

Call Center Times

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From the Publisher's Desk

Are you looking for ways to improve business processes at your call center through the acquisition and implementation of new technology? (ACD, IVR, Call Monitoring Systems, etc.)

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Regards,
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Cartoons Capture the Attention of Call Centers Operators

As all of us who are in the call center industry know running a center is no laughing matter. Dealing with behavioral problems as diverse as poor call quality, absenteeism and harassment makes the management of large employee populations a very serious business.

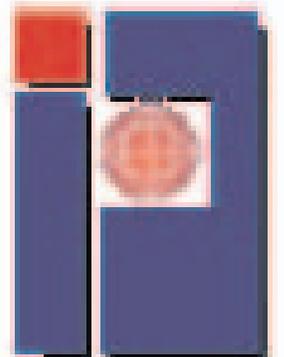
However that doesn't mean that laughter and the appropriate use of humor can't be used very effectively to deal with difficult situations in employee training and communication.

At least that's the point of view of MaraStar Communications an employee training and communications company in Paoli, PA that develops and distributes business animations that are being used by major companies throughout the US to deal with behavioral issues.

The cartoons are actually called ToonUps because they are used to tune up performance and enhance employee communications. The message may be customized for one person or broad enough to send to the entire office as a message of

the week. They can even be displayed in a PowerPoint presentation.

Handling customer calls, office etiquette, communication skills, diversity, harassment, and dealing with difficult callers are just a few of the topics these cartoons tackle. For example, one animation depicts a dry cleaner dealing with an angry customer. A werewolf, who enters the store growling angrily, plays the customer. Instead of becoming aggravated, the dry cleaner remains calm and defuses the situation. By the end of the conversation the werewolf turns back into a man leaving



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as a satisfied customer.

Ray Hansell, 55, of Villanova, founded MaraStar with partner Marysue Lucci in 1999. The duo previously built RMH Teleservices, one of America's largest teleservices firms, in Bryn Mawr, which went public in 1996 with a market valuation over \$100 million.

"We were always conjuring up this idea but never took it anyplace because we were busy building the other business," said Hansell. "Earlier in our careers we had worked as corporate trainers to help improve call-center operations. One of the things we frequently did in the context of our corporate training experience was we used humor to try to break down defenses and get people to open up."

After leaving RMH Teleservices in 1998, Hansell and Lucci explored Internet investment opportunities. One of the companies they investigated used Macromedia's Flash program for animation.

"We thought, 'Wouldn't it be neat if you could create animations that basically do what old-fashioned quality or safety posters do, but in a much richer and more personal way?'" Hansell said.

After taking six months to assemble the team and create the prototypes, they presented a variety of business

appropriate cartoons to focus groups. They received extensive feedback from corporate executives like telesales managers, customer service representatives, training managers and information technology managers.

"What they really liked were the short little bursts, which we would come to call 'ToonUps,'" said Hansell. "We got some great ideas from them. Focus group participants said, 'We would like you to put in some 'Toon Tips' at the end so that the message gets carried home to the employee.' In addition, they wanted customization and personalization as much as possible."

Of the roughly 500 accounts, MaraStar handles many large companies such as ADP. They do a lot of work with financial and insurance companies like American Modern Insurance Group. Nonprofit organizations like San Antonio Water also use their cartoons. "An awful lot of nonprofits have customer call centers or other large employee population groups that they want to communicate with," Hansell said.

Many of their clients use the MaraStar program entitled "ToonUp Your Call Center"(TUYCC.) Included in this program are animations that address the issues common to call center operations. MaraStar users typically select the animation

they wish to use and then incorporate them into weekly meetings, for example, quality issues. They can also use them to send to an entire group or to individuals to address various call handling issues that were observed during a monitoring session.

As one of MaraStar's clients observed recently, "These animations are an excellent way to deliver positive messages to employees and to reinforce training initiatives that may otherwise lapse into problematic behavior."

For the past few years MaraStar has offered these product via annual subscription to their various libraries of animations sent from MaraStar's website. Customers simply log onto the www.marastar.com and send the personalized messages to their intended recipients. This web-based method offers a safe, inexpensive and convenient way for users, although it does limit the usage and the users ability to customize the actual animation files.

As a result of feedback from some of their larger accounts MaraStar is currently developing packages for major users that will enable them to obtain unlimited perpetual licenses to the MaraStar libraries including the original source code thereby enabling the customer to change/modify the animations in any fashion via the use of

"Flash" software from Macromedia.

