

Middle East Call Centre Awards 2011

COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE



INSIGHTS

middle east

Call Centre
awards

May 31, 2011

“PURE MAGIC”!





Middle East Call Centre Awards '11

Celebrating Another Outstanding Year

More Entries Than Ever

Overall Level Of Regional Competence Continuing To Rise
The Leading Platform To Showcase Excellence In The Region
Another Fantastic Awards Evening - It Was A Kind Of Magic!

INSIGHTS Congratulates The 2011 Winners For Their Dedication & Achievement

The Middle East Call Centre Awards '12 Competition Begins
Dec '11. For Entry Forms Go To www.insights-me.com

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**Call Centre
awards
2011**

Introduction

As the 2011 awards ceremony got underway, guests gathered in the foyer of the Crowne Plaza to officially receive their award nominations. They were, most likely, unaware of some of the key milestones achieved by this year's program. The most all-telling sign was the fact that this year's

ceremony was a complete sell-out. In fact, for the first time ever, INSIGHTS were unable to provide tickets to all who requested them. Another positive was the fact that there were almost 20 senior executives present on the night.

feat". With such status at stake and recognising the business benefits associated with the internal process of completing a submission, senior managers are keen to be part of what their call centre can be. INSIGHTS congratulates and thanks all those senior executives who gave their full support to their call centre teams.

senior management so that they would better value differentiated practices in customer interaction.

Thirdly, it is a night where industry leaders can relax and enjoy themselves in the company of their industry colleagues. A night when you are in a room full of people who understand that one call waiting for 4 minutes in queue does not mean that your world has collapsed or that you are failing to achieve a service level of 80/20.

As organisers of the annual industry awards program, INSIGHTS believe that the event is achieving its objectives. Now we need to expand the program, to expand the remit and reach of the awards in order to ensure that they continue to bring added value, added recognition and most important of all, to ensure that we gain even more support from senior management and executive teams.

Another fact that cannot go unnoticed is that despite economic downturns and global recession the Middle East call centre industry continues to grow and to push the boundaries of possibilities. Over the last few years, INSIGHTS worked with numerous global gurus to develop a series of training programs and audit mechanisms to ensure that businesses were neither over-investing in call centres nor under-investing. These programs have been enormously successful, demonstrating clearly that regional operators are keen to ensure that their call centres are adequately capitalised and that correct budgeting methodologies are employed. It would, therefore, be wrong to suggest that regional call centres are unaffected by the global downturn. They are definitely affected but they still want to do great things with the resources available.

The INSIGHTS awards judging process is very appropriate for these times. For example, the judges commented about one call centre that had the most incredible facilities imaginable (they described it as a

ceremony was a complete sell-out. In fact, for the first time ever, INSIGHTS were unable to provide tickets to all who requested them. Another positive was the fact that there were almost 20 senior executives (including CEO's and Government officials) present on the night, proving that the industry recognises the fact that INSIGHTS awards are WON; The awards have meaning and STATUS.

It is hard work to be nominated for an INSIGHTS award and the judging process is painstaking, but participants know that the hard work is not in vain. Judges evaluate the submissions in detail and query the participants about any area they are concerned about. Therefore, to receive a nomination for any INSIGHTS award is proof-positive that your call centre's performance ranks among the top performers in the Middle East region. Going on to win an award demonstrates to all, that your call centre is ranked as the "BEST of the BEST" in the region and that is no "mean

INSIGHTS also asks all senior executives to reflect for one moment on the level of professional engagement required for a call centre manager or team member to openly analyse themselves in front of their senior executive team and industry experts. It takes a lot of commitment to do that and it is only fitting that the senior management team support the call centre's team efforts, regardless of their level of success. Even call centres that were not nominated this year will have undoubtedly learned something about themselves that will help them improve and their senior management should recognise them for having the resolve to "push the envelope".

The awards night serves a number of purposes:-

First and foremost it is a night of recognition. It is a night when call centre staff are recognised by their peers for outstanding achievement.

Secondly, it was always INSIGHTS goal that the awards would gain recognition by



“luxury resort for call centre agents”); the agents salaries were incredibly high, service level was “off the scale” (in a positive way) and of course, occupancy was very low. Even though they were achieving incredible numbers, this call centre never won a major award – why? Because, they were over-investing. There was a complete lack of congruence between their strategic objectives and their call centre costs. There was no value return. Given enough money, anyone can over-achieve. The trick is to achieve the RIGHT results for your business strategy, in your market with a level of investment and expenditure that ensures a positive value return for the business. The economic downturn has actually helped companies to recognise that this methodology is far preferable to benchmarking or “standards” and as such, the INSIGHTS industry awards program is not just about nominees and winners it is also about helping businesses to evaluate their own call centre operations.

With regard to strategic congruence there were two interesting facts about this year’s submissions:-

a) Among returning participants there was, yet again, an improvement in the area of strategic alignment. These call centres have put considerable effort into understanding the concept of strategic differentiation and they are working hard to implement differentially congruent strategies within their operations. One key, notable fact is that these businesses are recognising the need to base all their decisions on a defined strategic model – especially budgeting and investment. We see this as a very strong positive indicator.

b) There was also a surge in first-time participants. First –timers, of course, are often new to the concept of strategic differentiation and many struggled to understand why a higher service level or greater levels of self service are not always better. However, the benefit is that these organisations now know exactly what needs to be done to develop their business and potentially achieve even greater recognition in years to come.

In terms of industry trends, quality assurance is taking on a much more

important and recognised role within top-performing call centres. In fact, the competition for best QA program was one of the most highly competitive categories this year. Many organisations have managed to elevate QA out of the “agent police force” mode into a real QA department and for others, the QA department is fast-becoming a Voice of the Customer department. All of these developments are very positive outcomes for the businesses themselves and the industry as a whole.

For those participants who struggled to excel, in many cases, the root cause of their difficulty was lack of strategic awareness. In some cases, the business had no strategy at all or the strategy defined in the submission was completely at-odds with the strategy depicted in public domain communications, management styles, performance management or budgeting. There are still a surprising number of businesses who just “don’t get” strategy and we would urge those organisations to become more strategically aware as it is a key ingredient in the growth of brand equity.

For those companies that were not nominated, there were two common problems with their submission. Many of these companies failed to answer the strategic modelling section of the submission. While participants are not mandated to answer every question, if the strategic section is not sufficiently well answered, the judges do not have a comparison model on which to base their analysis. The other problem was a lack of supporting documentation. If there is no “proof” or “evidence” behind the submission then the judges cannot accept the submission at “face value”.

