

Middle East Call Centre Awards 2012

# COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE



*INSIGHTS*

middle east

Call Centre  
awards  
2012





# Middle East Call Centre Awards '12

Celebrating Another Outstanding Year  
Of Growing Regional Competence

More Submissions Than Ever

More Returning Entrants Than Ever

More Awards Than Ever

**INSIGHTS Congratulates  
The 2012 Winners For Their  
Dedication & Achievement**

The Middle East Call Centre Awards '13 Competition Begins  
October 12. For Entry Forms Go To [www.insights-me.com](http://www.insights-me.com)

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## middle east Call Centre awards 2012

# Introduction

The Middle East Call Centre industry's annual dinner and awards ceremony took place at Dubai's Crowne Plaza hotel on 5th June. The Crowne Plaza's Jumeirah Ballroom has been the venue of choice for a number of years but this year saw significant differences:-

operations and the strategic returns enjoyed by Middle East business has increased dramatically since the awards program was first introduced. While this means call centres have to work much harder to earn awards it also means that customers are enjoying much higher levels of service and businesses are enjoying much higher

business gurus and is not based on an arbitrary analysis of statistical results. In addition, the judges will only consider submitted data that is supported evidentially and they will visit call centres as required to ensure the integrity of the data presented.

Thus, as guests filed into the Jumeirah ballroom they knew that they were about to be judged by their peers, not on the basis of simplistic statistical performance but rather on their ability to truly deliver a branded customer experience and positive business returns.

In his opening address, Keenaghan highlighted that this year saw the introduction of some new "artistic" award categories. These artistic events provided opportunities for call centre staff to compose songs, to produce music videos, to write essays and to create comedy "skits" in an effort to harness and recognise the very necessary "artistic" skills of customer interaction professionals. Keenaghan was quick to highlight that these categories were INSIGHTS' first attempt to open up more opportunities to recognise the talents and efforts of the most important of all call centre staff – the call centre agents.

The awards program has, in many respects, been a victim of its own success. So, without making any material change to the very foundation of the program's success, INSIGHTS are planning a "facelift" for the 2013 awards program. This will include all-new entry forms and new submission procedures. There will be some improvements to the judging processes that will see the formation of a voluntary regional "council" which will work with the international judging panel to select winners. INSIGHTS will also launch a symbiotic certification program that will provide opportunities to recognise and reward individual industry professionals and call centre operations based on their

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When the ballroom doors opened and guests were invited to take their seats the most instantly apparent difference was scale. This year the event occupied THREE times as much floor space as in previous years. Support for the event continues to grow, not only in numbers but also in stature as the number of executives and VIP's in attendance continues to increase. While this obviously makes the event more nerve-wrecking for the participants it also serves to make the event more exciting for the industry as a whole.

The event is organised by INSIGHTS, the Middle East's Call Centre experts, under the direction of INSIGHTS President, Mr. Dominick Keenaghan. Keenaghan highlighted the fact that increasing numbers of attendees is also indicative of more competitors. That makes the event more competitive so call centres are forced to perform to much higher levels in order to earn recognition. "The quality of call centre

returns. That's what the INSIGHTS awards program has sought to achieve and we are very happy with the success to date".

INSIGHTS' awards are not simply based on statistics and numbers. There is no such thing as an international standard for call centres and any business that relies on that notion is delusional. The competition is based entirely on the proven strategic business results achieved by call centres on behalf of their parent business. INSIGHTS are keen to avoid anecdotal business results and to dispel notional relationships. For these reasons, INSIGHTS recognises call centres and industry professionals who can prove they have maximised strategic business returns from their call centre. Such operations do not necessarily have the highest service level. Rather, they have the IDEAL service level for their customers, their market and their brand. The judging process involves complex strategic modelling based upon the works of recognised international



achievement of defined strategic results. These changes are expected to increase the number of competitors even further but they will also increase the number of award categories thus increasing the opportunities for call centres and individual professionals to be recognised for their talents and their contributions to business, to customers and to the industry as a whole. In fact there are so many exciting changes to the awards program that INSIGHTS are organising a special “awards 2013 kick-off” event in October where prospective competitors can learn exactly what it will take to be successful in next year’s, re-designed program.

In terms of industry trends, this year quality assurance continues to be at the forefront of most call centre activities. In continuation of last year’s trend, the 2012 QA category was one of the most highly competitive categories. The majority of businesses, however, still see quality assurance as a mere subset of agent performance management and are failing to harness the other 80% of the business value attributable to customer interaction quality assurance. Strategic awareness continues to be a hurdle for many of the less successful operations. Many of the entries that failed to be nominated failed because there was no strategic modelling and therefore the call centre was effectively operating blind. Call centres that just achieve performance objectives without any strategic rationale behind those objectives are always going to struggle to excel in an awards competition that measures strategic business results. Competitors for 2013 are urged to spend more time modelling business strategy and to design call centre performance around their business’ unique strategic requirements.

