



Saturday, March 08, 2008

Call center agents leave industry despite boom

By Darwin G. Amojelar, *Reporter*

WHILE the Philippine contact center industry is projected to grow at a faster pace this year than its Asian counterpart, the number of Filipino agents leaving their work is increasing, according to an Asia Pacific research and analyst firm.

In a briefing, Catriona Wallace, Callcentres.net president, said the rise of the contact center industry in the country is an extraordinary period of growth, with seat size set to increase by 23 percent in the next twelve months.

Wallace said the total number of contact center seats in the country is estimated to be 129,000 this year from 105,000 last year.

She attributed the increase in growth to the resilient domestic economy, technology and shift of clients preference to Filipinos from Indian nationals.

Wallace said 53 percent of contact center agents servicing the domestic economy are Filipino, while 47 percent are international.

In its 2008 Asian Contact Centre Industry Benchmarking Report, Callcentres.net said the country's industry growth is higher than that of Malaysia, which is growing 17 percent; Singapore, 8 percent; Thailand, 15 percent and India, 10 percent.

However, Wallace said the industry must continue to address its human resource challenges as 51 percent of the agents have left the contact center industry, while 49 percent have moved to another contact center.

She said the reasons for leaving the industry are lack of career path, uninteresting work and below industry-rate remuneration.

The Filipino contact center agent receives \$3,964 annually, lower than in Thailand with \$4,877, Malaysia, \$5,199 and Singapore, \$16,884. But, higher than in China, \$2,539 and India, \$2,862.

Don Lee, director of Asia Pacific, Autonomy etalk, said the high levels of employee turnover can have a devastating effect on all aspects of customer service, disrupting operations and decreasing customer satisfaction, as well as increased costs for new high training.

But Wallace said, "We are seeing some improvement in agent tenure in the Philippines, with the average time an agent remains working in center now being 22 months, up from 18 months in 2007."

The research was sponsored by Autonomy etalk and Genysis, an Alcatel Lucent company. The study interviewed 539 contact centers executives representing 2,488 contact centers.♦



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