, agency staff allows employees to collect their belongings before escorting them from the premises and gathering any badges or company materials.

5. Perform Proactive Follow-Up

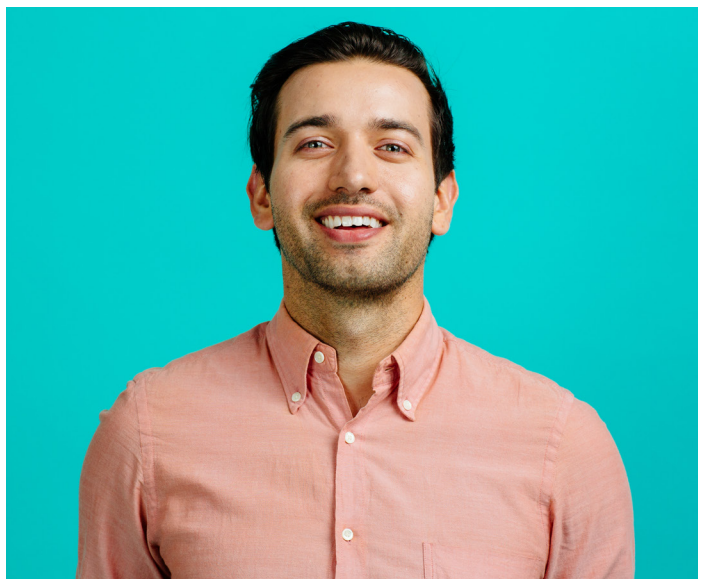


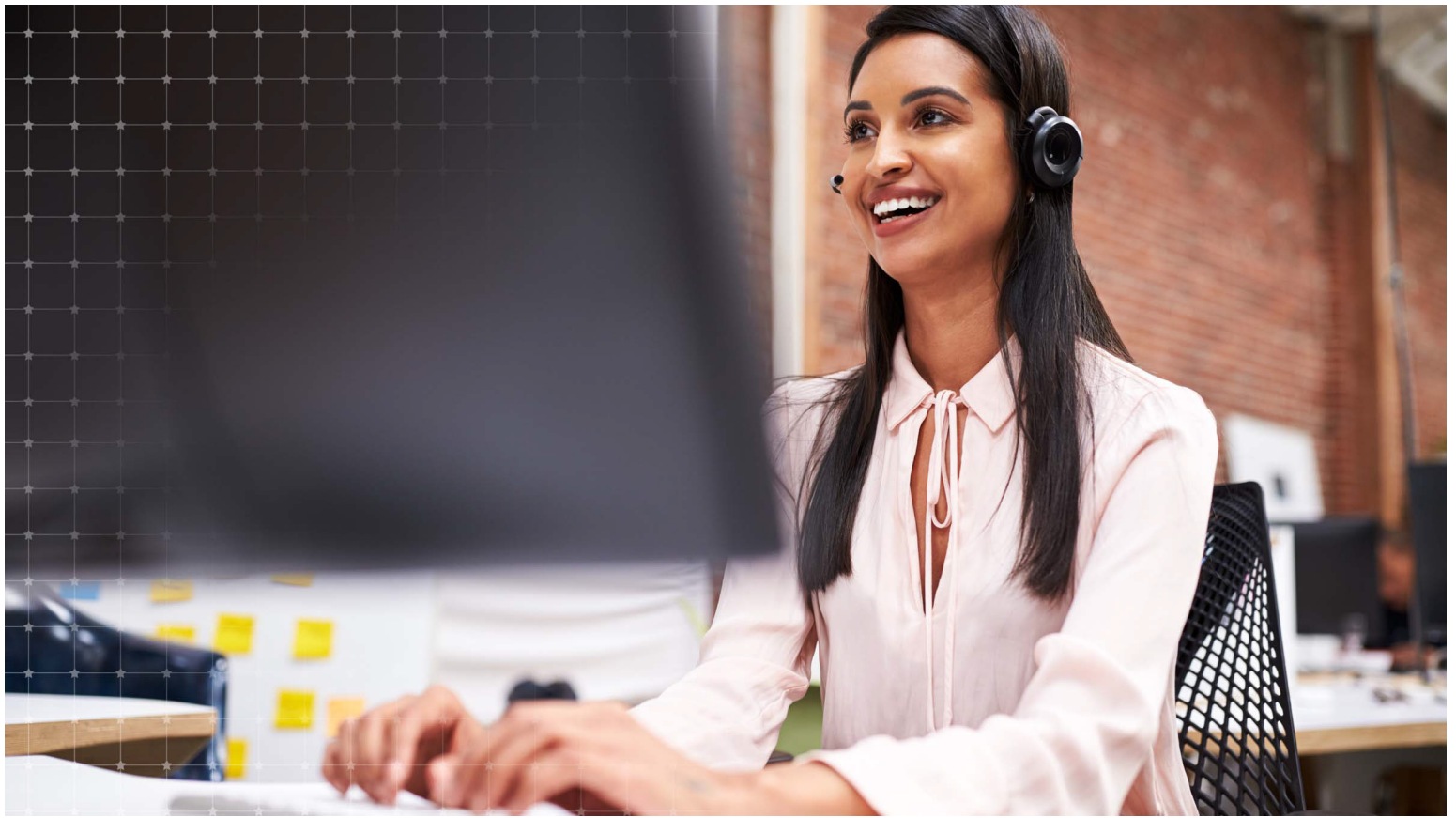
Any odds and ends that fall outside of the downscaling meeting are appropriately handled. We make sure candidates clock out and are paid in full on their final day. Regardless of whether a meeting happens in the morning or toward the end of the day, we keep it consistent so anyone overseeing the process knows the protocol. Finally, we try to provide transportation accommodations for bus riders and anyone else on the grounds to show gratitude for their work.

6. Complete Payroll



Stay in communication with associates about when they should expect their final paychecks. We provide all associates with contact information should they have any questions about their checks. We also try to account for regional regulations that might occur with termination and ensure payroll is on it. And if someone is let go before they expected, we work with operations to supply them with a \$100 bonus to show an extra bit of appreciation.





THE RESULTS: AN ASSOCIATE-FIRST EXPERIENCE FROM

The successes have been twofold. For our client, the shift led to an improved local reputation. Consequently, that yielded higher rehire rates and lower recruiting costs.

What impact has it had on the associate experience? It enabled us to build a complete and associate-friendly journey that's transparent, empathetic, and mindful of associate needs. And it allowed us — and our clients — to be reputable and reliable career partners that associates can come back to time and time again.

LET'S TALK.



Integrity Staffing Solutions is a full-service staffing agency and ranks in the top 2% of agencies across the country for quality service based on ClearlyRated's "Best of Staffing" client survey.

1-833-446-1300 | sales@integritystaffing.com
integritystaffing.com

JOIN US ON SOCIAL     