



Customer Service News

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BT Predicts 2008 'Homeshoring' Surge



BT claims that a growing dilemma between the need to lower costs and the demands of increasingly selective customers will force UK businesses to turn to 'homeshoring' call centers. The idea of homeshoring is that calls are routed to skilled customer service agents working from their own homes, rather than in physical call centres. Dr Nicola Millard, a futurologist at BT Global Services, explains "It requires a skilled workforce with disciplined shift patterns integrated into the operation of a virtual contact centre and the access to real time voice and data to allow specialists to answer customer calls based on skills based routing."

Analyst group Gartner estimates that businesses could save as much as 10 percent of their costs by making efficient use of contact centre homeshoring, as well as significantly lowering their carbon footprints. Millard argues that homeshoring is the most viable solution for improving the quality of contact centre customer support whilst simultaneously lowering costs. She believes there are five key drivers which are likely to lead to a growth in homeshoring:

1. Increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining skilled staff. Homeshoring allows companies to cast their nets wider, since they are not restricted to hiring staff which live close to the call centre and want to work conventional office hours.
2. An increase in the specialised nature of call centre interactions, requiring staff with specific skills to handle enquiries.
3. A growing consumer backlash against offshored call centres, and rising wage costs in the world's most popular offshoring locations.
4. Greater affordability and reliability of home broadband connections.
5. The growing importance of environmentally sustainable business practice. It's estimated that the four million CSAs working in the US, UK and Canada produce more than six million tons of CO₂ every year.

Millard added: "Homeshoring needs to support the needs and aims of the organisation and must have buy-in at every level from the CEO to supervisors. It will not be appropriate for everyone and culturally, companies will need to adapt. Many managers will lack confidence in their ability to "manage at a distance" and some will not have faith in their staff's commitment to be as productive as they would be in a contact centre. However, systems and processes can be carefully thought through to counteract this and this is far from an insurmountable challenge."

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Stat of the Month

The number of UK adults shopping online has grown from 11 million in 2001 to over 28 million in 2006 - APACS survey.

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Quote of the Month

"More than 650 individual products were considered by our team of editors, analysts, integrators and users for this year's list of Trend-Setting Products. KANA is being acknowledged for its willingness to listen and serve its customers in useful and innovative ways."

Hugh McKellar, KMWorld editor-in-chief

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