Thankfully, there were no “real” disqualifications this year. There were a small number of participants who inadvertently entered the wrong category or who were not eligible for particular categories but there were no serious issues in terms of cheating or misrepresentation. In the case of incorrect category choice, the judges worked with participants, wherever possible to correct the error and this did not negatively impact the participants’ ranking.

Finally, regarding submissions, there

was another trend. This may in fact be THE most significant indicator of the mindset of regional operations – That trend is what we are starting to refer to as the “warts and all” approach. Participants are increasingly disclosing their problem areas within their submission. Sometimes they explain how they are dealing with it or they justify why they cannot deal with it but increasingly, they explain why they SHOULD’N’T deal with it. In other words, the concept of acceptable imperfections, the concept of pleasure and pain and the relationship of all the above to brand values and strategy is really taking hold in the market. The Middle East market is surging ahead in the realisation that striving for perfection is not an effective business mindset. Middle East call centres are striving for strategic/brand alignment along with operational congruence and THAT is EXACTLY what INSIGHTS set out to achieve when the awards were launched some seven years ago.

INSIGHTS are absolutely delighted with the positive impact the awards program is having for the regional industry. INSIGHTS are proud to be associated with the program and the participants and of course, INSIGHTS thank all involved – our sponsors, the participants and the organisations who support them. In our belief and from our global travels, we at INSIGHTS believe that the Middle East call centre industry is no longer lagging behind the industry in Europe and US. With the support of senior executives the regional industry is now reaching parity with our global cousins....The next step is to surge ahead and in that regard INSIGHTS is planning on announcing a number of “extension initiatives” to the awards program for 2012. Extension initiatives focused on:-

1. Taking the regional industry to a new tier – ahead and beyond the performance of call centres in other parts of the world

2. Enlarging the audience for the awards program to capture more early-stage call centres, more public call centre services and to highlight additional areas of differentiation for top-performing operations

3. Continuing to develop and nurture the support of senior management and executive teams from all industries across the region.

On behalf of all the team at INSIGHTS and on behalf of this year’s award ceremony sponsors we thank you all for your continued support of our awards initiative. We aim to delight you with our new program for 2012 and we look forward to the day when Middle East call centres are taken as global role models.



Preparing For The Middle East Call Centre Awards

Many companies enter the awards competition without careful consideration of what is required to be truly competitive and stand out from the crowd. In consideration of the entries that didn't make it over the last six years, the judges have compiled a few suggestions to help

include copies of ACD reports, training materials, recruitment assessment processes, etc. In general, everything covered in the submission form must be supported by fact, in the form of additional material. Give yourself plenty of time to collate all the supporting data and include it with the submission. INSIGHTS provide

customer interaction operations norms. Competitors are not mandated to use the INSIGHTS methodology in their businesses, but they must be able to link their methodologies to the INSIGHTS' models within their submissions (so the judges can compare all the submissions). If your business does not have a strategic

The judges felt that many participants did not understand business strategies and strategic modelling or they did not start their preparations early enough.

companies enjoy greater success. The judges felt that many participants did not understand business strategies and



strategic modelling or they did not start their preparations early enough. There are a number of ways companies can better prepare themselves for the awards process:

The FIRST step is to understand that the submission process is exhaustive and requires considerable effort. Submissions generally run to hundreds of pages and

a non-disclosure statement with the submission forms. There is no reason to withhold information. If too much detail is withheld, disqualification is a likely result.

The SECOND step is to ensure that your company has a clearly defined business strategy. There are many different methodologies for defining business strategy. INSIGHTS have adopted and adapted a number of recognised industry models to build a strategic template that links directly with



model or if you are unsure of the INSIGHTS methodology, INSIGHTS organise a number of suitable training programs during the year and the judges strongly recommend that participants use these courses to become fully familiar with strategic modelling in advance of making a submission. One participant in the competition responded to the question: "What stage of evolution has your call centre reached (using the INSIGHTS evolution model)?" by saying: "We are about average"..... Needless to say they hadn't got a clue about the model or its significance. It is also surprising how many organisations confuse their Mission and Vision. If your organisation is not strategically competent, you cannot win, so take whatever steps are required to maximise the strategic competence within your organisation before entering the awards program. This is not an award for the highest service level or the lowest cost per call, it is an award for the most

The judges recommend the formation of a team or committee, responsible for the submission. Specific sections of the submission can be delegated to sub-committees. They also remind participants to begin formation of the team early as the closing date for receipt of entries, as always, is final and non-negotiable.



strategically congruent operations. Strategic congruence, strategic differentiation and branded experience strategy need to be understood by everyone involved in the submission especially those responsible for or working within the call centre.

The THIRD step is to design, build, operate and manage a call centre that is operationally-strategically congruent and to prove that with reports, testaments, samples and other supporting documentation. The judges will examine web information, advertisements, customer reports, newspapers, etc. to see if your brand is congruently projected. Thereafter, they will assess if your operations methodologies are congruent with your branded experience strategies. One competitor has an incredible operation – the operational statistics are beyond compare, the call centre looks like a hotel and the staff enjoy a wonderful life but they spend HUGE amounts of money and given their competitive strategy there is no justification for the amount of money spent and no business-value return on investment. Therefore, even though they have an incredible operation, it is not strategically congruent and did not win any of the major awards. Strategic congruence is another topic that is covered in numerous INSIGHTS training programs and awards

participants should be fully familiar with the concepts. The judges emphasise that competitors in the past have tried to use terminology to make it appear that they fully understand strategic congruence but on close scrutiny or in interview, the true nature of their lack of understanding became quickly apparent. Trying to “fake it” invariably leads to poorer results in the competition.

In addition to focusing on the internal call centre, the judges also recommend INDUSTRY EXPOSURE. Competitors should research and visit more call centre operations. They need to take part in more industry forums and industry events. By not seeing ALL the possibilities, competitors limit their options and often fail to leverage every possible opportunity to improve the branded experience strategy. They also fall into the trap of misinterpreting or misjudging their own performance.



The FOURTH step is to involve the entire operation. This should be a team project. Executives, managers, supervisors and agents should all take part in preparing the submission. In previous years, agents have made video submissions and taken part in customer surveys to reinforce the companies strategic positioning. Be creative, get the team involved – it will make your job easier,



improve motivation and, probably most significantly, it will clearly demonstrate how your strategic congruence manifests itself.