In addition to participants who lacked strategic foundations there were another

group of competitors who failed to be nominated. These were the competitors who failed to support their entries with evidence of their performance and their claims. The judges will only judge entries that are supported evidentially. Even though a call centre might look great on paper and even though they might be achieving fabulous “numbers”, if those numbers are not proven with supporting evidence and if those numbers are not congruent with the modelled business strategy presented in the submission then the entry may fail to be nominated.

The judges also commented that a lot of call centre managers are failing to network effectively among their peers. Many call centres happily believe that their operation is beyond compare but they are failing to invest in opportunities to network with other call centre managers to actually understand where they stand. In this respect the judges emphasised the need for all industry professionals to commit to events that allow them to interact with their peers and to understand how many truly fantastic call centres are operating within the Middle East. The best call centres in the region are investing in networking opportunities to ensure that they always remain at the top “of the league tables”.

The INSIGHTS awards program is serious. There is a serious, defined judging methodology that ensures that INSIGHTS are happy to attach their name to award winners. INSIGHTS are keen to provide opportunities for participants to further their applications and to present their call centre in the best and most factual way possible. INSIGHTS highlight that it is incumbent upon participants to acquaint themselves with the awards process and to adhere to defined rules and guidelines. INSIGHTS cannot be held responsible for participants or prospective participants who fail to avail

of opportunities to become fully acquainted with the system. New participants are urged to take opportunities to understand the entry and judging process whilst returning participants are strongly urged to study the new formats carefully in order to ensure that they make the required changes to their existing entry processes.

INSIGHTS are proud of what the awards program has achieved but most of all, we are proud to say that we are a part of the success of the leading call centres in the Middle East. Our goal is to continue the development of the regional industry and to continue to recognise those that go beyond the mere notion of standards and create business operations that are uniquely inspiring whilst delivering positive value returns. Congratulations to all the 2012 award winners and best of luck to all those participating in the 2013 event.

## Looking Ahead

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 2013 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 (Reprinted on Request)

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 seven years, the judges have compiled a few suggestions to

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 **FIRST** step is to understand that the submission process is exhaustive and requires considerable effort. Submissions generally run to hundreds of pages and include copies of ACD reports, training materials, recruitment assessment processes, etc.



help 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, testimonials, 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 INSIGHTS, 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 2013.





Hutchinson Deirdre, Head of Customer Care at Vodafone Qatar, accepts one of the several Awards won on the night

- 🏆 Call Centre Of The Year (Strategically Aligned)
- 🏆 Best Internally Developed Application
- 🏆 Best VOC Program - Medium Company (100-1000 Employees)
- 🏆 Talent Award - Best Music Video
- 🏆 Talent Award - Best Essay



Vodafone Qatar continued an incredible streak of achievement when they won the highly coveted “Call Centre of the Year” title for 2012. Vodafone have always been a top performing organisation because of their brilliantly organised strategic/operational congruence. However, INSIGHTS have always enforced the rule that judges cannot award the same title to the same call centre for two consecutive years based upon the same reasoning. So it might be worth looking back on Vodafone’s previous performance to understand just how they managed to win premium titles each year for the last three years....

In previous years the judges commented that Vodafone had three foundation characteristics that, in the eyes of the judges, if harnessed and leveraged correctly, 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.**

Last year Vodafone emphasised that they compete as a LIFESTYLE company, not as a Telco but they continued to adhere steadfastly to the three foundation characteristics that powered their acceleration. The judges were in no doubt that Vodafone’s business modeling along with their adherence to

strategy and their operational congruence would 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 dubbed Vodafone as one of the region’s business strategy role models.

Vodafone had their three foundation characteristics in 2010. In 2011 they could not be awarded a premium title for the same three characteristics but instead, they impressed the judges with their ability to take their LIFESTYLE strategy and emphasise it to the fullest extent. The LIFESTYLE approach was not without risk. Clearly, some customers like it but there were also some who would not like it. Vodafone remained resolute about who they are and who they want to be and as a result, their bravery paid dividends.

The judges wondered what would happen in 2012. Even if Vodafone were performing fantastically, the judges would be prohibited from awarding them a title based on their strategic foundations or on their LIFESTYLE strategy... The judges were in for a huge surprise!

Changes in the global economy, in the regional market and specific changes in Qatar and in the Vodafone Corporation necessitated a strategic shift. And, if the judges were impressed with Vodafone in previous years, they were totally “blown away” with Vodafone’s accomplishments this year.

Vodafone have a new brand strategy. They are doing things differently but they remain resolutely committed to the three foundation components. Imagine what such a shift means to a call centre

operation. It is like asking the staff to wake up in the morning and change their personality, change who they are, change the way they do things. Change management is difficult to do any time but to manage changes in brand strategy whilst retaining the engagement of your labour force and retaining operational congruence is admirable. To do it all in a matter of months is truly beyond belief and that is exactly what Vodafone have done in the last year.

Vodafone, are very lucky to have four fantastic, strategically competent managers who drive every aspect of their call centre. Headed by Deirdre Hutchinson, the operations management trio comprising Kavitha Singh, Manlio Garcia and Maria McCourt are the call centre industry’s version of “the INCREDIBLES”.

