Executive Summary

The common challenges in supporting federal contact center mission requirements are those of quick ramp-up and call volume surges. Because every emergency or significant change is dynamic, being prepared for those changes and anticipating change by staying agile is integral for success. The following challenges are common with ramp-up and surges:

- Defining and implementing specific project performance and implementation in an abbreviated timeframe (ramp-up or surge).
- Quickly establishing an in-depth Implementation Plan in conjunction with the client.
- Successfully completing recruitment, training, and staffing requirements during the ramp-up or surge period.
- Obtaining the required telecommunications capacity within a short timeframe (3-5 days vs. 45 days).
- Providing comprehensive training within a short timeframe (3-5 days vs. 30 days).
- Establishing a process for ongoing project tweaking and testing during the ramp-up or surge period to integrate any job specification changes, client updates, etc.
- Managing the complexities associated with full project implementation.
- Ensuring that client service levels are achieved from project start date through ramp-up or surge.
- Ensuring that the Contracting Officer’s Technical Representative (COTR) and Program Manager (PM) have adequately discussed the timelines required to perform any background checks, drug screenings, required for employee vetting, etc.

Senture, LLC of London, Kentucky has been providing contact center solutions to federal government agencies since its incorporation in 2003. To be successful in supporting government contracting, it is vital that Senture not only understand the challenges every contract poses, but have a plan to overcome each of them. As a small business whose initial objective was to support federal government agencies as a subcontracting partner to large systems integrators, Senture has firsthand experience with a myriad of challenges associated with project ramp-up or surge. The following pages outline Senture’s approach in solving those challenges—the “how-to” of fulfilling rapid staffing and adjunct support operations and procedures to handle large surge requirements in a matter of days (vs. weeks) to meet an immediate public need. These lessons learned can be applied to future contact center quick ramp-up initiatives to facilitate delivery of the required set of services.
I. Introduction

Key success factors for ramp-up or surge involves as much planning as possible. Senture uses the following step-by-step approach for quick-ramp and/or surge projects. Every department within Senture that is involved during ramp-up or surge must perform their respective responsibilities efficiently and on time; there is simply no room for error during the ramp-up or surge phase.

A. Step 1—Planning
   1. Step 1 involves gathering detailed customer requirements. This provides background and information to help in the planning process.
   2. Define goals of the program.
   3. Define capacity (facilities, technology, and staffing).

B. Step 2—Preparing
   1. Recruit and hire appropriate staffing levels.
   2. Secure and configure existing facilities.
   3. Order, install, and configure technology.
   4. Develop software solutions or load content into existing solution.
   5. Train staff.

C. Step 3—Activating and Operating
   1. Manage changes in information content (key messages, recorded scripts, Q&A, and knowledgebase).
   2. Debrief at the end of shift. Information updates.
   4. Provide just-in-time training.
   5. Adjust schedules to meet demand.
   6. Monitor quality and provide feedback.

D. Step 4—Demobilizing
   1. Determine triggers for reducing or changing surge.
   2. Communicate results and document lessons learned.

II. Issues and Challenges

A. People

From Senture’s past experience, a major issue is trying to identify and learn the customer business needs. Senture recommends the partner hire a content/communications resource to initially learn the customer business needs and function as the central point of contact. This resource is the single point of contact with the client prior to and during any ramp-up or surge activity. The benefit is that this resource understands the customer’s business and already has a relationship before the ramp-up or surge event occurs with the government agency.

During the past four years, Senture has supported some of the nation’s largest federal government call center initiatives. Key projects supported by Senture that required a challenging ramp-up or surge and a brief summary of those project requirements, including staffing, are as follows:
Effective surge staffing for any project cannot be accomplished without the full complement of human resources personnel needed to recruit, screen, evaluate, hire, and train the necessary staff for the project. All too often, the Human Resources Department can be understaffed and unprepared to handle huge ramp-up projects that are short-term in nature. Senture has worked diligently to ensure that its Human Resources Department is well prepared to handle such projects and has taken the following steps to ensure ramp-up success on every project:

- Senture continuously takes applications in the communities in which we serve. Far too often, good employees who are interested in applying for a position are unable to do so because companies do not accept applications unless they are hiring.

- Senture’s Human Resources staff tries to gather as much information as possible about the applicant’s willingness to work; i.e., whether the applicant is willing to work part-time, full-time, weekends, shift preferences, etc. Senture’s Human Resources staff also performs background checks, reference checks, drug screening, and personality profiling to better understand each applicant’s qualifications and their ability to perform the job on a day-to-day basis. We do this on an ongoing basis, not just when we have an immediate requirement or opening.

- We also inquire as to whether the employee would be willing to work on a temporary call-in basis. Senture has had success in this regard and has steadily built our temporary call-in staff to provide assistance during unplanned ramp-up requirements.