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Finally, all participants need to remember that the awards program is a competition. No one knows who will enter each year and therefore companies cannot enter with the expectation of winning. In reality, the only competitor companies can focus on and aim to beat . . . is themselves. Companies should push the boundaries of their own capabilities to be better than they are at matching their operational achievements with strategic organisational goals. Many previous participants commented that they learned a lot about their own internal “gaps” as a result of completing the awards submission. Participants who are nominated are, in effect, earning a seal of approval that indicates they rank among the best of the best in the Middle East. We at INIGHTS, are responsible for protecting the value of nomination and as such will only nominate operations that are genuinely deserving. Almost every year has seen one or more categories with no nominations because the judging team simply didn't regard any competitor as “making the cut”.

In essence, the goal of every participant should be to be nominated for an award. That's the seal of approval. After that, winning is a bonus. With those words, we wish you all the best of luck in next year's competition and we look forward to reviewing your submissions in 2012.





Daniel Horan, Director - Consumer Business Unit, Vodafone, accepts one of the several Awards won on the night

- 🏆 Best Large Call Centre (>70 Seats)
- 🏆 Best Voice Of The Customer Program
- 🏆 Best Retention & Motivation Program



vodafone

The winner of the BEST LARGE CALL CENTRE 2011 was Vodafone, Qatar. In 2010 Vodafone competed as a “new player” in the Gulf region and, as a new entrant, they brought with them some incredible examples of how to leverage strategy to achieve greatness. This year, their presence is no longer “NEW” but they continue to be strategically innovative and operationally congruent. Vodafone’s strategic/operational congruence was recognised by the judging panel when, in addition to the BEST large call centre award, they also won awards for the region’s best Voice Of the Customer program and the best Retention and Motivation program. Last year the judges commented that Vodafone had three foundation characteristics that, in the eyes of the judges, if harnessed and leveraged would continue to deliver unrivalled, congruent excellence. The three foundation characteristics were:-

1. A great strategy that is well modelled and clearly communicated.
2. A steadfast, operational belief that strategy is non-negotiable.
3. A strategically, operationally and experientially competent operations management team.

In 2011 Vodafone continued to accelerate ahead. Vodafone’s business operation further emphasised that they compete as a LIFESTYLE company, not as a telco but most of all, they adhered steadfastly to the three foundation

characteristics that power their acceleration. The judges are in no doubt that Vodafone’s business modelling, their adherence to strategy and their operational congruence will continue to push them forward, ahead of most other companies who are still failing to model their brand, define their strategic differentiation and make operational congruence non negotiable. For this, the organisers of the 2011, Middle East Call Centre awards congratulate Daniel Horan and the senior management team of

some additional congruency challenges. They wished to serve their large expatriate customer base with a welcoming “home-style” experience and so, they operate a distributed call centre environment that includes call centre operations in Qatar, Egypt, India and Philippines. When an operation is spread across the world, congruence is infinitely more challenging to achieve. The Vodafone operations management team also recognise that operational congruence cannot be achieved by

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Vodafone, Qatar. They are, without doubt, the region’s business strategy role models.

Operational congruence is not that difficult to achieve as long as the entire business is honest about “who it is” and as long as senior management understand congruent strategic differentiation. Vodafone, however, were forced, by their own strategy, to induce

simply mandating a set of operational KPI’s. In fact, KPI’s are more likely to hinder congruence. The operations management team at Vodafone have done an incredible job to ensure congruence across all operations and have done so in a manner that allows each operation, within the culture of its population, to deliver, project and live the values of Vodafone. For their amazing

work in this regard and for their competence and their BRAVE belief in the Vodafone model, the organisers congratulate, Deirdre Hutchinson, Manlio Garcia, Maria McCourt and Kavitha Singh

So what is it that, in the eyes of the judges, Vodafone do to achieve strategic congruence? Congruence is considered by many to be a management-intensive process (especially when dealing with a globally distributed operation). Vodafone have been very successful at de-leveraging the management overhead associated with congruence and they have achieved this first and foremost via a strategically-aligned and congruent recruitment process. The Vodafone assessment process is more of an audition than an interview. It is important to note that the judges would not recommend this approach for every business but for Vodafone's business strategy, it is perfect. The Vodafone team have also adopted a slightly different approach to performance management and coaching. More time is spent coaching "Vodafone values" than coaching performance, competencies and KPI's. Because of Vodafone's congruent structure, staff who focus on delivering the company values will, inherently deliver the right services in the right way. By focusing on "value projection" the operations management team have been successful in removing themselves from the need to micro-manage every agent's competencies. Thus, Vodafone have achieved unique levels of strategic congruence with much lower-than-expected management overhead. Last year, Vodafone were very focused on maximising the effectiveness of all that they do. This year they started to focus a little more on efficiency. They have begun to centralise more of their operation Support Functions in Qatar rather than relying on them to be spread across all operations centres. Their evolutionary projection is exactly as the judges predict a world-class operation should be.

Therefore, in terms of strategic differentiation, operations management and evolutionary development, Vodafone

continue to be "at the top of the league tables" – an amazing result for an incredible team who continue to be role models for the rest of the region.

In terms of MOTIVATION and RETENTION, Vodafone go right back to their recruitment process. The "audition" approach ensures that they recruit people who are motivated by the VALUES of Vodafone. The VALUES of the business are a primary motivator and being given the latitude to project those values operationally is truly inspiring for the agents. Involuntary staff turnover is extremely low and voluntary turnover is

they know how to motivate and retain the RIGHT people and they know how to focus on the RIGHT customers (not ALL the customers). Vodafone are truly "self activated". They don't need to copy others. They don't need to adhere to some notional standard in order to gain the approval of a senior management team. They simply need to be themselves and to achieve greatness within a clearly defined customer base. It really doesn't get any better.

Whilst we congratulate the executive and operations management team we must never forget the one key ingredient that allows Vodafone to excel.

Strategists can be brilliant and operations managers can be superb but if the staff themselves, the agents and supervisors in the call centre do not embrace their company's mission each and every day; if they do not take the time to deliver an emotional experience to each customer and if they do not take every opportunity they identify to elevate the customer experience within the values defined, then the strategic and operations

management investment is a complete waste of money. It is not a cliché. The call centre staff of Vodafone Qatar, whether they are based in India, Egypt, Philippines or Qatar should stand proud, for in the eyes of the region's call centre industry you are the best of the best. You make the values and the strategy count in each and every customer interaction. You make Vodafone what it is and for that we applaud you. We thank you for showing other call centres in the region what can be done and we ask you to keep doing it, to keep pushing the boundaries of possibilities and perhaps most importantly of all, we ask you to recognise that you are the role models that thousands of other agents aspire to emulate. You have effectively, collaboratively won GOLD at the Call Centre Olympics. We look forward, with eager anticipation to what the entire team of Vodafone will achieve next year because whatever this team do together..... it will be brilliant!!



