

SYKESHOME MANAGES FINANCIAL PARTNER'S EXTREME PEAK SEASONS BY MAXIMIZING FLEXIBILITY



> Brand Partner

Our brand partner provides financial management solutions that simplify the business of life for consumers, small businesses and accounting professionals. They reached out to SYKES for help supporting one of their flagship products, a best-selling tax preparation software for filing taxes online.

With a broad customer base ranging from individual consumers and small business owners to tax practitioners and contractors, our client's peak demand periods are incredibly fast-paced. In their words: "A year is a month, a month is a week, a week is a day, a day is an hour and an hour is a minute."

> Challenge

When it comes to providing customer care for financial services, supporting tax-filing software presents some of the most complex and extreme peak demand requirements in the industry. To meet that demand, our client relies on a network of outsourcing partners to provide high-quality customer service at a competitive rate. When one provider failed to meet performance standards they sought a new partner who could fulfill all their requirements for flexibility, quality and security.

These criteria included:

- Flexibility to handle dramatic seasonal scaling:
 - First peak in January and February to serve early tax filers and customers likely to receive a refund
 - Second peak in April to serve customers filing returns or extensions just in time to meet the tax deadline
 - Third peak is one day in October for those filing last-minute to meet the extension deadline
 - Major staffing scale-backs in between peak periods
- Need for a proactive partner capable of recognizing and mitigating potential issues instead of needing the client to point out problems after the fact
- Affordable, high-quality customer service both during and between peak periods

> Our Solution

To meet our client's unique seasonal needs SYKES created a customized solution based on three key success factors:

1. Implementing a “carousel” model to deliver maximum staffing flexibility and quality.

Carousel staffing provides the ability to train and retain top agents for peak demand periods and transfer them to another account during off-season. The carousel model minimizes training time around each peak season ramp-up because returning agents are already familiar with the product's functionality as well as the client's processes and policies.

2. Providing a flexible service at a competitive rate while preserving security levels.

While SYKES customer service analysts knew SYKESHome, our proprietary work-at-home (WAH) service delivery model, would be key to providing quality, flexible service at a competitive rate, the brand partner was concerned about the security of customers' sensitive information. To alleviate these initial concerns, we started with a 80/20 remote/in-office staffing split to demonstrate how SYKESHome is able to keep customer information as safe and secure as in a traditional service center environment.

3. Applying creative learning strategies to reduce training time.

Our brand partner's timetable required agents who could essentially self-train — proactive self-starters who learn by doing. Recognizing the inherent difficulties with training this way, SYKES' training specialists developed a custom solution: We identified agents struggling with training and created small group re-training sessions based on their needs. For example, some sessions were designed to cater to different learning styles while others targeted specific subject matter.

Highlights include:

Delivering high-quality customer service and performance.

- Achieved a Net Promoter Score* (NPS) of 56 on peak demand days; core team currently performing at a +70 to +80
- Placed first among the client's network of service providers with an NPS 10 points higher than the network average during the “blitz” period, which involved high-volume hiring with limited training to assist on Tax Day only
- Delivered an NPS of 46 during the 4/1-4/18 peak period, despite the majority of SYKES agents being new to the program
- Clocked an average handle time (AHT) 6 percent lower than all other network providers
- Earned an 80 percent call resolution (CR) rate on peak days
- Achieved an average 89 percent rate for documenting and closing (Doc) cases, as well as the highest Doc rate in the network on peak days at 86 percent

Providing maximum staffing flexibility at a competitive rate.

- Met un-forecasted coverage needs related to the government's last-minute passage of a sweeping tax reform package
- Quickly flexed staffing up to accommodate last-minute IRS deadline extension
- Successfully ramped past the initial goal of 200 agents to 500 FTE as needed for the January season, continuing to 560+ for the April tax deadline
- Moved to 100 percent remote agents to maximize flexibility and savings after earning the brand partner's confidence in the security of the SYKES work-at-home model
- Reduced training time from 10 to 3 days
- Added more than 700 “jumper” hours (over-time extra hours) on peak days to help with network staffing

* With the Net Promoter Score (NPS) range of -100 to +100, an NPS of +30 is considered “proficient,” +50 is “excellent.”