

CONTACT CENTERS:

5 Keys to Remaining Efficient During Disasters



The 2017 hurricane season was an unusually busy year, pushing many in the contact operations space to their limits. Ten Atlantic-based storm systems reached landfall resulting in what National Geographic classified as the most expensive hurricane season in history:



\$265 billion
in damages



450+
deaths



4 hurricanes
made US landfall
within a 44-day period



95%
of the Gulf Coast
affected



How can we use 2017 to prepare for 2018?

The time to prepare for 2018 is now. With current hurricane forecasts indicating that the 2018 hurricane season could be a repeat of 2017, leading contact center operators are using 2017 to drive their disaster strategies for 2018.

In developing these disaster strategies, there are four questions to address:

How do I...

Reduce inefficiencies?

Consumers will be busy preparing for or dealing with the impact of the event and may not be reachable or desire contact at this time.

Avoid customer hostility?

If you do reach out to someone who has been affected by a natural disaster, it's highly likely you'll face some hostility as they'll be focused on the event, and not your outreach.

Protect my brand?

Beyond remaining functional and operational, you want to protect your brand from the negative press.

Eliminate compliance risk?

Customer complaints or other adverse actions might result from improper contact attempts.

The five keys to remaining efficient

With the often-unpredictable nature of natural and man-made disasters, understanding how to pivot and adjust your approaches to each unique event has a lasting effect on your ongoing operations.

The key is to keep up with disasters without disrupting your workflow.

How is this accomplished?

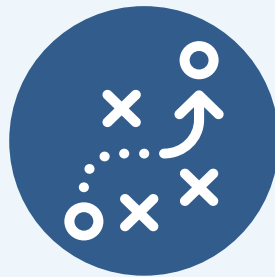
Here are the **five steps** that all contact centers should follow:



Put people first



Be proactive



Map your strategy
to the disaster



Use your
intelligence



Communicate
clearly with
your team

Put people first

What does this mean?

As simple as it sounds, it's about changing your thinking with your customers; they are people first and business commodities second. Adjusting your approach to put the customer's individual needs ahead of the business allows you to better align your outreach efforts during disastrous times.

How you can improve

1. Check in on your customers

It doesn't always have to be about business. Use low friction ways to check in on a customer, including website and mobile surveys or emails. Keep this outreach "sales free" and instead take a humanitarian approach to ensuring they are safe.

2. Understand your customer's reality

Provide customers with the assurance that you understand what they are going through. Amplify communications before the event if possible, followed by periods of silence for disaster preparations, during, and immediately after the event. Wait until the customer is open to your message before reengaging. Additionally, develop programs tailored to the disaster, identify customers as disaster victims when they reestablish contact and train your agents on how to understand and handle affected customers for both inbound and outbound interactions.





Be proactive

What does this mean?

Develop strategies that get ahead of disasters. You can use previous disasters as guides to refine and improve your existing processes (or as the guiding force to create your processes if you don't have any).

How you can improve

Continuously refine your disaster strategies. Go beyond business continuity and disaster recovery to planning for the customer experience during disasters.

Take the time to regularly review your strategies to identify improvements to be made in the customer experience during:

- Anticipated and unexpected disasters
- Shifting or unpredictable disasters

Additionally, schedule ongoing leadership disaster training to ensure your teams have a clear understanding of how to reach customers during a disaster, including:

- What constitutes a disaster?
- Who should provide direction?
- What channels should be utilized for information?
- How will the strategy be implemented from the top down?



Map strategy to disaster

What does this mean?

Not all disasters are the same, so we cannot expect a single strategy to address all disasters. Instead, individual strategies must align to varying disaster types.

How you can improve

Ensure you have strategies in place to match all types of disasters, both natural and man-made.

At a minimum, these plans should address:

- Communication strategies for before, during and after the disaster
- How to avoid unnecessary communications during disasters
- Appropriate communication channels

Regularly review these disaster strategies to ensure that the processes are still up to date and adjust as needed.





Use your intelligence

What does this mean?

You don't have to rely on your intuition or judgment alone to develop your strategic plans. Instead, use available industry data to make educated decisions.

How you can improve

When it comes to data, you can never have too much. So don't depend on a single type for information on disasters. There are numerous trusted, real-time data channels available that go beyond basic weather monitoring like the National Weather Service and FEMA. Make sure you have access to:

- Evacuation notices
- Power outages
- Mail/Delivery suspensions
- Government, business, and school closures

Remember, without a complete picture you cannot make accurate decisions.



Communicate clearly with your team

What does this mean?

Inefficiencies in internal communications can destroy your reputation among your customers.

How you can improve

Understand the disaster's reach and its impact on your operations. Disasters rarely affect isolated areas, but instead, have tentacles that extend far beyond the initial impact area.

Communication must be very efficient during the disaster onset as events will be unfolding at a rapid pace. Recovery after the disaster will be slower but needs a more detailed analysis and explanation to effectively communicate the areas ready for reengagement.

Make sure you can accurately monitor these growing impact areas and distribute strategy updates to leadership teams to disseminate to influential parties, including internal operations, partners, and customers. The goal is to create unambiguous direction across your entire ecosystem in real-time.



Doing it right means creating and sticking to your strategies, while also remaining flexible to the shifting nature of disasters. **Consider these 5 steps as the foundation** to creating lasting disaster strategies that can elevate your operations and your brand.



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If developing and maintaining strategies with real-time updates sounds daunting, it doesn't have to be, thanks to **ContactRelief's Disaster Decision Engine.**

ContactRelief's Disaster Decision Engine monitors 24/7 for disasters, both natural and man-made, and provides users with customized inbound and outbound contact recommendations based on configuration rules that align to their business practices, allowing them to proactively message their consumers before or after a disastrous event, or suspend all contact until the event is over.

When you rely on ContactRelief, you know you are in good hands as our system delivers hyper-accurate information on weather, disaster declarations, infrastructure capability, recovery efforts, and restoration timetables.



The Disaster Decision Engine



Free 30-day Trial. Experience the Disaster Decision Engine!



Seeing is believing. The best way to experience the power of the Disaster Decision Engine is to see it in action. For a limited time, we're offering a free 30-day trial of ContactRelief so you can see for yourself how the Disaster Decision Engine can improve your disaster-oriented operational planning, reduce your inefficiencies and create a positive customer experience.

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