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# The **Ten Commandments** of Call Center Outsourcing

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WHITE PAPER

19th. Floor, Antel Global Corporate Center  
No. 3 Dona Julia Vargas Ave.  
Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1600  
Philippines

[www.piton-global.com](http://www.piton-global.com)

**Successful** business process outsourcing does not happen overnight or by chance. It is the result a diligent vendor identification, evaluation, selection, and management process. You can dramatically improve your chances of success by avoiding the mistakes others have made. Just follow these ten offshore business process commandments — professional, not personal, judgments based on more than ten years of business process outsourcing consulting experience in the Philippines.

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## **1** Establish your business objectives and expectations

Define your objectives and expectations clearly prior to the selection of a call center outsourcing provider. Determine service and performance targets, and set your priorities. Decide on the set of tools you will use to establish and maintain an open line of communication with your service provider. Your service provider should be treated essentially as an extension of your company and should be managed as such.

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## **2** Identify “right-sized” vendors

Limit choices to vendors properly matched to the size of your operations. Small and medium-sized service buyers are best advised to look for mid-market vendors. These service providers are usually financially more stable, have proven processes (see below), an experienced senior and middle/center management, and have access to higher quality, industry-experienced agents.

Large outsourcers often require a minimum starting outsourcing volume of 100 FTEs or more for them to consider a potential client, and they typically charge premium rates for smaller accounts (50–100 FTEs). Clients with smaller volumes also typically don't get the attention, high quality resources, and account management needed for an optimal outsourcing option. Small vendors, on the other hand, often lack a stable infrastructure, the right processes, experienced middle and senior management, and most importantly, a steady supply of quality agents.

### **3** Select vendors with an experienced management team and proven processes

Partner with a call center that has an experienced middle and senior management. This will significantly increase your chance of successfully outsourcing a business function. The experience of a call center's senior and middle management team plays a critical role in your mission to gain maximum benefit from an outsourcing Engagement because small vendors often lack the domain expertise, processes, and hands-on management required to make inbound and outbound programs work.

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### **4** Select based on service specialization

Service specialization is a key success factor. Outsource only to specialized and experienced service providers with proven expertise in specific fields to significantly boost your chance of making your outsourcing partnership a resounding success.

If you have a heart condition, where do you go for treatment...to a general practitioner or to a cardiologist? The same thinking applies here. Go for a call center that specializes in your line of business.

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### **5** Avoid outsourcing to centers in second and third-tier cities

Short list only those service providers in first-tier cities where there is a higher concentration of qualified agents. These cities also have the superior infrastructures which attracts competent and experienced call center managers and rank-and-file employees. Also, the majority of the best colleges, universities, and learning institutions that produce strong candidates for call center service requirements are situated in the first-tier cities.

## **6** Examine closely the center's infrastructure

Extend your examination of the infrastructure of a prospective call center partner beyond its data center. Scrutinize its entire facility. Do not outsource services to the “sweatshop” type of establishments. Manpower recruitment in the Philippine call center industry is highly competitive. Because of this, the most talented, qualified and reliable agents have become more sophisticated and gravitate toward companies with the best working conditions...i.e. superb, state-of-the-art facilities... rather than those with a “backyard” or garage-type of work environment.

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## **7** NEVER select a vendor based on service rates

Focus on your program's ROI rather than the candidate vendors' hourly service rates. NEVER select a call center provider based solely on its lower service charge vis-à-vis its competitors. This is an invitation to disaster.

Low-cost vendors have to make significant compromises with regards to agent quality, management experience levels and/or infrastructure quality. It is extremely important to understand that there is often a direct correlation between service rates and the quality and performance of an outsourcer. A service provider with higher rates but which delivers a better ROI to you is definitely preferable to another with lower fees but which contributes nothing to your business growth.

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## **8** Analyze all key processes thoroughly

Take a meticulous look at the service company's key processes, including those of its recruitment, training, quality assurance, account management, and reporting procedures. A good service provider should be able to supply you with a comprehensive overview of all of its key processes and a company which has solid processes in place will likely be more than willing to share this vital information with a potential client.

**9** | **Require multiple, long-term client references**

Oblige your short-listed service providers to submit at least two to three meaningful and verifiable, long-term client references. Establish their credibility and request to listen to a few live calls of these references. Ensure that these are not self-serving testimonials devised by their PR or marketing agents or are just friends of the owners of the call center company.

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**10** | **Seek professional advice from industry experts**

Ally with competent outsourcing/call center/Call Center industry consultants and don't disregard their advice. Their input will not only help you save a tremendous amount of time and cost but more importantly can substantially increase your chance of establishing the long-term partnership with a call center service company that consistently delivers the desired ROI.