

OFFSHORING RESEARCH 2007

Over the past 6 years we have conducted a number of projects, both qualitative and quantitative to understand the offshore customer experience and more crucially how to improve. In addition to this research work, we have also led several onsite consultancy projects in India which have helped support action for improvement.

Our work with the Contact Centre Association, Lancaster University and client-specific studies over this time has developed a body of research and knowledge into the understanding of the differences in performance between UK and Indian call centres, that is 2nd to none. We are currently engaged on a number of fronts to understand how to bring about a 'step-change' in performance for Indian.

Through our latest research we have been able to accurately compare the differences between in country and offshore service centres, taking account of the impact that negative background noise has on perception of service.

The results were striking and will make operating decisions much clearer and more objective. Importantly we are now able to assess the impact on satisfaction.

Key findings from the research:

- 1) Resolution is key; 2 out of 3 customers don't care where the call is handled from as long as it is resolved.
- 2) One call with equal resolution leads to 2 different perceptions –yet Indian/offshore advisors rated lower than in country counterparts.
- 3) It is about perception NOT skill, where the 'background noise' influences public attitudes.

What does it mean for your organisation?

I: The challenge for research:

- 1) Demonstrates the need to understand *real* skills as opposed to *perceived* skills. Requires the use of customer perception models to provide more accurate measures.
- 2) Challenges the use of 'flat' satisfaction surveys, which reflect a 'recalled, perceived' experience as opposed to an objective opinion.
- 3) Provides a more predictive form of research (The findings challenge the idea that just moving from one offshore location to another will offer any advantage (it doesn't matter whether the call centre is in India, South Africa or Estonia –the over riding factor is that it is offshore in the first place). The methodology provides a new way to test potential locations before committing.

II: The operational challenge:

Ultimately the work allows us to challenge: motivation, technology/systems, training and communications.

- 1) Provides an opportunity for increasing motivational support and internal communications/PR.
- 2) Provides an opportunity for efficiency savings by allowing a better allocation of training resources.
- 3) Re-emphasises the importance of the advisor over the system/process.

The advisor will always be expected to be a soft target but more can be done by organisation's to minimise their exposure.