

BRITISH BUSINESSES SPEND 3.5 BILLION POUNDS TOO MUCH BY MOVING CALL CENTRES OVERSEAS

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Off-shore call handling can be a false economy – says Transversal

Research from Cambridge-based e-service software company, Transversal, has found that up to half of the £7 billion spent outsourcing call centre functions could be wasted.

Based on cost-benefit studies with blue-chip organisations such as Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, Fujifilm and Direct Line, Transversal have identified that often as much as 80 per cent of inbound customer contact can easily be automated at less cost and disruption than outsourcing overseas -and without having a negative impact on service.

The average cost of a call handled in India is £1.30, compared with less than 30 pence via web self-service. Given that companies using web self-service are achieving cost savings of between 20-50 per cent, Transversal believes that even companies that have already outsourced their call-centre operations to lower cost countries can reduce their contact volumes by automating customer service responses over the web.

Transversal's studies have also identified that company strategy to reduce costs, by driving customer transactions via the web, can have the opposite effect: generating higher volumes of calls and e-mails simply because the website is unable to provide answers to customer queries. Transversal gets these volumes down by enabling customers to search a knowledgebase using 'natural language questioning', in the way they might ask an agent, to get the answer quicker than contacting the call centre.

Dee Roche of Transversal said "We are finding that when call centres look more closely at the queries their agents are handling, a large proportion of calls and e-mails are from customers asking the same thing, but in a different way. In fact because the work is so repetitive even the Indian call centre industry is already starting to experience its own problems with agent retention and recruitment."

Metafaq reduces the number of calls and incoming emails to customer helpdesks as queries are dealt with online. Only questions that cannot be answered are forwarded to customer service staff. Their responses are then simultaneously e-mailed back and added to the knowledgebase to be used to answer future queries.

Gerard Buckley, CEO of Transversal, said: "Taking advantage of intelligent online customer services is the next phase in the efficiency drive that companies need to embrace. Not only is it highly cost effective, but it also ensures that a company has complete control over the consistency and accuracy of the answers their customers are receiving."

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About Transversal

Founded in 1998 by two PhDs from Caltech and Cambridge University, Transversal is based in Cambridge, England. Transversal provides cost efficient, web-based customer support and information management solutions through its Metafaq™ products. Transversal aims to transform the Web from a passive information-sharing channel into an active knowledge-creation environment. To support this goal it has combined the sophisticated concept matching of its Memory Engine™ technology with a modular infrastructure for web-based communications and content management. Current customers include Sony, Direct Line, MFI, Fujifilm, TDK Systems, Hotcourses Systems, DfES, Proctor & Gamble and the British Army.

For more information go to www.transversal.com

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