

Business Profile

>gem (GLOBAL EMAIL COMPANY)

www.the-gem.com



gem sparkles with customer relations expertise

Northern Ireland's talent pool and its business-friendly environment are providing a fertile spawning ground for companies ready to grasp the opportunities of the global e-economy.

These advantages, combined with the strong digital infrastructure, were the foundation for the creation of gem (global e-mail company), an innovative and entrepreneurial privately-held company which is now delivering outsourced customer service and marketing solutions to businesses throughout the world.

With the number of e-mails sent around the world expected to hit 30 billion a day by 2005 (IDC Research), companies need to dedicate more and more resources to dealing with it, thus diverting them from their core business - a fact that gave gem its market opportunity. gem says its successful answer to this problem combines state-of-the-art online communications technology with personality.

gem is headquartered in Belfast, with another Northern Ireland office planned for Londonderry and a US office in Philadelphia. Employment -



now more than 250 - is predicted to reach 900. The company's range of outsourced services include: providing responsive answers to inbound customer service enquiries; Customer Relationship Management data analysis; customer targeted marketing to improve business processes and sales; and a full suite of e-mail based outbound marketing services.

gem's approach to customer service has so far impressed its customers. Its blue-chip client base includes the world's top online web loyalty program, with a customer base of tens of millions of email users.

gem has also announced an alliance with online retailer Amazon.com to enhance its worldwide customer service network. With five international websites and customers in more than 200 countries, Amazon.com must maintain a year-round, 24-hour, 7-days-a-week customer service network. gem will complement Amazon's existing customer service network during their three year contract to ensure that Amazon.com's customers get the very best service.

Diego Piacentini, Senior Vice-President International for Amazon.com says: "Working with a co-sourcer of gem's expertise and professionalism allows us to seamlessly handle incredible volume surges and provides strong multilingual capabilities year-round."

Talent for success

gem's idea was groundbreaking and Northern Ireland provided the essential qualities required to make the concept a success - a reliable IT infrastructure, a pool of available labor and the talent required to make the company a global leader.

Owen Lamont, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of gem, believes his company's investment will encourage other internet technology businesses to explore opportunities in Northern Ireland. He says access to the "polite, friendly and capable workforce" in the region is a key ingredient of gem's success worldwide.

"We looked at other locations for this investment but Northern Ireland offered the best package of readily available and computer literate young people, excellent digital communications and a thoroughly business-friendly environment for an ambitious and highly innovative company such as ours," says Lamont.

"We have created a world class e-response center in Northern Ireland. This operation is an integral part of a project which involves

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diversification into other internet communications business areas with enormous potential."

The digital location

A new generation of Northern Ireland companies has recognized that global business is being shaped increasingly by the Internet and the digital revolution. The region is strongly business oriented and is taking active steps to encourage these companies to grow.

gem is determined to be a leading player in this new game. Its business proposition is based on six key business benefits: speed; skill; savings; security; scalability and structure. gem prides itself on its provision of highly flexible, scalable and cost effective service which adds to and complements its clients' existing resources.

"gem saves companies significant investment in capital equipment, contact center facilities, recruitment and training and reduces the day-to-

day operating costs. Many companies who buy software to handle e-mail traffic never use it, it's too much hassle; but we have the people, processes and technology in place to bring results," says Philip Cassidy, gem's Chief Operating Officer.

The future for gem looks bright. In 2001 they won 'Most Impressive Newcomer' at the Electronic Business Transformation Awards sponsored by the UK's Institute of Directors and IT Consultants Charteris. The company's research estimates that currently one-third of all e-mails from customers to companies go unanswered and that the volume of mail sent will double every six months in coming years.

Outsourcing may be the answer for many companies which want to reduce the burden on their marketing and customer service departments while maintaining the appearance of dealing with their customers directly, allowing gem's clients to get on with what they do best.