The victorious Vodafone team

also much lower than the regional average. The reason, in the eyes of the judges is simple:- "Recruits know who Vodafone are and what they stand for. There are no games or tricks. Staff are empowered, valued, appreciated and allowed to be themselves. Vodafone know that the first component of successful motivation is a good recruitment program that values individuals on their ability to project the values of the business".

In terms of Voice Of the Customer, Vodafone excel once again, not because they collect data or do surveys but because of the way they analyse that data relative to their brand strategy. Vodafone accept that not every customer will be an advocate of their values. Their goal is to ensure that they capture the right customers and turn them into advocates. Their Voice of the Customer program is thus cleverly arranged to ensure strategic alignment.

So, Vodafone know how to define, model and operate a differential strategy,

Vodafone Customer Care Team

Winner

Insights Middle East
2011 Awards

Dubai, 31 May 2011

▶ Call Centre
of the Year

▶ Best Retention
and Motivation
Program

▶ Best Voice of
the Customer
Program





Leonard Francis of Mashreq Bank, receives the top Call Centre Award

Call Centre Of The Year (Strategically Aligned)



The winner of the 2011 “Call Centre of the Year” award was Mashreq Bank. One guiding principle of Mashreq is that they (like many of our other top award winners) know exactly who they are. There is no pretence about Mashreq. They are very clear about who they are and the kind of service they promise to deliver to their customers, via their call centre.

Many banks fall into the customer experience trap of utilising banking industry governance and audit protocols to attempt to achieve 100% in everything measurable at the call centre. The result is usually a bank that is just even more boring than the average cheque book. Mashreq are different. Mashreq’s call centre define what THEY need to do in order to achieve the strategic goals of the bank and then use the governance/audit mechanisms to ensure they are on track. They avoid becoming an organisation that is focused on achieving KPI’s. They are focus on achieving strategic business objectives. KPI’s are a dashboard tool to assess the achievement of strategic goals.

As a traditional brand one might expect to meet an arrogant operations management team. In this regard, the Mashreq management team are the very opposite of a traditional banking management team. The team exude both competence and confidence without any hint of arrogance. They enjoy and embrace every opportunity to review their performance and validate their decisions and assumptions. While they do all this, they are ever-mindful that they have a brand to support. A brand that is attractive to the target audience and in all instances, Mashreq do everything in their power to ensure that they understand what it is that makes the target audience advocate the bank and build upon that to drive results and growth.

In terms of call centre operations

performance, the judges were impressed with a number of factors:

- First and foremost, they were impressed with the call centre’s brand congruence and in keeping with the brand identity of the bank, teamwork continues to be one of the operational pillars. The call centre operation have done exceptionally well at taking a series of strategic goals and breaking them down into meaningful and challenging team goals. The result is a call centre team who are totally focused on achieving the common good. The common good might appear to the uninitiated as a simple set of targets and a series of challenges but in fact each target and every challenge are clearly born out of defined, coherent, brand-aligned strategic business objectives.
- Secondly, they were impressed with the levels of agent empowerment and the resultant impact on First Contact Resolution. Mashreq are doing well to avoid the trap that other banks fall into whereby call centre success is inhibited by a complete lack of agent empowerment. In banking, of course, empowerment can be a dangerous thing and once again, Mashreq have deployed a series of systems, processes and various other controls to audit and manage the empowerment risk, thereby allowing them to strike an acceptable balance between the benefits and risks of empowerment.
- Thirdly, another positive characteristic at Mashreq bank is the wealth of competence among the operations management team. The operations team is well resourced, well equipped and well educated to deal with all aspects of call centre operations. Leonard and all the members of the management team strive towards

excellence and they are clearly empowered and equipped by the bank to “raise the bar of excellence”.

The Mashreq call centre is not limited to inbound customer service as they also have a significant sales function to contend with. As the UAE banking industry faces up to new differentiation-diluting rules and regulations, Mashreq have remained capably aware of the fact that their sales targets cannot be allowed to distract them from achieving their differential targets and cannot be allowed to dilute the brand differentiation that has made this call centre so successful to date.

The agents at Mashreq’s centre are among the most capable agents in the Middle East. They take pride in their position as telebankers and clearly deliver a differentiated experience. They do this because of the superb operations management and senior management teams but most of all they do it because they take pride in what they do. This year, they have been voted to be the leading call centre in the entire Middle East Region. It is not easy to win such a coveted title and while the management teams deserve every piece of recognition they get, it is the teamwork at Mashreq bank that has brought them to this superior position of excellence. Mashreq’s agents make a difference for Mashreq’s customers each and every day of the week. This year the entire Middle East call centre industry congratulates Mashreq’s agents. We urge them to be VERY proud of all that they have achieved and to recognise that this is just the start of a journey that will ensure Mashreq’s call centre remains as the LEADING and most recognised telebanking operation that the Middle East has to offer.

Customer satisfaction is our best reward



Mashreq wins the Best Call Centre of the Year Award

- Awarded for two consecutive years.
- Chosen from over 100 companies across the Middle East.
- Recognised for our high standards of service, support and response to customer.
- A reflection of our effort and commitment to provide solutions across the Middle East.

we do banking, you do life.



The INSIGHTS Call Centre Awards '11 Night

The 2011 awards night can best be described using just two words – “PURE MAGIC”! The evening was hosted by the event organisers, INSIGHTS, under the direction of INSIGHTS’ president, Dominick

kaleidoscopic display of lighting, decoration and setting created the scene for a night that started good but ended incredibly.

After the guests poured into the hall, Keenaghan delivered his opening

3. 70 % of last year's competitors re-entered
4. 40% more companies entered this year
5. 80% more people attending the awards ceremony

It all pointed to an awards program that is growing exponentially. Keenaghan highlighted the fact that because the judging process is very manpower intensive, closing dates are final and those wishing to participate need to begin the process early. The significant number of companies attempting to make late entries in 2011 suggests that 2012 will see

The fullness of the room and the excitement of all in attendance created an atmosphere that was “PURE MAGIC”.

