

Business Profile

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TeleTech breeds customer loyalty in Belfast

With more than 20,000 service agents dealing round the clock with customers of major corporations such as Ford, Hewlett Packard and Verizon, NASDAQ-listed CRM services and solutions provider TeleTech Holdings Inc of Denver, Colorado, is more discerning than most companies when it comes to hiring new staff.

But when new clients are coming onboard and, internationally, labor availability is low, is it realistic to hope to maintain high recruitment standards and keep costs down at the same time?

In TeleTech's experience the answer is an emphatic "yes" following the recent opening of a unique customer interaction center for telephone and e-commerce-based customer care operations in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

With a potential of 900 jobs, the center is unique within TeleTech's global network of 48 customer interaction centers in 12 countries around the globe.

Thanks to Northern Ireland's advanced all-digital telecommunications

infrastructure, the new facility incorporates a sophisticated thin-client IT infrastructure, effectively making it TeleTech's international ASP test-bed. The architecture allows software applications used in Belfast to be hosted at an established TeleTech location elsewhere, minimizing capital investment and software maintenance costs. Once proven, it will be introduced to other TeleTech centers around the globe.

TeleTech is just one of the latest major international IT investors in Northern Ireland which is increasingly being recognized as a world-class location for ambitious, technology-driven companies.

Founded in 1982, TeleTech is a leading provider of integrated, e-commerce-enabling customer relationship management solutions (eCRM) for Global 500 companies predominantly in the telecommunications, financial services, transportation, government, healthcare and technology industries. The company had revenues of \$885 million in 2000.



The company's electronic eCRM capabilities, including business-to-business channel management and database management, have been developed specifically to help companies acquire, service, grow and retain their customers throughout the entire lifecycle.



"Northern Ireland's blend of high-caliber people, world-class infrastructure and high technical competence makes it an ideal location..."

Duncan Jamieson
Managing Director, TeleTech

The availability of a highly educated, motivated and flexible workforce coupled with a robust and resilient all-digital telecom infrastructure were key factors in the company's choice of location. Within just a few months of its opening, the wisdom of that decision was already paying dividends.

Says managing director, Duncan Jamieson: "When your clients are blue-chip Global 500 companies you automatically assume responsibility for projecting their image to their customers. That's one of the major reasons why the quality of the people we hire is so important to us.

"While the technology these customer service agents use is critical to assuring a high quality interaction, our people are doubly important because it is they who generate revenues.

"Technology is a key enabler for our customer service agents. Within our industry, there is a general trend away from interaction by phone towards Internet-based communication including custom

e-mail response, 'chat' and web co-browsing.

"As a company, we've been a technology leader in unifying these different channels through the development of enhansiv, an innovative interaction platform that seamlessly brings together all of the different forms of electronic communication.

"This has resulted in our ability to handle the same volumes of interaction that we used to handle exclusively by phone, but with significantly fewer people.

"From a resources point of view, that means we require people who are not only excellent communicators, but who are also comfortable with technology. I'm delighted to say that we've found both in Northern Ireland.

"Finding people who can work harder and smarter and generate more profits is only one side of the story. At the end of the day, they are also responsible for breeding loyalty in our customers' brands and our

Belfast operation also provides us with a distinct advantage in achieving that goal.

"From our own experience, we know that Northern Ireland people are ideally suited to this role. Part of the reason is that Irish accents are accepted as being friendly and trustworthy.

"On top of that however, they tend to take responsibility for their work to a much greater degree than elsewhere. They're very competitive people - they want to do the best they can for themselves, for the customer and for the company.

"I believe the biggest challenge facing the CRM industry today is maintaining the flexibility to meet the growing sophistication of customers and their customers."

Adds Jamieson: "Northern Ireland's blend of high-caliber people, world-class infrastructure and high technical competence makes it an ideal location to help us meet that challenge."