"Making people laugh is no longer just a laughing matter but one that Corporate America is taking very seriously" Hansell added. "By offering unlimited capability and perpetual licenses to our larger corporate customers we fully expect them to take advantage of this unlimited control and flexibility to shape the animations in ever more creative ways in order to better address the ever challenging world of corporate communications and training."

To learn more about MaraStar, visit <http://www.marastar.com/tuycc.asp>

NEWS

TIME AMERICA AND GLOBAL MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGIES ESTABLISH STRATEGIC MARKETING ALLIANCE

Scottsdale, Ariz., – Time America, Inc. (OTCBB: TMAM) has entered into a strategic marketing relationship with Atlanta-based Global Management Technologies Corp. (GMT), a leading provider of workforce optimization solutions to provide real-time scheduling and tracking of employee time and labor data.

The alliance enables Time America and GMT to provide automated labor



management with scheduling optimization for customers that require a sophisticated means of scheduling and tracking employee data. GMT's software, GMT Planet™ interfaces with Time America's 100 percent web-based NETtime® application to provide a turnkey workforce management solution.

Commenting on the alliance Roger Avats, President and CEO of GMT stated, "We found Time America's products to be a natural fit with our workforce optimization solutions. The ease of use and scalability of NETtime ensures a solution that meets the needs of any customer size."

GMT provides powerful workforce optimization software solutions that are sophisticated and easy to use. Their applications enable companies to make sound workforce management decisions - increasing productivity, profitability, and employee satisfaction.

"We believe this relationship will help customers in industries that require a more sophisticated level of scheduling and workforce optimization to effectively manage and utilize their labor resources. Using GMT Planet and NETtime, customers can schedule the correct employee, for the right task, at the appropriate time," stated Jonathan Weiss, Vice President of Business Development for Time America, Inc.

NETtime is a 100 percent web-based time and

labor management solution offered as a hosted or licensed application. Accessible from any computer with Internet access, NETtime provides powerful tools that help companies know exactly where their workforce time and dollars are spent. NETtime drastically reduces the amount of time spent calculating and entering employee data.

About GMT

GMT (www.gmt.com) makes companies more profitable through effective workforce management. GMT delivers its workforce optimization solutions by listening to what our customers require and cost-effectively delivering those features. GMT Planet, the company's flagship product, is a flexible workforce management and workforce optimization solution that adapts to meet the needs of contact centers, processing centers, financial institutions and entire enterprises. GMT is also the developer of CashMaster™, the world's leading cash management and forecasting application for financial institutions. ■

Envision Launches Business Consulting Group

Seattle — Envision Telephony, Inc., a leading provider of business solutions for the contact center and the enterprise, announced its new business consulting service.

Envision's business consulting group is designed to help companies achieve a maximum return on their technology investment by providing interactive, results-oriented sessions for tackling real-life contact center challenges.

Heading up the group is Connie Smith, Envision's chief evangelist. Smith brings more than 20 years of contact center and consulting experience to the group. "Envision has been doing this for years with its customers," said Smith. "We want to formalize the program so that other companies can improve their quality programs and customer relationships through contact center and enterprise best practices."

As well as offering customized business consulting, Envision will offer a complete menu of on-site programs to evaluate, improve or redesign quality programs, benchmark coaching efforts, as well as evaluate ways to utilize business intelligence to improve contact center and enterprise performance.

"Our consulting program will connect the dots between technology, best practices and improved performance," said Ted Lubowsky vice-president of sales & marketing at Envision. "It is critical that companies investing in technology to improve quality and performance receive assistance and feedback to maximize the benefits and results of that technology."

Envision provides business solutions that link contact centers to the enterprise, driving best practices throughout the organization to create the superior customer experience and measurable business value. The Envision™ Performance Suite includes business intelligence, workforce management, full-time recording, quality monitoring and eLearning solutions.

Availability

Detailed information about Envision's Business Consulting is available by calling 206.225.0800, ext. 257 or via e-mail at businessconsulting@envisioninc.com.

About Envision

Envision is a leading provider of software solutions that empower businesses to produce profitable and enduring customer relationships from customer interactions. Since its founding in 1994, Envision has focused on improving the effectiveness and performance of contact center agents to create measurable value for the enterprise. In 2004, Envision introduced a new suite of applications to provide business intelligence and analytical tools to the enterprise for achieving "The Superior Customer Experience." The company's scalable, integrated products are used by some of the world's most customer-focused companies in a variety of



industries, including financial, utilities, telecommunications, software and insurance. Envision has offices in Seattle, Australia, Atlanta, UK and Amsterdam. For more information, call 206.225.0800, ext. 500, or visit <http://www.envisioninc.com>.

