Well, we all know that the retailers and the big toy stores can certainly kick it into high gear to meet increased customer demands, especially during the holiday season. But how does a small business do it? In this week's Small Business World Report, The Wall Street Journal's Lynnette Khalfani shows us one company that has mastered the process.

LYNNETTE KHALFANI reporting:

This coming Monday is Yom Kippur, the most important day of the Jewish year. After fasting for 24 hours, many Jews will break their fast and have a big family meal, and that means big business for ACME Smoked Fish company in Brooklyn, New York. The week proceeding Yom Kippur is the single biggest week of the year for ACME. This week it's moving one million pounds of fish or 10 percent of the total product it will handle for the entire year. Mr. DAVID CASLOW (ACME Smoked Fish Co.): So this will give you an idea of what the finished and what a raw material piece would look like.

KHALFANI: David Caslow is vice president of operations at ACME. Here at the company's plant, everyone, reporters included, must wear hair nets and smocks.

Mr. D. CASLOW: And safety comes first here, and making sure that nothing damages our product is really the primary focus.

KHALFANI: ACME is a case study in how businesses, even small businesses, can ramp up to meet a surge in demand for a holiday season. And the demand is for everything from these cold smoked salmon fillets to this white fish that's being cured and hung out to dry. But this is the heart of ACME's operation: a newly installed high-tech system to slice and package all that fish quickly and safely.

Mr. D. CASLOW: A long, long time ago...

KHALFANI: OK.

Mr. D. CASLOW: ...20, 30 years ago, this stuff used to be hand sliced. This--it's all now machine sliced. These are the highest tech machines that they make.
KHALFANI: David's uncle, Robert, is ACME's vice president. He says the new system has drastically boosted productivity.

Mr. ROBERT CASLOW (ACME Smoked Fish Co.): David's been keeping percentage increase on what we're producing. We would be working 10- and 12- and 14-hour days every day to keep up with the demand and now what he seems to be doing is--in eight hours, possibly 10 on an occasional day.

KHALFANI: Russ & Daughters in New York's Lower East Side is one store that sells salmon from ACME. Owner Mark Federman says that like ACME, he, too, is preparing for an onslaught of business just before the Jewish holiday.

Mr. MARK FEDERMAN (Russ & Daughters): This weekend there will be a line probably around the corner. And the wait on Saturday will be an hour to two hours, and on Sunday, three to four hours.

KHALFANI: Rob Landauer lives in Westport, Connecticut, but he stills come to Russ & Daughters to buy fish and get ready for a big family dinner the evening of Yom Kippur.

Mr. ROB LANDAUER (Customer): So we're going to have about 25 people--about 12 adults, 13 kids. I bought two different kinds of lox. I bought a white fish salad, white fish and baked salmon.

KHALFANI: Well before you can buy salmon and other types of fish products at stores like this one, the folks at ACME Smoked Fish company have been working hard to make sure that those fish products make it to stores like this one on time, but it doesn't stop there. And the process is probably a lot more complicated and takes a lot longer than you might think.

Mr. ERIC CASLOW (ACME Smoked Fish Co.): You plan half a year in advance. You go to your sources of supply. You talk about scheduling a product, increasing--they have to ramp up. You have to organize the sch--the logistics of getting enough product to you in--in a timely fashion.

KHALFANI: ACME president Eric Caslow says some items require even more planning.

Mr. E. CASLOW: With the aquaculture product, salmon from Chile, we work closely with a particular supply source. They need to grow the fish to the appropriate size, and it requires literally 18 to 24 months of coordination to pick up this period.

KHALFANI: Still, he and other ACME officials say in the end, it's all worth it.

Mr. E. CASLOW: If all parties are working carefully together, integrated, it gets done. It's harrowing while you're doing it. You're--you're--you're fearful that, 'I hope I'm making the right decisions,' because you're producing so much goods that if you're wrong by 5 percent, it's a lot--it's a lot of product. So you work hard to produce it and you pray hard that it gets sold.

KHALFANI: Now a couple of other interesting things about ACME--all of their products are kosher. They even had a rabbi on staff full time. And as for their new production system, it's been working better than expected. They say that it's among the most innovative thing that the company's done since it began back in 1954. Sue, back over to you.