

## So....What *is* a Virtual Call Centre Then?

Imagine the modern day equivalent of “The Two Ronnies” leaning on the farm gate chewing the fat! Seamus and Sean, two successful owner operators of call centres in Ireland, who have been friends for years, sitting in a Dublin bar watching the world go by.

Seamus had inherited his call centre operation from his father and was making a pretty good job of running the business whereas Sean was the entrepreneur who had set up his call centre operation from scratch and knew the business inside out. When Seamus had a problem he always turned to Sean for advice – normally under the pretext of “let’s go for a drink!”

“So what’s on your mind Seamus?”

“The same old story, lack of good quality Agents. We’ve always managed to recruit in the past but now it’s getting really difficult to find good people within commuting distance of the Call Centres. We’ve just won another large contract which I need to run from the Shannon call centre because they have the right skills but I need to recruit another 50 – 60 Agents with similar skills, but can I find them in and around Shannon? There are plenty of suitable people in Dublin and Cork with the right skills but none of them want to commute or move to Shannon. And anyway, even if I could recruit the necessary Agents I’d have a problem squeezing them all in the existing building. I suppose I will have to build another extension to the call centre to replace the relaxation area – which is now allocated to the new people that I haven’t been able to recruit yet.”

“Seamus, it’s time you started thinking about introducing more flexibility into your operation. You have got three call centres which are now getting so big that you are having trouble recruiting locally – and its getting too expensive to build new call centres in Dublin where there is a much greater skills pool,. What you need Seamus is a “virtual call centre!”

“A what?...a virtual call centre? you mean one that doesn’t exist? That doesn’t make sense –please explain

“Seamus, a virtual call centre isn’t smoke and mirrors but it might as well be as some or, all, of your call centre Agents can be literally working anywhere you, and more importantly they, choose to work. You have to realise that *Work is a thing you do...not necessarily a place to go* so why continue to drag the workforce to a centralized place of work when, with technology available today, you can, just as intelligently, literally take the work to the workforce, no matter where they are located.

You have to start thinking in terms of access to a “global workforce” where everybody with the right skills are all linked seamlessly together with voice and data communications, and managed remotely as though they were in one central place of work by supervisors and managers that can literally monitor everything that is being done. You can even listen in on Agents calls, and record their conversations if you want to. It really is powerful stuff these days.

I know a travel agent in the UK who set up possibly the first truly virtual call centre back in 1998 with 4 agents all working remotely from home. Now he has hundreds of highly skilled agents all working from home – a business turning over £40m from an office of a few thousand square feet where he runs the back office administration!”

“So your saying that I could recruit people who live all over Ireland to work from home – or presumably, from smaller offices or call centres close to where they live and I would have the same level of management control as if they were working in my actual call centres?”

“Exactly Seamus! You see, there are so many extremely competent people available for work, who want to work, but simply cannot go to a place of work who could be gainfully employed using this technology. The disabled, single parents, young mothers who have to leave work if they want a family – you might even be able to recruit all the additional people you need in and around Shannon”

“Or I could even link my three call centres together and operate them as a single call centre – and no need to build the extension” exclaimed Seamus.

“Now you’re talking! Said Sean – now where’s that beer you promised me!

For more information on virtual call centres contact GemaTech on 0800 328 8354 or email [callcentrehelper@gematech.com](mailto:callcentrehelper@gematech.com) web site [www.gematech.com](http://www.gematech.com)