■

Genesys and Viecore, Inc. Enhance Partner Services to Accelerate Speech Adoption

San Francisco and Upper Saddle River, N.J. - Genesys Telecommunications Laboratories, Inc., an Alcatel company (NYSE: ALA, Paris: CGEP.PA), and Viecore, Inc., a leading systems integration firm specializing in enterprise level self-service solutions for customer contact, announced that the two companies have broadened their existing partnership to deliver enterprise-wide speech-enabled self-service solutions to vertical markets including: financial services, insurance, healthcare, utilities and retail.

Together, Genesys and Viecore have a successful history of architecting and installing a wide variety of computer telephony integration (CTI) solutions using Genesys' framework for the enterprise. With the new agreement, Viecore will work with Genesys to accelerate enterprise adoption of speech technologies and will provide opportunities to develop

speech solutions for the Genesys Voice Platform (GVP), recognized as an industry-leading, open standards-based IVR solution.

■

Symon Communications Celebrates 25th Year,

Continues Uninterrupted Profitability and Growth

Revenues increase 25 percent; net income up 100 percent; success attributed to product innovation, launch of expanded professional services and global growth

DALLAS – Symon® Communications, Inc., a leading provider of real-time enterprise information for productivity and performance management, has completed its 24th consecutive year of profitable growth and kicked off the “Silver Anniversary” of its founding in 1980. During 2004, Symon’s revenues rose in excess of 25 percent while year-over-year net income grew over 100 percent.

Symon attributes the company’s success to coordinated efforts on several fronts, including product innovation, where the company successfully implemented the newest robust versions of Symon Enterprise Server® (SES) software and developed the NetLite II® Blue LED panel, an

industry first, and new releases of Symon Community® workforce management software. Also, the launch of Symon’s expanded Professional Services team has had a major impact on the company and its clients. Globally, Symon has continued its trend of international expansion, led by the company’s India operations with year-over-year growth of 80 percent plus in India.

■

Captaris streamlines workflow for GRA and SAP America

Captaris, Inc. (NASDAQ: CAPA), a Business Information Delivery Solutions provider, is streamlining the way Gadaletto Ramsby & Associates (GRA), a Michigan insurance services firm, is handling customer inquiries and managing its records with Captaris Alchemy. GRA has created an efficient workflow environment that minimizes paper-based documents, alleviates pressure on **customer service representatives**, provides an indexed electronic archive, and provides immediate access to critical documents, via the Web, for its customers. “Our biggest challenge has always been paper,” said Carter Weslock, GRA’s director of information systems. “We wanted a workflow environment that provided an electronic file cabinet, simply indexed and

easily accessible by our **call center representatives**. And, we wanted a solution that could be accessed by the agents to monitor the details of their contracts and other critical business records.” GRA has created Virtual Private Networks for each of its insurance agents. Agents log onto the Web, input certain search criteria and pull documents directly from the Alchemy database, view, download or print out what they need, alleviating the necessity to contact the **GRA’s call center**. This cuts out a great deal of time for the reps and at the same time, take some pressure off the call centers. It also helps GRA comply with regulations that stipulate retention policies for various types of insurance contracts. In addition to the streamlined workflow for GRA, Captaris RightFax did the same SAP America in enabling SAP to deliver business-critical information to partners and customers worldwide. SAP installed RightFax Enterprise Server and the RightFax Microsoft Exchange Gateway in several U.S. and international locations—including SAP Labs North America—to address increasing growth and integration requirements. Now, having used RightFax for more than four years, SAP finds it easier to manage multiple phone lines and fax machines. SAP continues with plans to extend RightFax to all of its U.S. employees.



“Integration of RightFax with SAP has saved time and expense,” Daniel Larot, systems engineer with SAP Labs, said. “Once we implemented RightFax, the automated faxing required less human effort ... saved on consumables and provided ROI in a short time.” Furthermore, RightFax integration with Microsoft Exchange enables SAP employees to handle in- and outbound faxes at the desktop. They view, send and receive faxes directly from Microsoft Outlook; the streamlined workflow leads to increased productivity and mobility for SAP professionals in the office and on the road.

CALL CENTER OF THE YEAR SERIES

Leading ISP Dials Up ClientLogic for Rebate Processing

Rebates are a memorable part of the purchasing process—a powerful last impression that impacts product satisfaction and brand perception. Unfortunately, rebates are often a neglected, forgotten piece of the promotions puzzle. Thanks to technology, customers now enjoy lightning-fast Web service, overnight shipping and instant online chat. Why, then, does it still take 12 weeks to get a rebate check?