Keenaghan. The ceremony was sponsored by Smart Link, KSA and Spanco GKS, Qatar. Master of Ceremonies for the evening was INSIGHTS’ Brownell O’Connor.

The fullness of the room and the excitement of all in attendance created an atmosphere that was “PURE MAGIC”. From the moment the doors opened, the

presentation. He has a certain reputation in the industry for being “good with numbers, KPI’s and other mathematical incidentals”. So, perhaps precisely on cue, guests were treated to some eye-opening statistics regarding the 2011 awards program:-

1. More post-closing date applications than ever
2. 16 % more applications



Dominick opens the proceedings



The cream of regional Call Centres were in attendance

another surge in the size of the competition.

In closing, Keenaghan thanked all the participants and gave special mention to the senior executives who support their call centre teams by attending the awards program. As he closed his speech, Keenaghan introduced and welcomed, the master of ceremonies for the evening, Brownell O’Connor.

One suspects that O’Connor enjoys the MC role as much as Keenaghan enjoys statistics and one participant was later to comment on how the Keenaghan/O’Connor duet is, in its own rite, an institution within the regional industry. O’Connor highlighted that the evening was a night of celebration

and recognition and thanked all involved for their support.



Brownell, the MC

The awards ceremony wouldn't be complete without a few challenges. This year the challenges were manifested in a table quiz and a collection of puzzles. Everyone took part in the challenges and the enumerator for the quiz (Nidal Qanadilo) commented that the competition was tight and overall scores were quite high. In his estimation, there was a high level of intelligence in the room. However, for next year's event it would be worthwhile for all awards participants to ensure that all their guests at the awards ceremony attend the MECC exhibition during the day. This is reinforced because, despite being forewarned, many teams performed weakest in the MECC exhibition round of the quiz.

The awards statistics demonstrate very positive growth but that growth increases the workload on the MC to ensure an on-time finish so as soon as starters were completed, the BEST in category awards were announced and thereafter, dinner continued. As the meal continued a seemingly unknown stranger appeared from nowhere and roamed from table to table demonstrating his skills. He was definitely PURE MAGIC.

As the evening continued the "BEST of the BEST" awards were announced and then, just before the announcement of the ultimate awards, our magical stranger took to the stage and mesmerised the audience. It would be fair to say that one common goal of every call centre agent is to know what the customer needs before the customer even knows it. If that ability were the mark of a superior agent then our magician for the evening, Frederic Sharp must surely be the world's greatest call centre agent.

In his opening performance, Sharp handed members of the audience a number of random books. One book was the UAE telephone directory and others were well-known works of fiction etc. He then asked members of the audience to choose random pages in the various books and to visualise numbers, texts and pictures from those

books. He stood on the stage while the participants stayed seated to ensure he was unable to see the books and yet, 100% of the time he correctly identified what the audience member was visualising. He described his own artistic skills as not being "Van Gogh" but his images were good enough to prove that he had read the minds of the random, willing participants.

In another display Sharp asked a number of volunteers to draw pictures on a pad. The pictures were shuffled and he analysed each picture in-turn to identify personality traits of the artist. Without knowing the volunteers he correctly identified which of them had drawn each picture.

In one of his closing acts, a volunteer (a call centre professional, well-known to other attendees) was asked to select a random card from a deck. Sharp then proceeded to draw on an A3 pad. He drew a

because she created a devastating tremor across the industry earlier in the year when she announced that personal circumstances may force her to leave. Humaira is TRULY an institution in the regional industry and INSIGHTS recognised that without her, things may never be the same. Thankfully, just minutes before she received her award, she confirmed that she would not be leaving us in the very near future. – Perhaps the award achieved the result of keeping her where she is needed most.

Thereafter the ultimate awards were announced for call centre, OSP and manager of the year.

The evening was another resounding success. Participants, award winners, organisers and staff were all happy and as the guests filed out of the ballroom many took themselves and their awards to other locations to continue the celebrations. We



A Puzzling time was hard by all!

deck of cards with the ace of spades at the front. He confirmed that the ace of spades was NOT the card chosen by the volunteer. The magician then stood back while the seven of diamonds rose magically from the picture he had created on the sheet of paper. The seven of diamonds was indeed, the card chosen. He handed his drawing to the volunteer, proving that it was just a picture.

With the audience still in awe of Sharp's skills the evening continued as the MC announced four special awards that were being awarded to individual "personalities" (a.k.a. industry celebrities) for their exceptional contribution to the industry. Three of the awards went to industry pioneers who all happened to represent Outsource Service Providers from various countries around the region. The final award went to Humaira Majid

know of two companies, whose celebrations continued straight through to the next morning. Some of us had to appear at the conference the next morning so we were more constrained than them but we were all delighted at the fact that we had been part of something that brought so much happiness, so much celebration and so much pride.

Our MC reverted to his role of conference chairman the next morning and our host continued in his role as exhibition director but one thing was evident – they couldn't help but smile and they took the time to congratulate all the awards participants because without the participants' determination, their vision and their ability to rise up to a challenge it just wouldn't be..... MAGIC



Mr. Iftikhar Kathawala, CFO of CTS, receives one of the several Awards

- 🏆 Best Large Call Centre (>70 Seats)
- 🏆 Best Voice Of The Customer Program
- 🏆 Best Retention & Motivation Program



TIn addition to winning awards for Longevity, internally developed application and best sales program, CTS, the Dubai-based outsource service provider were recognised as the Call Centre Outsource Service Provider (OSP) of the Year, 2011.

CTS have a habit of sweeping the board whenever they compete in the awards process. Their consistent winning of the longevity award provides one hint to their success – CTS have more experience of regional outsourcing than any other entrant has ever had. CTS are the longest existing outsourcer in the region AND the proof of their client-approval ratings is no more evident than the fact that they also enjoy the longest contract tenures of any other OSP. There is no greater accolade for a call centre OSP than a client-base who continually renew contracts time after time.

CTS clearly impress their clients. They also impress the judges. Not just with the results they achieve on behalf of their clients but with the sustainable methodologies they employ to achieve those results. Particularly with inexperienced clients, who rely heavily on KPI-based achievement metrics, it is easy for an OSP to achieve apparently good results. To achieve sustainable results, however, an OSP must feel confident enough to challenge their clients and must be competent enough to justify those challenges and capable enough to deliver. CTS do it all and they do it repeatedly.

