CallCenter
TECHNOLOGIES, SERVICES AND STRATEGIES FOR CONTACT CENTERS

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When Worlds Collide

Big IT wants you to share your CRM business.

By Richard Mills, CFA

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Some months ago, IBM announced it was purchasing a 9,000-person call center named Daksh with operations in India and Philippines. The acquisition is interesting for two reasons. First, IBM previously had no significant call center capacity and with this one purchase has become a major player in the booming offshore industry.

Second, the price IBM paid was exorbitant. According to investment banking firm Avendus, the price was roughly 15 times last year's earnings (or three times annual revenues). Clearly, IBM felt that owning (rather than just leasing) call center capacity was an absolute necessity for their long-term business strategy.

Earlier in the year, Accenture, another large IT company, hired a senior call center executive from contact center company, ICT Group. I spoke to the individual about his new job and he said he was hired to be "responsible for the world's single largest call center offshore initiative" involving 6,000 call center seats. Apparently, Accenture is moving into the call center business in a big way as well.

Traveling in the opposite direction, the large call centers are moving into the IT services business - although in a somewhat less grandiose manner. Sykes is a worldwide contact center organization with many service lines including managing tech support for clients like Microsoft. They have done such good IT support work that they have moved into full-blown IT consulting for many clients. In the Philippines, Sykes is hiring software developers by the hundreds to do software programming work for their blue-chip clients.

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Convergys has hired ICT heavyweights to oversee the company's Information Management Group (IMG). Their objective is to focus on developing the company's higher-value service offerings in the IT and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) spheres.

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