Market research indicates that only 50% of customers that qualify for rebates actually apply to receive payment. But for those customers that do go the distance, companies must deliver a swift, efficient experience or risk losing them forever. This is especially dangerous for an ISP (Internet service provider), given the market’s month-to-month subscription model, extreme competition and high customer acquisition costs. ClientLogic understands that the modern customer will not tolerate a slow, confusing service process. To support its industry-leading client base, ClientLogic decided to build a rebate solution that would revolutionize the industry. ClientLogic set out to reduce rebate turnaround time from weeks to days and apply the solution for a leading ISP – with great results.

REINVENTING THE REBATE

While numerous companies employ rebates as a strategy to acquire customers, the process is often long and belabored for the consumer. So to stick to its customer-driven approach, one leading ISP knew it needed a different kind of rebate: a fast, convenient and easy rebate with ample customer support. It turned to ClientLogic.

The ISP’s former rebate-processing provider struggled with manual data entry, slow

processing times and poor bank reconciliation reporting. In order to use rebates as a way to increase customer sign-ups and make a positive first impression, ClientLogic developed a fully integrated and personalized rebated processing program for the ISP. ClientLogic launched—in a mere 60 days—an innovative item processing program to handle the ISP’s customer gift cards and rebates. ClientLogic began by collaborating with the ISP to alter the rebate form itself to maximize scanability and minimize manual data entry. This new form, coupled with ClientLogic’s high-speed imaging and scanning technologies, enabled ClientLogic to cut rebate turnaround time from 8-12 weeks to 5-7 days. It also boosted data accuracy and consistency, enabling the client to deflect costs and prevent customer complaints.

SPEEDY SCANNING AND SERVICE

ClientLogic’s rebate process begins when a consumer purchases a qualifying PC and signs up for the client’s Internet service. While the rebate varies depending on the offer and length of sign-up, it generally falls between \$100 and \$400. Once the customer fills out the rebate form, ClientLogic’s work begins: receiving and entering the rebate request, verifying rebate eligibility, assigning account numbers, checking for duplicate submissions

(suppression processing) and printing the check. Even ClientLogic’s payment process is customer-centric: each check is printed on a high-security check with custom messaging, such as, “Anna, congratulations on your new PC. Thank you for signing up!” All customer information is stored in the ISP’s central data repository, which is accessible by ClientLogic agents should a customer call with a question. Allowing for mail time, customers generally receive either a rebate check or a notice of ineligibility (specifying why or what the customer needs to send in order to qualify) within 10 days.

CLIENTLOGIC “THINKS LIKE A CUSTOMER”

ClientLogic’s new rebate service bucks the trend of poor rebate support. As reported in the *Washington Post*, “Customer service of rebates seems to get perpetually worse. When consumers try to apply for a rebate, they often get trapped in a ‘rebate jungle.’” But ClientLogic’s client doesn’t mind partnering in innovation on behalf of the customer—it’s part of their long tradition of letting the customer drive the experience. And how do customers feel about the fast, accurate rebates? Well, given that customers are waiting on checks valuing from \$100 to \$400, rebates are no trivial matter. The client measures the success of the program by a significant



reduction in customer complaint and inquiry calls, and increased service sign-ups. And how does ClientLogic measure success? Their ISP client is delighted and several new clients have embraced the ClientLogic solution over the past few months, which means word is getting around: "ClientLogic has reinvented the rebate."

ESSAY

The Next Step: Moving From Workforce Optimization to Operational Optimization

by Alton Martin, CEO COPC, Inc.

Few will deny the need for help in managing the complexities that make up the call center environment. Most in the contact center industry are familiar with software tools offered to help in workforce management. In general, these applications are designed to deal with the issues that surround staff scheduling, tracking, and demand forecasting. Of late, new tools have emerged under the umbrella of "workforce optimization" that offer a more comprehensive approach, addressing the need for management of other key operational process components such as

budgeting, strategic planning, performance evaluation, skill-gap analysis, recognition and rewards systems.

For the organization looking to improve workforce management, such tools can provide the mechanisms that can help them begin to meet the challenges faced in the call center environment.

However, for the organization that is prepared to impact its entire operational process in such a way that not only improves workforce management and performance, but positively impacts profitability, customer satisfaction, and overall ROI as well, there are ways to add value to their basic workforce optimization efforts.

This "value add" piece is critical to bringing the entire process together. Without it, tools become limited, in most cases, to functioning as boilerplate solutions that often provide little more than the improvement of efficiency in a few operational areas. With it, appropriately selected tools can become part of an integrated process that creates a culture of continuous improvement. With it, workforce optimization moves up a level and becomes total *operational optimization*.