CTS project very clear brand values. The quality of the service they deliver and the evidential business results they generate are but two of the most tangible outcomes of those brand values but CTS do something else – something more challenging than simply defining their

strategy and their brand values – CTS have mastered the art of building an operational bridge between their strategy and the strategies of their clients. CTS' clients have many different brand strategies and brand values. CTS' operational structures provide them with a set of process tools that allow them to apply their clients' values to customer interactions whilst adhering strictly to their own corporate values in client interactions. It is a result of their ability to adhere to their own values whilst embracing their clients' values that have powered CTS to the successful position they have enjoyed for many years.

CTS also impressed the judging panel by their ability to leverage their brand-bridging methodologies, not only in outsourcing arrangements but also in insourcing and cosourcing arrangements. CTS operate a number of insourcing projects at various locations and for a myriad of activities in addition to providing manpower and executing tangible backoffice projects in support of their call centre services. The strength of management required to maintain branded differentiation across a wide range of services over a vast geography has got to be recognised and applauded.

CTS are one of the UAE's most stable companies. They have been operating successfully for approximately 12 years and in all that time, they have enjoyed staff retention (especially senior staff retention) that is comparable with their client retention rates. CTS clearly know how to attract and maintain the ideal people for the job-at-hand.

With regard to the award for best sales program, CTS once again demonstrated their business-results-oriented operations capability. In analysing the submissions in this

category the judges quickly identified that CTS were achieving faster and higher business returns than any other competitor. CTS excelled in conversion rates and in revenue generation proving that they have excelled far beyond their initial foray into customer service and technical support.

With such a diverse array of projects (as mentioned, ranging from sales to service, to tech support) one may query how they manage it all so effectively. One answer to that lies in their clearly defined processes and procedures but this is only part of the picture because CTS have also impressed the judging panel by their ability to develop unique and innovative software applications to assist in converting the needs of their clients into call centre-ready services.

The judges commented that one of the most enlightening aspects of CTS is the fact that they know exactly what they are good at and when they commit to something, they deliver. With all the confusion that exists with regional outsourcing it is reassuring to see that organisations like CTS, organisations with values, with longevity and with dedication are getting the recognition they deserve. We congratulate all the staff at CTS. The senior management team who have the knowledge, the skills and the courage to define who they are and to stick rigidly to their own values. To the operations managers who successfully bridge the values of CTS with the values of their many and varied clients and of course, the agent population of CTS who work tirelessly on behalf of their clients to achieve results that elude many regional, international and global companies. You remain a "force to be reckoned with" and we look forward to many more exciting, successful years from CTS. ●



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Mr. Ibrahim of City Services Consultancy receives their Award

Best Call Centre Technology Platform



City Services Consultancy (CSC) are a specialist and focused Outsource Service Provider. This year they won the award for best technology platform. To understand what impressed the judges most about City Services Consultancy one must follow the judging process right back to the “beginning”... City Services Consultancy have a wealth of experience providing various out-sourced services to Government bodies since 2006. In addition to Government they provide various specialist services to a wide variety of industries including civil construction, aeronautical and hospitality.

City Services Consultancy's award submission was particularly focused on their “Drishti Implementation at the Department of Transport Abu Dhabi”. One of the judges' first comments after reviewing the CSC submission was – “OSP's with a lack of strategic direction regularly fall into the trap of over-specifying and over-implementing in order to ensure that the market as-a-whole remains fully aware that they employ the biggest, the best, the leading, the most expensive or the most highly regarded systems. City Services Consultancy did not fall into this trap”. Instead they carefully examined the dimensional requirements of the Drishti implementation along with the technology features required to support the applications and they then implemented a perfectly designed, robust and fit-for-purpose technology platform.

This methodology required a brave approach from both CSC and their client.

They had to fully understand the needs of the business model and strategy. In addition to avoiding any temptation to over-specify the technology they had to be absolutely certain that they did not under-specify. In essence, CSC combined the engineering concept of “managed design tolerance” with a thorough understanding of business strategy and call centre services. Their design tolerances were as tight as they could comfortably be (allowing room for expansion and unforeseen circumstances) which is exactly what would be strategically recommended for this particular outsourced application. City Services Consultancy's implementation strategy was indeed “text-book” perfect.

The realisable benefits of this implementation strategy include much faster time to market, significantly reduced (almost negated) implementation and integration risks, capital investments congruent with the project needs and overall operational costs that ensure a value return from the services provided. In essence, City Services Consultancy succeeded in implementing a perfectly customised technology platform for a very specific project. It is not really surprising to see City Services Consultancy doing so well in this area because their focus on client relationships ensures that they enjoy a perfect understanding of the needs of each individual application/implementation. They could never be described as a mass-production company who churn out a menu of services. They are very careful to ensure that each and every solution they

provide is perfectly designed for the application strategy. In some cases, like the Drishti implementation, this requires extremely tight tolerances but in other cases, wider tolerances are mandated. In all cases, City Service Consultancy's team of exceptionally capable project managers and account managers work extremely closely with their client to ensure that the end result of their outsourced services is a delighted client and a happy customer.

Apart from technology, strategy and relationships there is another aspect to City Services Consultancy that has got to be mentioned. TEAMWORK. Witnessing the management team in operation is truly a sight to behold. The camaraderie and support shared among the team is genuinely inspiring. The team work collaboratively to overcome hurdles and problems, they resolve issues together and support one another seamlessly. The result is an energetic, vibrant team who, together overcome challenges quickly and with ease. It is truly a pleasure to be in the presence of the team. With five years of successful business behind them, City Services Consultancy will definitely remain on the UAE outsource landscape for many years to come. Their ability to focus and their dynamic inspiration will energise and enthuse all who deal with them. They are a perfect example of inspired, strategically congruent execution. We look forward to many more great things from City Services Consultancy in the future.



City services consultancy is a customer services and solutions provider committed to assist its clients and help them achieve their business goals. No matter how challenging the situation is CSC makes a tangible difference by implementing innovative management solutions while providing them with definite cost advantages. Customer services and satisfaction is the key point that is clearly visible in all services rendered by CSC. All our services are designed by set SLAs to achieve and help enhance client KPIs and to meet customer satisfaction.

Your Smart Consultant



The top managers at SmartLink lead their team to multiple Awards

- 🏆 Best Large OSP (> 300 Seats)
- 🏆 Call Centre Manager Of The Year (Ambassador)
- 🏆 Best Recruitment Program

Smartlink was formed in 2005 as a wholly owned subsidiary of Al Khaleej training. This year Smartlink were recognised as the best large outsource service provider in the region in addition to being recognised for the Middle East's best recruitment program.

