

2008 – Offshore Research Programme

1. Cross-cultural servicing

The first project of the year focuses on better understanding how to incorporate cultural issues as part of the operating practices to enable the Indian culture (of the advisor) to better match the UK culture (of the customer). This work will be driven from an in-depth and objective research study into cultural similarities and differences.

It will also incorporate consultancy reviews to highlight areas where improvements could be made to lead to a better 'cultural fit'.

This project will draw closely on working with the CII, the British Council and internal reviews of member operations.

2. Creating new operating paradigms

Following directly on from the cultural research, the programme will then go to directly challenge each area of the call centre operating model with a direct aim of finding a better future 'best practice' in offshore servicing. This will challenge the understanding of 'cultural fit' and how suggest that to close the perception gap and better meet UK customer expectations, we may need radically different operating models offshore than those we employ onshore and that merely 'exporting' the process-led, command and control model that was developed in the UK/US cultures may be exaggerating the perception gap.

The output of this work will be to recommend possible new improved operating models – ones better suited to the 21st century customer and ones that incorporate cultural sensitivities at the deepest level.

3. Closing the Perception Gap

This work will seek to understand how different accents impact the size and the nature of the offshore perception gap. From this work, we will then drive debate amongst the group as to how they as responsible operators can work to positively impact the UK customer perception gap via PR, motivation and morale.

4. The North American Perspective

Members of the group will also gain access to our sister programme into the experience of US customers. This will assess how operating models also need to be flexible enough to reflect the needs of the US customer base.

This will provide an in-depth exploration of the attitudes and perceptions of US customer, examining whether or not the issue of negative 'background noise' has an impact within the US to the same extent that it does with the UK customer.

Taking the US customer experience further, we will provide a new analysis of location from the perspective of the US customer. This report will analyse both the 'cultural fit' and also the impact of accent on the US perceptions and attitudes, identifying the best locations for servicing the US customer base. Furthermore, we will consider how the cultural fit may differ depending on the different regional parts of the US and the different customer groups.

Structure

This is a syndicated group that incorporates trade and government bodies, client organisations and 3rd party outsource providers that are jointly committed to narrowing the offshore perception gap.

The group undertakes to steer debate through thought provoking research and consultancy that fuses direct knowledge of the UK (and US) customer with pragmatic operational insight. Together the group can work to understand better how to meet the 21st needs of cross-cultural servicing.

Throughout the course of the year, 3 or 4 projects will be commissioned and moulded by members.

The group is structured around 3 levels of membership:

- 1) Strategic Partners
- 2) Partnership members
- 3) Core members

All members gain full access and input into each project. All are able to have a direct say into the topics and be able to mould the design of each phase of the work.

Partnership members have additional opportunities for in-house consultancy and/or workshop sessions, enabling them to get direct and bespoke advice from the work, applied to their individual needs. This enables them to gain a fuller understanding of the issues and have the opportunity to discuss their impact in reference to their organisation.

Strategic Partners have the same rights as Partnership members but have additional opportunities for PR. There are just 3 strategic partners at any one time and each has the opportunity to use different parts of the work to support specific and exclusive PR rights/initiatives. They further enjoy bespoke consultancy.