Steps to Operational Optimization

Identify the Overall Goal of the Organization

Before considering the implementation of any program it is vital that the organization have a clear understanding of its overall goals and objectives. This may sound rather obvious. However, unless executive management is able to identify and consistently articulate the "big picture" to middle management and staff, the operational process is fragmented. It is these goals that must drive the operational process. In turn, any mechanism to improve workforce performance must support the attainment of these corporate goals. Each employee must understand not only what is expected of them individually and as a member of their department, but also how they impact the achievement of corporate goals overall.

Identifying Key Tasks

Once goals are clearly articulated, the next step is to determine how each component of the operational process should feed into, support and promote the achievement of those goals. These components should then be broken down into key tasks – the nut-and-bolts of the operational system that can be monitored, improved, and measured, together with the employees responsible for their execution. In this way the entire process can be

streamlined and managed for maximum performance, and problem areas can be identified before they threaten the entire process. Training and recruitment also become more effective as skill sets required for each task are identified.

Once the over-arching corporate goal has been put into focus and key tasks identified, a model of an operational process can be developed. One that suggests objectives and skill sets required in order to move the entire process smoothly and efficiently toward goal. This, in simplest terms, is operational optimization.

Each element of the call center operation can then be examined against this model to determine the extent to which it promotes or hinders realization of the goal. As a result, objectives contributing to the success of the complete operational process can then be set for individual tasks and component processes.

Developing Metrics for Key Tasks

Setting metrics for key tasks has a powerful effect on performance. Being clear on what is expected energizes a level of performance improvement that results in operational optimization. It brings focus to the efforts of the workforce. For management, it creates a consistent means of measuring performance together with pro-



active identification of potential problem areas, allowing for timely and appropriate intervention. It also stimulates a type of ownership and self-accountability that raises the bar for employees across the board.

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Identifying Problem Areas

Determining areas that need improvement is the next step toward operational optimization. It is important to establish problem areas not only as they manifest in a particular area of operation, but by ascertaining root causes and subsequent effect on other components of the operational process.

One of the most effective ways to identify areas of weaknesses in performance and disconnects in the process is the use of an operational baseline audit. Such an audit is best performed by an independent consultants with expertise in call center operational performance improvement. Prior to the audit, the consultant meets with management to determine the organization's goals and objectives, strengths and weaknesses, using this information to develop a plan for use during the audit. The plan is then reviewed with both management and staff in order to promote the all-important commitment of the entire organization necessary for successful implementation of the level of change necessary to effect operational optimization.

Following detailed process audits of all key tasks, findings are analyzed and reviewed with management. The consultant can then make recommendations for actions to be taken in order to begin the process of operational improvement.

Measuring Performance Against an Independent Standard

To insure a consistent and appropriate measurement, performance of key tasks should be evaluated against an independent standard.

Using an internally generated standard is a flawed approach. Regardless of how rigorous a criterion the organization believes it has set for itself, using a self-generated standard to measure operational performance is comparable to offering internally audited financial statements against a loan. Both are vulnerable to bias and subjectivity that dilutes their effectiveness as well as their credibility.

Electing to pursue certification to a recognized and respected standard provides criteria for continual process improvement together with a comprehensive model covering all aspects of contact center operation.

Care should be taken in selecting a standard that will give direction and maintain contact center operational excellence. Here are some things to keep in mind:

Clearly outline the rationale and objectives for implementing a standard for improvement.

Consider carefully if the prospective standard provides a well-defined roadmap for reaching those objectives.

Test the standard for is Return on Investment (ROI) by segmenting your analysis into relevant time frames. The first year will be the investment year during which, at minimum, you should expect to break even. The second year and

following will be when significant gains are obtained and sustained.

If ROI is disappointing, the standard may not be rigorous enough.

The most effective standards will include elements in the critical areas of planning and leadership, performance, processes, as well as workforce management.

Software Tools as Part of the Solution

This discussion began with mention of workforce optimization software tools. There's no question that appropriately selected application has an integral role to play in the collection and organization of the detailed information required for workforce optimization and process improvement.

Engaging in certification to a global standard, such as the COPC-2000® Standard, will provide a clear, in-depth picture of the entire operational process is invaluable in this regard. Armed with this information, a software solution can be selected that will adequately and cost-effectively support optimization by providing a closer fit with the organization's operational objectives, rather than forcing the organization to conform its improvement efforts to the software. Implementing a



software application prior to developing this information may well prove to be the classic case of horse before the cart. Bringing together both the technology and the support of contact center operations improvement professionals has the potential for enhancing service delivery and increasing customer satisfaction while reducing operational costs.