- Senture also maintains a pool of “Ready Reserve” candidates. This is a group of experienced call center agents who are called upon with as little as one hour’s notice to fill in for vacations, absenteeism, and/or other personal employee leaves.

### B. Process

**Senture recommends that processes be documented prior to quick-ramp/surge events.** For example, call escalation or call flow triage procedures need to be documented and approved in advance so they can be implemented immediately upon surge notification. Second tier or Subject Matter Experts are contacted with confirmation of roles and participation. **Senture’s designated PM documents the processes and procedures.** In addition to implementing the personnel procedures, the PM works closely with the Information Technology staff to test processes and procedures to ensure the proper infrastructure support is in place prior to any surge event.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Systems Integrator Partner</th>
<th>Period of Performance</th>
<th>Ramp-Up or Surge Requirement in Days</th>
<th># Agents</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census</td>
<td>Vangent</td>
<td>11/09 – 08/10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>I/B and O/B Call Center Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-800-MEDICARE HHS CMS</td>
<td>Vangent</td>
<td>09/08 – 01/11</td>
<td>&lt;30 (in each of three years)</td>
<td>1,620</td>
<td>Tier 1 I/B Customer Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash for Clunkers Department of Transportation</td>
<td>Vangent</td>
<td>08/09 – 09/09</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>750+</td>
<td>Clerical Support to Process CARS Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCC Digital TV Conversion Phase I</td>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>02/09 – 03/09</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>Tier 1 and Tier 2 English and Spanish Help Desk Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCC Digital TV Conversion Phase II</td>
<td>TeleTech</td>
<td>05/09 – 08/09</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>Tier 1 and Tier 2 English and Spanish Help Desk Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Changes often occur during project ramp-up or surge. Far too often, there is no formal change process in place for projects. As a result, the contractor may find themselves in a situation where they are forced to make changes required by the client without going through the appropriate documentation, testing, and pricing that is so vital for this critical project phase. Not having a formal change process in place can lead to a host of errors, reporting issues, and inconsistency among agents concerning job understanding. Managing and implementing the change process for scripting, reporting, capture instructions, etc., is requisite in achieving strong customer satisfaction and ramp-up or surge success. Senture has established a strong change process that clearly defines the objectives, methodology, and reporting responsibility for any changes identified.

The change process can be presented during the actual proposal submittal for the contract and implemented by the PM immediately upon their assignment to the project. Senture requires the PM to meet with the government agency’s COTR immediately upon contract award to openly discuss the project change process and how it functions in supporting the government’s contracting initiative. This ensures that the government agency has a complete understanding of how they will be affected by the project change process and can provide meaningful dialogue about any concerns or issues they may have with the project management process.

C. Physical Space

It is important for the call center partner to make the agency aware of facility locations and capacity to aid in surge planning. Being prepared for ramp-up or surges includes having the physical plant, hardware, and software infrastructure in place to accommodate the influx of personnel and the tools they need to accomplish the job. The table below outlines the locations of Senture’s presently owned facilities, the square footage, and number of seats each facility can accommodate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Square Footage</th>
<th># Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London, KY #1</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>1,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London, KY #2</td>
<td>52,400</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London, KY #3</td>
<td>33,250</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Vernon, KY</td>
<td>8,250</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester, KY</td>
<td>8,300</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annville, KY</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monticello, KY #1</td>
<td>23,500</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monticello, KY #2</td>
<td>9,650</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booneville, KY</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocala, FL</td>
<td>9,300</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>291,850</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,550</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These available resources allow Senture to accommodate large ramp-up or surges. Senture has repeatedly been able to effortlessly reconfigure its facility infrastructure to accommodate some of the nation’s largest projects. To accomplish this, we have implemented a number of very critical actions that we think are important that surge partners be required to support:

- We maintain an inventory of systems, monitors, and workstations to accomplish quick ramp. This ensures the project can be brought online quickly without having to order equipment. In the event additional equipment is needed, Senture has relationships with existing hardware vendors that allows receipt of equipment within 3-5 days.
- Quick ramp-up or surge requires facilities that are already cabled, wired, and ready to go and an IT staff available to support any issues that might arise concerning new cabling/wiring or reworking of existing cabling/wiring. Senture not only has the facilities, but IT personnel on hand to accommodate such needs.
- All of Senture’s facilities may be added to Senture’s existing fully meshed network in a matter of days.
D. Technology

Minimum technology requirements are as follows:

- Automated routing, greetings, and menu options.
- Continuous distribution of calls to the next available agent.
- Data collection that meets the client’s reporting needs.
- Self-service IVR recordings and call path routing.
- 24/7 technical support and backup systems.
- Seamless integration between facilities.

