

Port@l – Home Sourcing

“A flexible way to extend capacity using home based agents”

Introduction

Managing large contact centre operations is an exercise in compromise. Trying to find the “best fit” between the demands of the business, the staffing skills available, the operating hours, and the physical limitations of your facility can be very frustrating. There are other options available such as outsourcing or employing more temporary staff on short-term contracts, but both have their drawbacks that can lead to further problems in the future.

The challenge

A major dilemma that any organisation faces when setting up a contact centre operation is deciding on its location. The second is dealing with the limitations that the chosen location presents, regardless of where it is situated.

The catchment area for a site is defined the moment a location for your contact centre is chosen. You will only attract staff in that locale and the ease with which you can do this will depend upon the local infrastructure, competition for employment, the nature of the work you are offering and your reputation as an employer.

Employment, however is not the only issue, you may require “out of hours” services or even to operate 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

A fixed location comes with the following constraints:

- Difficulty in recruiting new staff as employment in contact centre locations begins to “dry up”
- High attrition rates of temporary staff can add to recruitment problems
- The physical constraints of the premises
- Other centres operating in the vicinity may exacerbate existing recruitment problem.

But what if you didn’t have these constraints? What if you could match your resources to your operational requirements?

“The home agent network has met all our business challenges and exceeded our expectations. Home Sourcing is the way forward and this is likely to be the model for all our future recruitment plans. They offer an almost unlimited geographical labour pool, a low attrition rate, and in turn the best return on our investment with the lowest risk”.

A MAJOR OFFICE SUPPLIES COMPANY.

The solution – home sourcing

Home Sourcing is an innovative approach to contact centre capacity and resourcing that fits directly into your existing operation, delivering overwhelming benefits, without the need to consider less attractive options such as outsourcing.

The concept of home sourcing started in the USA and is now recognised as a major contributor to overall contact centre operations management. Unlike home working, home agents are selected and sub-contracted through a third-party, such as ourselves, on short to medium term contracts. The selection process is carefully undertaken, paying special attention to the characteristics necessary for a home agent.

Recent surveys have demonstrated that home-based agents bring a higher degree of professionalism to an organisation. They are typically older and more mature than their office-based colleagues. The result is greater loyalty, lower “churn” rates and enhanced customer retention.

We have taken this concept and married it to our proven expertise in hosting to deliver the key resources, people and infrastructure, for you to direct. This way you derive all the benefits whilst avoiding the two key problem areas where organisations typically fail, managing remote people and the associated IT.

The benefits are obvious and significant:

- Better ability to penetrate the local labour pool
- Ability to expand recruitment beyond the centre's catchment area
- Ability to attract experienced highly professional contact centre staff that would otherwise be unavailable to the industry
- Avoid the risk of entering into long-term leases and fixed contracts
- Because you direct the workforce, you retain control, unlike outsourcing
- Potential to save up to £9,000 (£13k in London) per agent per year compared with providing a workstation in a centre ^{Note 1}
- Improve the quality, performance and retention of your agents
- Provides alternative options for business continuity
- Agent hours do not need to be continuous thereby providing enhanced levels of flexibility

Note1 – TOCS report 2006



The results – what our customers have achieved

We can provide a total Home Sourcing solution that allows an organisation to overcome its resourcing and capacity problems at a known cost. Charged on a “per hour” basis, our service includes the following:

- Recruiting and contracting all agents
- Providing all the necessary home based technology and support
- Providing a seamless interface into the contact centre's infrastructure
- Providing the tools necessary to allow effective management of, and communication between, home agents

We also do all the training associated with working remotely, but our home sourcing solution allows you to deliver your culture, brand, product, and service training in parallel with our implementation.

Our customers have realised the following benefits from a our home sourced solution:

- Expanded recruitment pool
- Ability to attract experienced highly professional contact centre staff that would otherwise be lost to the industry
- Avoided the need to take on additional leases, therefore reduced their overall exposure to long term risk
- Agents are trained and managed by the client, therefore brand values are kept safely in-house.
- Dramatically reduced “churn” rates caused by temporary staff

“Initially I had been aware that Port@I delivered hosted contact centres throughout the UK, but felt that this option was possibly a step too far for us at the time. But to offer a hosted model with virtual home agents was more attractive, largely because our parent company had used this approach successfully in the US.”

“Outsourcing is something that we did consider very seriously and at first glance it appeared to offer a solution to all our problems; we could offload our excess capacity to a third party on a short term contract and this seemed to be a reasonable solution. On careful analysis though we also recognised that an outsourced solution could potentially undermine our whole business reputation”.

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