Publisher's Note: Alton Martin also wrote "Missing Link Between Quality Monitoring & Customer Satisfaction" in our March issue. Authorship of that article was credited to Catherine Nowocien. We regret the error.

A CASE STUDY

Help Desk NOW Helps Themselves with Automated Labor Management

Contact Center Insists on a Comprehensive Time and Attendance Solution to Streamline Operations

Introduction

In May of 2001, Help Desk NOW (HDN) opened its first contact center at its corporate headquarters in Greensboro, North Carolina. The organization's leadership

viewed labor management as a high priority from the onset, launching the center with a fully automated labor management solution in place. The company wanted to equip its contact center employees (primarily phone agents) with a cutting-edge, but easy-to-use system that enabled them to clock-in and out directly from their desktop computers.

HDN stands out as an example of a truly forward-thinking company that didn't waste precious human resources developing and using an outdated time and attendance system. Unlike HDN, many new businesses don't realize the need for automated labor management until after they've struggled with manual employee timekeeping methods, such as paper punch cards or handwritten sign-in sheets. These companies then seek a labor management solution out of operational necessity – when they're no longer willing to lose time and money on repeated issues with inefficient, error-prone data entry processes, incorrect time and attendance records, and/or inaccurate reporting.

As a leading provider of inbound and outbound contact center solutions, HDN knows the value of state-of-the-art technologies. The company prides themselves on offering its clients the highest level of customer care, technical support, sales campaigns and

technology solutions. For companies who don't want to perform these services in-house, HDN helps increase revenue, reduce costs and improve customer satisfaction by enabling full-service contact center capabilities. Insisting on a comprehensive labor management solution expanded the company's capacity to provide such varied and complex services.

Decision Factors and Implementation

In choosing a labor management vendor, HDN selected Time America, Inc. (OTCBB: TMAM), a leading provider of advanced time and workforce management solutions designed to help companies improve the tracking and utilization of labor resources. Specifically, HDN purchased Time America's HourTrack™ system, which combines client-server software with a wide range of data collection devices to automate the process of tracking, managing, and reporting the many aspects of employee time and attendance.

The company chose the HourTrack time and labor management solution based on a recommendation from HDN's Director of Operations, who had researched leading labor management solutions. He found that it met all the company's budgetary and

technical requirements, and especially liked the system's flexibility and ease-of-implementation. Because this was the inaugural HDN call center, the company needed a solution that would fit its initial budget, but would grow with them over time. Now, after using the system for three years, the company feels certain that the right decision was made, as HourTrack continues to support all of their labor management needs.

HDN also chose to integrate HourTrack into an existing front-end system, the Help Desk NOW Intranet site. The company incorporated a link into this site to give employees one-click access to their labor management system. Every workday, employees simply sign in and out of the HourTrack web clock through the Intranet site that they use for intra-company communication.

Rosalind Strickland, HDN's Director of Human Resources, recalls the process of getting HourTrack up and running as "...an easy implementation with no hiccups." Once installed, the staff immediately adopted it. As Strickland describes, "Employees find it extremely easy to use. And, from a supervisory/administrative perspective, there's a small learning curve. It's a user-friendly program."

Based on their smooth



implementation and positive end-user experience, HDN has come to expect nothing less from a labor management vendor. When HDN's IT department calls the Time America support line, they're consistently pleased with the rapid response times, as well as the overall quality of support. According to Ms. Strickland, who has personally called to ask end-user questions herself, the product support team is "...accessible and responsive..." The level of attention that HDN receives reaffirms their belief in the value an automated labor management solution.

Operational Benefits and Cost Savings

After installing and successfully running HourTrack for some time, HDN decided to integrate HourTrack with its payroll system so that automated data feeds and exports could occur. After successfully completing the integration, HDN staff could export employee hours at the touch of a button and, without human intervention for reformatting or recalculation, send the data directly to their payroll provider.

By integrating the labor management and payroll systems, HDN reduced opportunities for error and unburdened the staff of time-consuming administrative work. Ms. Strickland reports

that, "...payroll exports now take just minutes to run." Previously, the company would have had to pay a person to enter each employee's hours into a spreadsheet to submit to payroll services. The integration initiative also dramatically increased accuracy and efficiency rates. Ms. Strickland describes the automated system as "...almost 100% accurate," compared to an 85% accuracy rate for manually transferred data.