E. Community Partnerships

Senture recommends building ongoing strong community relationships with local job shops, state employment services, and local vocational and high schools in the area—all of which are key in supporting rapid staffing. The more employers involve all aspects of the community, the better success they will have in their recruiting efforts, as these relationships reduce recruiting costs and provide an ongoing steady flow of personnel to assist during the ramp-up phase. Another key element in developing strong community relationships is to periodically conduct job fairs in counties where we recruit staff. This provides the local communities with an awareness of who Senture is and provides much-needed help in mass recruitment. Senture utilizes all of these resources not only today, but when it ramps up a major project.

F. Leadership Communication

Successful leadership in any project requires constant communication and the ability to change as requirements change. To enhance communication, as well as provide clients with a current view of their operations, Senture provides performance results via a “dashboard.” Senture also recommends daily operational calls with the customer to update performance results, provide feedback, and implement changes or training to better prepare the agents.

G. Customer Satisfaction Metrics

It is essential to oversee, manage, and ensure the customer’s quality expectations are met during ramp-up or surge. During this period, Senture has learned the importance of QA monitoring and providing immediate feedback to the agents. Senture initially monitors twice the number of calls required to ensure the desired quality level is achieved. This additional monitoring provides valuable feedback to both the Training Coordinator and the customer, as well as promotes confidence in what is being done.

III. Sample Senture Case Studies

A. Federal Communications Commission Digital TV Conversion

Issue

Teletech, serving as the FCC’s prime contractor for the Digital Television conversion (DTV), was required to provide 4,000 FTEs for Tier 1 and Tier 2 support beginning in April 2009 for a “surge” the week of the actual conversion (June 12, 2009), then ramping down through August.

Solution

Senture provided oversight and management support, as well as facilities and infrastructure for this effort. Recruited, screened, hired, and trained 300 bilingual agents, including all the Tier 2 Spanish support as well as 650 English agents, over the course of a six-week period. Developed a QA database to automate quality monitoring requirements, and also automated hourly and daily reporting requirements.
Results
Due to exceptional service throughout the life of the contract, Senture was eventually the only location taking outsourced calls on behalf of the FCC and the contract was extended for two additional months. Senture maintained service levels well above expectations and exceeded quality expectations by more than 20%.

B. US Census Bureau, 2010 DRIS Call Center Services

Issue
The Census, taken every 10 years, is a huge challenge involving inbound and outbound contact center support. Senture was the only small business selected to provide contact center services for the 2010 Census.

Solution
Senture recruited, screened, hired, and trained over 2,000 CSRs, and additional support staff between December 2009 and April 2010, providing over 1,250 seats. Senture provided oversight and management support, as well as facilities and infrastructure for this effort.

Results
Senture’s London, KY facility was utilized for the project. It underwent C&A in December 2009 and received an ATO shortly thereafter. Senture received accolades from its prime contractors and the Census Bureau. The project finished three weeks ahead of schedule, saving Census $1.8M.

C. US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Beneficiary Contact Center (BCC)

Issue
BCC required annual support in 2008, 2009, and 2010. It is one of the nation’s largest call center initiatives, requiring nearly 8,000 CSRs. Senture, as a subcontractor to Vangent, provided Tier 1 and Tier 2 inbound CSRs who processed general Medicare beneficiary inquiries.

Solution
Senture hired 870 CSRs in less than six weeks in 2008, 350 CSRs in less than six weeks in 2009, and 400 CSRs in less than six weeks in 2010 to support this effort. Senture provided oversight and management support, as well as the facilities and infrastructure for the effort. In addition to its primary site in London, KY, Senture provided a secondary site in Monticello, KY to serve as additional capacity for CSRs needed in excess of 1,000 FTEs as well as a redundant site for natural disaster backup.

Results
All CSRs were successfully hired and trained to handle the surge requirements. In 2009, 440,000 calls were handled in a three-month period. 99.92% of calls were answered within 20 seconds and .22% for abandoned calls. Senture also achieved a score of 96.66% for overall schedule adherence, with an average quality score of 98.36%.
D. Department of Transportation (DOT), Car Allowable Rebate System (CARS)

Issue

Due to the overwhelming success of the ‘Cash for Clunkers’ program, DOT needed additional support to process the CARS applications in a timely manner.

Solution

Senture, as a subcontractor to Vangent, recruited, screened, hired, and trained 750 CSRs and additional support staff in one week. Senture also provided oversight and management support, as well as the facility and infrastructure for the effort. Several processes were automated, including the review and quality process, to facilitate better controls and reporting.

Results

All CSR staffing objectives were achieved. Process automation provided more timely access to information and Senture was able to catch the program up (it had fallen significantly behind) in 70% of the allocated time. Senture’s efficiency was duly acknowledged by DOT representatives, who thanked Senture for their efforts.