The judging panel commented that to be recognised as a great outsource service provider a business must clearly demonstrate superior client retention rates over a significant time period. Smartlink have an admirable success record in this regard. Few of Smartlink's customers elect not to renew contracts with the organisation; further confirming that Smartlink's strategic alignment and operational congruence are working effectively. And, in addition to receiving direct recognition, Smartlink have also earned indirect recognition as many of their customers have been recognised for outstanding customer service provision.

Smartlink have invested well in technology, facilities and other infrastructure. Their overall platform rivals that of many international outsourcing companies. It is reliable, robust and scalable but most importantly, the platform is built of best-in-class solutions thus ensuring that Smartlink remain as a leading provider of quality outsource services for many years to come.

Smartlink have done a great job at bridging their strategy with the strategy of their clients and in this regard their team leaders and supervisors make outstanding contributions. The operations management team at

Smartlink is well motivated and the account management team are accredited, certified and recognised leaders within the regional industry.

One of the more captivating highlights of Smartlink's service and one that was clearly recognised by the judging panel, is their attention to detail when aiming to strike a perfect balance between delivering client satisfaction (in terms of KPI achievement) and customer satisfaction (in terms of accomplishing objectives). Smartlink invest a lot of effort "upfront". During the sales cycle and the implementation process, Smartlink tend to over-resource the engagement. This results in a VERY positive experience for Smartlink's clients as it leads to faster, trouble-free implementations. Smartlink have earned an envious reputation for taking on some of the most challenging implementations in the Kingdom and leaving their clients in awe as they succeed, not only in meeting contractual requirements but in driving the business forward due to accelerated customer advocacy and an exceptional ability in uncovering and realising the all-important added value – be it sales, up sell, service to sales, referrals or plain old customer satisfaction. This is all driven, in part by Smartlink's advanced CRM capabilities but no such systems provide any real value return unless they are operated by well educated, well trained and well managed agents.

One key differentiator of Smartlink is that they are a Saudi company, formed in the Kingdom by the Al Khaleej organisation. In short, Smartlink know



Smart
Link
Customer Contact Services



how business works in the Kingdom. They know how to get things done and they know what customers seek. As such, Smartlink is in a unique position to not just implement client requests "by the book" but to examine the viability of the clients' requests and where appropriate, to recommend alternative approaches. In this regard, Smartlink project a level of flexibility that is all-too-often missing from many outsource service providers. In a country like Saudi Arabia; a country that is growing and developing very fast, things change, new challenges arise and old challenges fade into the sunset. Smartlink understand this and have demonstrated time and again, their understanding of these circumstances along with their willingness and ability to adapt and accommodate as necessary to ensure the success of the project.

Smartlink's flexibility as a company is no more evident than in the management team. They are always ready to deal with any client issues. They are accommodating and hospitable. They are indeed, a pleasure to work with and they truly reflect the brand values of the organisation that they must be so proud to be part of. Smartlink have achieved great things but what we have seen so far is likely to be merely the tip of the iceberg. Smartlink is bursting with talent and energy. They have the experience and the capability and now, maybe more than ever, they have the recognition of the market that they have served so well since 2005.

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Tel. 00966 - 920029999

Fax. 00966 - 1 - 4531088

E-mail: info@smartlink.com.sa



Mr. Tejinder Singh Bhatia, Director & CEO of Spanco GKS recognized as a pioneer

Market Pioneer - Qatar



To many regional organisations, SPANCO are EXACTLY what they are looking for in an outsource service provider. SPANCO have definitively embraced the concept of strategic differentiation as the range of services and the overall approach of the company is very different from other regional OSP's. We have often described Spanco as pervasive for their reach is truly regional but even more than mere pervasiveness, they do one thing very well – they identify the job tasks that are distracting organisations from their core business, they take on the fulfilment of those tasks and their aim is to advance their clients' businesses whilst ensuring that their clients can focus on their own unique differentiators. Spanco are a true enabler.

They are providers of REAL outsourcing services and in the provision of those services they deliver REAL, TANGIBLE and FAST value returns to their numerous clients across the region.

Sales, lead generation, customer acquisition and process fulfilment contracts marked Spanco's initial entry into the region. They proved themselves capable and reliable in all areas and so it wasn't long before their service remit expanded into various administrative and support functions. Today, SPANCO are just as likely to be contracted to save a faltering business by reversing high customer attrition or improving customer advocacy.

Spanco's key skill is their ability to implement, manage and control processes. One problem facing all regional outsource clients is that their processes are often not "outsource

friendly". Spanco have become exceptionally adept at ensuring their clients' processes "work" in outsourcing. They have a strong process-focused approach to implementation that ensures they avoid many of the foreseeable transitional problems that other OSP's struggle to overcome. One key characteristic that the judges associate with Tejinder and his team at Spanco is RELIABILITY. The entire team are dedicated to the ultimate goal of ensuring that their clients have more opportunities to focus on their core business as a result of their outsourcing arrangement. Tejinder and his crew work

The management team at Spanco could not be more helpful and enthusiastic. In fact, they are regularly found to be the MOST helpful OSP during the preparatory (tender, negotiation and contractual) phases of any outsourcing project. They are keen to be a part of their client's success and they are rarely dissuaded by the size or scope of a project. One short visit to Spanco's web site and a quick click to the client page tells the whole story. Spanco's client list reads like a "who's who" of successful regional and international businesses. Some of those success stories have become success stories because of

SPANCO are providers of REAL outsourcing services and in the provision of those services they deliver REAL, TANGIBLE and FAST value returns to their numerous clients across the region.

tirelessly to ensure the goal is realised and like the other great outsourcers herein recognised, Spanco have a significant record of client-retention.

As Spanco continues to propel its own evolution, clients are increasingly requesting them to increase their services portfolio. Spanco now deliver systems integration and IT services that once again allow the company to introduce their process management expertise, in the form of IT solutions, to their client companies. And, following their success in the world of private industry, Spanco now offer a range of tailored services to the public sector.

Spanco while others have joined Spanco because, as an outsourcing option, Spanco's market reputation suggests they are the most likely to deliver further success and accelerated development.

For all that can be said about Spanco they have an extremely attractive record of success, they have an "A-list" client base, their process management capabilities are beyond compare and perhaps, most of all, they are always keen to make a difference, to be a part of a success story and to propel another organisation to greatness. What more can an outsource client ask for?