Additionally, HDN can now quickly and easily export payroll data (i.e. how many agent hours were accrued for customer accounts) and client billing information into an easy-to-read, printable format. The company prints these documents directly from the integrated system and sends them to clients for billing.

The decision to implement the HourTrack system prior to opening its contact center proved to be a strategic advantage that continues to generate positive returns. Integrating HourTrack with its payroll system resulted in even broader operational benefits. HDN speculates that had an attempt to manually monitor time and attendance for its 500 employees been made, the results could have been devastating. Financially speaking, the system has prevented potentially large losses due to time theft,

human error in calculations and time spent manually figuring time sheets. Thankfully, HDN never learned these lessons the hard way.

HourTrack is a registered trademark of Time America, Inc. All other names are the property of their respective owners.

TRENDS

BARBADOS – An Emerging Call Center Location

Expanding? Looking for new Call Centre options? Consider Barbados!

Over the past few weeks Barbados attractiveness as a prime Call Centre location has been greatly enhanced with the issuing of international telecommunication carrier license to AT&T (Cingular), Digicel, Tele-Barbados (Antilles Crossing) and Cable & Wireless.

Increased market competition in the telecom sector will undoubtedly drive call centre rates down, improve the islands' competitiveness, usher in reductions in telecommunication costs, introduce an expanded range of services, as well as attract new and higher levels of investment, particularly in the call centre and wider information

technology industry.

Investors from North America have noted savings of approximately 35% on their US cost, by establishing facilities in Barbados. These savings are expected to increase as the anticipated new lower rates for telecommunications come into effect.

Over the past three decades, investors have been choosing the Barbados environment as a prime location for information processing facilities. Since 1999, call centers and customer relations management (CRM) activities have emerged as the significant sector of growth in the island's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry. Today, the island hosts ten call centers, which provide employment for approximately 1,000 persons.

The advantages that distinguish Barbados as the investment location of choice and which will propel the growth of this sector include modern, reliable telecommunications infrastructure, available office accommodation in fully serviced industrial parks, cultural affinity as well as geographic proximity to North America, and exceptional social, political and economic stability. These factors, coupled with a service-oriented, loyal, trainable labor pool, competitive labor costs, and high levels of worker productivity add to the appeal of the island as a cost-effective



location for international call centers.

In addition, the Government offers an attractive incentive package to international business companies which includes:

- a low rate of tax on profits, the maximum being 2.5%
- duty-free importation of all equipment and materials used in the business
- exemption from exchange control
- no minimum capital requirement
- no withholding taxes on dividends, royalties or interest payments paid to another international business company or non resident of Barbados
- full and unrestricted repatriation of capital, profits and dividends
- office accommodation at competitive rates
- a network of double taxation treaties with several countries including the USA.

The government continues to work with the private enterprise to pro-actively develop and train the workforce with the necessary skills to provide a solid platform on which investors can build. To this end, it has implemented a training program, which aims to equip the labor pool with the necessary soft skills for entry-level positions in this dynamic industry.

But Barbados not only provides a cost-effective, productive work environment – it is an excellent place to live. Barbados, renowned as a premier tourism destination, has a high standard of health care and an excellent education system.

So if you have a call center offering services such as business process outsourcing (BPO) solutions including accounts receivable management, customer support, inbound and outbound sales, or market surveys, and you are looking for a dynamic, service-oriented and cost effective location, have a look at the Barbados business environment!

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Egypt: Emerging Opportunity For Multilingual Call Centers

When people think of the key drivers to choose offshore outsourcing, reduced price comes at the top of the list followed by availability of Educated/Skilled workforce & Access to multilingual workforce followed by Government subsidies as well as follow the sun capability. In this respect different offshore destinations have a varying degree of success, India and the Philippines for instance capitalize most, on their low cost of English speaking labor being the ultimate choice for cost driven companies. While Egypt, a new comer in the call center offshore market, according to a recent DataMonitor Report. (February 2005), tends to capitalize most on its quality of agents & multilingual labor pool representing a viable client service choice for companies concerned about reducing overhead costs (Egypt stands at 54% of the cost of a US inbound voice-based customer care agent), while at the same time maintaining a very high degree of customer interaction quality.

Egypt is a country that supports both the basic foundation required for any successful call center facility with the added advantage of a multilingual population, with more than

200,000 multilingual university graduates that leave universities each year and approximately 80 000 students graduating in the IT domain. Thus offering a talented, well-educated workforce fluent in multiple languages (English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish). Moreover the Egyptian Arabic is the most favorable as well as the most comprehensible amongst all Arab region dialects. Added to the languages capability, Egypt has succeeded to leverage between quality of its agents and a superior telecommunications infrastructure; and being centrally located between the US, Europe, and Asia Egypt has a convenient time zone difference for Europe - US coverage, added to a stable and western world friendly government with a significantly low cost of living.

