

## HEED THE CALL



**The uptake of business process outsourcing in the South African corporate sector is on the rise and is expected to achieve an estimated worth of R7.4 billion before the end of 2010. A large percentage of South Africa's highest-earning companies are following this trend and contracting their call centres to an outsourced agent in a bid to focus on their core functions, achieve greater efficiencies and reduce operating costs.**

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**S**outh Africa's growing consumerism and the emergence of a burgeoning middle-class has resulted in far greater expectations when it comes to services and customer care delivery to the end user. The South African consumer profile is changing in that each generation is becoming more techno-savvy than the last. This is resulting in consumers that want instant answers and service gratification.

Companies in South Africa are subsequently utilising outsourced call centres that have the ability and resource-base to provide increased flexibility in terms of the up- or down-scaling of staff; the ability to customise solutions for the end user; the elimination of non-core business functions; and increased service delivery.

### STRATEGY

Call centres form a key part of many a company's strategy, and traditionally serve as the communication platform between the organisation and its customer-base. Over the years, this has evolved into a host of other functions and, in many organisations, the call centre is a main source of customer information to customer management.

Call centres are pivotal in ensuring that an

organisation is competitive from a service and customer delivery perspective. It is for this reason that when a company is selecting an outsourced call centre partner, service delivery as part of a company's customer value chain, should be high on a partner's agenda.

An outsourced call centre partner should be able to offer its customers leadership in the servicing space, as well as the innovation needed for a company to stay ahead of its own customer's expectations and perhaps more importantly, the service offering of their competitors.

South Africa's call centre industry is currently dominated by centres serving the domestic market, with the majority based in Gauteng. In 2006, ex president Thabo Mbeki identified the call centre industry as being a high-potential sector that is targeted in government's strategy to boost the country's economic growth rate.

According to figures from Frost & Sullivan, further development of the South African business process outsourcing sector looks positive, and is forecast to grow to R13, 8 billion by 2015; while Gauteng provincial government - in collaboration with players in the business process outsourcing industry - have agreed on a strategy for Gauteng that should see the call centre industry grow by an additional 9% - 14% annually over the next four years. ■

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