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🏆 Outstanding Contribution



Tejinder Singh Bhatia of Spanco GKS

Safwan Al Khatib of SmartLink

Humaira Majid of CTS

This year, in addition to facilitating the regional industry's awards program and hosting and organising the awards ceremony INSIGHTS bestowed special honours upon four well-known industry personalities. As it happens, all four are from the outsourcing arm of the call centre industry and each one of them has made uniquely valuable personal contributions to the creation and development of the call centre industry in the Middle East.

UAE - The Call Centre Outsource Service Provider of the Year award went to CTS, Dubai. Over the years, CTS have achieved innumerable awards both nationally, regionally and internationally. They are the longest operating outsource service provider in the region and they are recognised by all and sundry, not only for the value of the services they provide but also for the impact they have had in "pushing the performance envelope" of regional outsourcing. The man who drives CTS; the man who steers the team, ensures compliance and maintains strict adherence to both strategic goals and operational targets is Mr. Kazim Raza Awan, C.E.O of CTS. Without Kazim's vision, leadership and focus CTS would not have achieved such levels of greatness and without CTS' great achievements the regional outsource industry would never have reached the levels it enjoys today. As the first professional outsource operation in the region CTS gave rise to a whole new industry and the man behind that achievement was Kazim.

INSIGHTS bestowed the "UAE, market pioneer award" upon Kazim, in recognition of the years of service and the invaluable contributions he has made to the creation of today's UAE and regional call centre outsource industry.

Qatar - As the regional outsource market matured from the infancy days that were marked by prospectors out to achieve a "quick buck", a "new breed" of Outsource Service Providers began to emerge in the Middle East. This "new breed" are confident and assured that outsourcing is a valid, effective and powerful business model that offers strong strategic and operational benefits. They are not shy about investing in the future and they ensured that outsourcing move out from the shadows of business norms into the limelight of expected (not merely accepted), good business practice. As a result, the organisational model that "outsources all non core activities" is alive, well and growing at an enormous rate across the region and it is thanks to the professional, confident, resolute approach of OSP's like Spanco GKS. To move into a burgeoning industry like this and to invest heavily in a pervasive business model requires a strategic mind with a clear sight on implementation perfection. It requires an individual with perfect timing, determination and a resolute approach. That individual is Mr. Tejinder Singh, CEO of Spanco GKS.

INSIGHTS, on behalf of the entire call centre industry, bestowed the "Qatar, market pioneer award" upon Tajinder, in recognition of the impact he has had in developing the OSP industry in Qatar and his contribution to regional development.

KSA - Even as the rest of the region began to embrace outsourcing more readily, the Saudi Arabian outsource industry was still suffering from a plethora of prospectors who failed to deliver on promises and who caused seemingly insurmountable damage for the national industry. A few, reliable, trustworthy, competent OSP's slowly began to emerge and just as the market began to

consider the possibilities of outsourcing, one organisation launched itself forward as the ultimate provider of call centre outsource services in the Kingdom. Businesses were naturally sceptical but now 6 years on, Smartlink's contribution to the Kingdom's outsourcing industry is accepted and admired by businesses spanning the length and breadth of the country. The man behind Smartlink; the man with vision, tenacity and a steadfast belief in results orientation is Mr Safwan Al-Khatib

INSIGHTS, on behalf of the entire call centre industry, bestowed the "KSA, market pioneer award" upon Safwan, in recognition of the impact he has had in developing the OSP industry in Saudi Arabia and his contribution to regional development..

Special - The three recognised market pioneers created the industry but the industry needed something else. The industry needed operations managers who could interpret the needs of the visionaries and their clients alike and then implement and manage a sustainable call centre operation. Over the years, many have tried and failed but one person has been around, seemingly from the beginning. She is no stranger to INSIGHTS awards, having served multiple terms as the reigning "call centre manager of the year". She is a foundation stone of the region's industry and without her this industry would just not be the same. In recognition and appreciation of her truly outstanding contribution to the region's call centre industry and with the expectation that she will remain part of this industry for many years to come, INSIGHTS, on behalf of the entire call centre industry, bestowed the "Outstanding Contribution award" upon Humaira Majid, COO of CTS.

Other Middle East Call Centre Awards '11 Winners Congratulated by INSIGHTS' President Dominick Keenaghan



Call Centre Manager Of The Year (<71 Seats)
Patrick l'Anson,
Call Centre Manager, Emirates IT



Best Small Call Centre (<31 Seats)
DHL Qatar



Best Government Call Centre
Best Quality Assurance Program
ADDC



Best Medium OSP (71-300 Seats)
Best Reporting Systems & Processes
CryTelCall



Best New Call Centre
National Center For e-Learning



Innovative QA
NWC



Best New OSP
Silah Gulf



Best Small OSP (<71 Seats)
Aramex

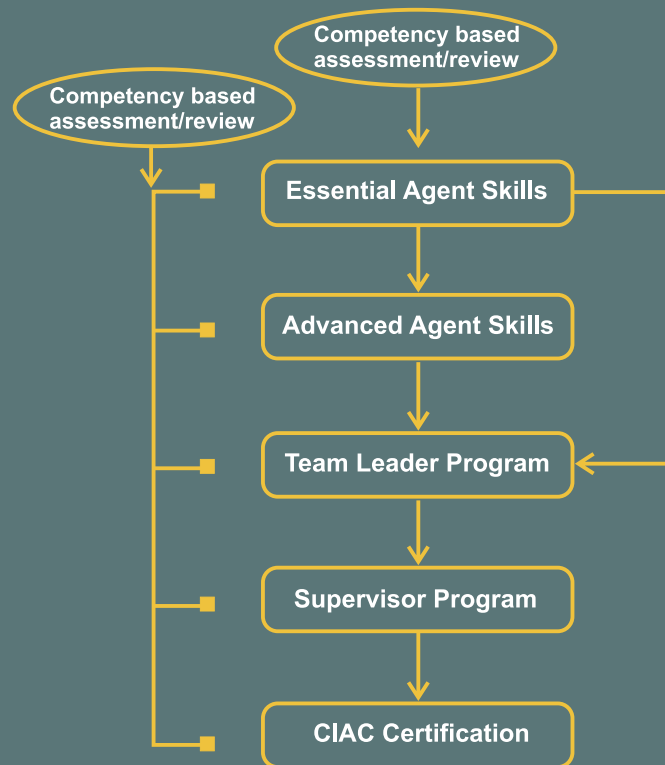


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