As a country Egypt continues to grow and is a good choice for call centers that interact with global clients. Over the past couple of years, several entrepreneurs started to jump on the offshore call center bandwagon in Egypt, and establish call center operations to cater for global clients call center needs. Of such call centers, is Xceed the call center hub in Egypt. Xceed was established end of 2001 and is a provider of outsourced contact center services to commercial and government clients worldwide. Since its



inauguration Xceed, has succeeded to attract some of the top tier companies in the global arena, that already had existing call center operations in India and/or other locations, yet chose to outsource to a company like Xceed in Egypt based on the competitiveness of its value proposition.

Currently, Xceed operates the largest contact center in the southern Mediterranean region with a capacity of 1200 web-enabled workstations catering customized service solutions that cover both inbound & outbound operations to companies across the globe. Xceed's clients span the globe and cover a full range of industries. Today Xceed has commenced work with several Fortune Global 500 companies and the telecommunication giant, Telecom Egypt that has a customer base of 8.5 million acting as their customer care hub. Among, Its worth mentioning that Xceed contact center caters its services to more than 12 different countries in 6 different languages delivering value to its clients across the CRM lifecycle and manages over 1.5 million customer contacts per month both live and via electronic interaction.

COMPANY PROFILE

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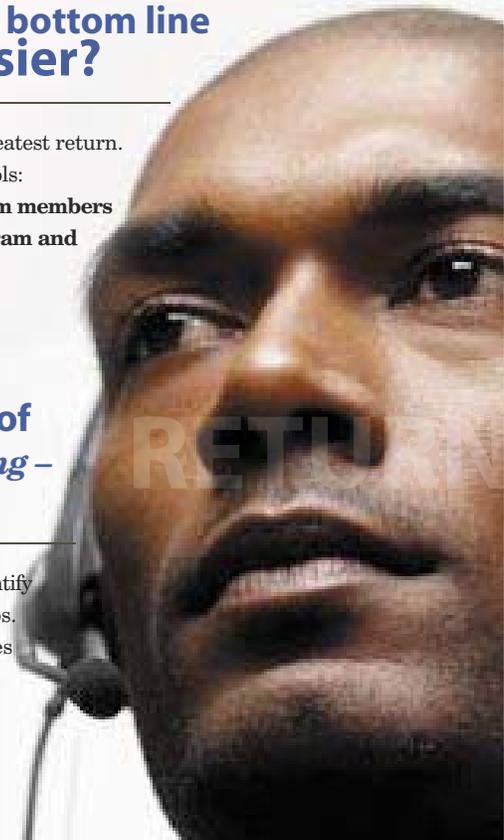
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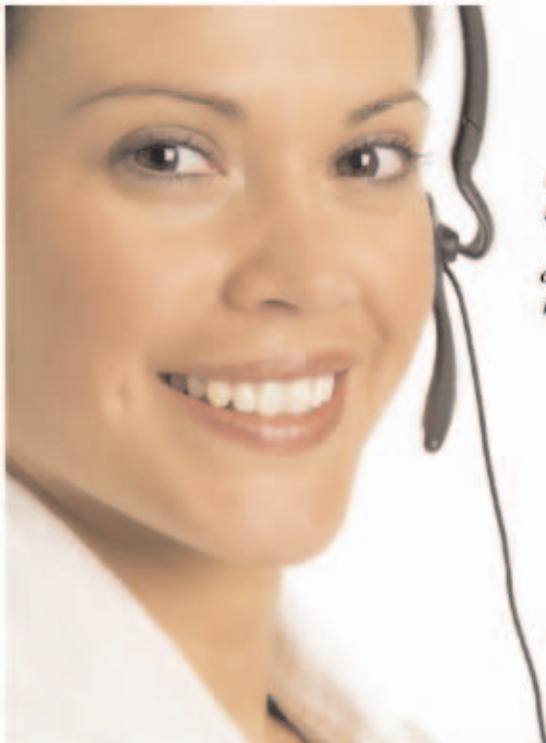
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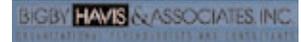
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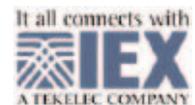


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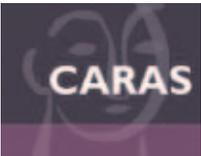


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