So what does this team do that makes their call centre so strategically congruent? Actually, it is really simple! They are not aiming for perfection or some notional set of operational targets. They are aiming to project a brand (a, “personality”, if you will) in each and every customer interaction. Their goal is not to achieve mere numbers but rather to use those numbers to measure whether or not they are projecting the right brand image and delivering the right branded experience.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that their staff collectively rank among the most artistic call centre agents in the region – many of them were recruited by audition rather than by competency-based methodologies. But whether it is because of the nature of the recruits, the type of training and coaching programs implemented by Vodafone or whether it is just indicative of the INCREDIBLES’ ability to drive performance, Vodafone

have managed to shift agent behavior in accordance with the new brand strategy with relatively little friction. In reality, the judges believe it is a combination of all the above AND the three foundations of strategy that have kept Vodafone "nimble" and allowed them to alter and change with ease.

Vodafone didn't just take home the coveted call centre of the year title. In fact, there were suggestions that they would need help to transport their "glassware" back to Qatar. 5 trophies headed back to the Vodafone office including, Best internally developed application, Best Voice of the Customer program (medium size call centres), Best talent award (essay) and Best talent award (music video).

Without divulging anything proprietary, the judges wish to mention Vodafone's internally developed application. The judges described it as "social business media" in action. The application is as much about work performance as it is about internal communications and the enforcement of the Vodafone corporate spirit. In fact, the judges commented on the communications skills of Vodafone's senior management team. They lauded their ability to explain the entire business strategy to each and every staff member with clarity, conciseness, transparency and above all else, simplicity. In addition to congratulating the development team, the judges later pondered if, in fact, the communications opportunities afforded by Vodafone's internally developed application played an enormous role in their ability to completely and successfully re-engineer their brand strategy in a year.

It is without doubt that Vodafone's senior management team rank among the best in the region. It is without argument that the call centre management quartet (The INCREDIBLES) are capable of super-human feats but none of their efforts, none of their skills and none of their talents would be evident where it not for the capabilities of the agents who actually deliver the branded experience to the customer. Vodafone's agents are spread across Egypt, Qatar and India. Management is centralised in Qatar but the Qatari team have real time connectivity to all their call centres and

they exert considerable effort in spending sufficient time with their "offshore" agents to ensure the essential human communications links are sustained. On the night of the awards ceremony Brownell read aloud the first few paragraphs of the Awards '12 winning essay. When they recognised the content, a seismic wave erupted from the Vodafone tables in the ballroom. The cheer was so intense that everyone present recognised that Vodafone don't just pay lip service to the appreciation and gratitude they have for their staff. They genuinely respect the efforts of each individual and they value the input

*don't only send him the settings and inform him in details how to use it; you also tell him that you would like to try the service with him to make sure that everything is alright. And it's not because you want to create a bees knees, world class quality to last in your PD, no, but because you want the customers to be beside themselves in merriment over your helping them; you want it to be groovy, amazing, oh-la-la! I stayed with the customer until he sent and received a photo from his fiancée back then. The joyful tone of his voice cannot be expressed in words; I literally smelled the flowers while walking the extra mile.*

Heba Saeed

*The Seismology didn't end with the essay award because the room shook once more when Vodafone's music video also won an award. Vodafone's music video was unique. It was an eclectic mix of well-known hits and custom-composed music with a background photographic collage the depicted Vodafone's voyage to date, their goals for the future. Most*

*importantly, it recognised the contribution of the agent teams and their supervisors and team leaders – without whom the Vodafone story would not have happened. The composition was unique, the arrangement was unique and the story was unique.... Uniquely Vodafone.*

*In fact, one could summarise the plethora of success enjoyed by Vodafone by stating that their call centre is not measured by some notional set of metrics and benchmarks. Their call centre is UNIQUELY VODAFONE and when Vodafone changed, the call centre changed too and retained its ability to be UNIQUELY VODAFONE. Dominick Keenaghan, President of INSIGHTS, after presenting Vodafone's awards commented, "People need to understand that there is no defined perfection for this industry. A perfect call centre merely projects the brand image of the parent". That's what Deirdre Hutchinson, her INCREDIBLE trio and their call centre team do to perfection and no-one could do it better..... They are indeed, the Middle East's CALL CENTRE OF THE YEAR 2012!*



The victorious Vodafone team

and engagement of every staff member. If more agents were respected by senior managers for the incredibly difficult job that they face each and every day then the world of customer experience would be so much better. We congratulate Heba Saeed for her words of wisdom. Words that, in themselves, manifest the Vodafone way:-

*Think about it: you get myriads of calls a week solely for internet settings. You habitually learn to do it blindly while sticking to the quality rules and you have done it prim and proper. Among this slew of calls, you stop being so pensive about it; you may actually find it ridiculous to go the extra mile because when something is popular, it ceases to have it's individuality and the customer in that case is one in a million. But when a customer accidently says "because I want to send it to my fiancée", your human heart is sent beating, pounding, throbbing again. Now is your chance to shine, my chance to shine and every one's chance to shine. You*



Vodafone Customer Care Team

# Winner

Insights Middle East

2012 Awards

- ▶ Best Call Centre of the Year
- ▶ Best Voice of the Customer Program
- ▶ Best Internally Developed Application
- ▶ Best Essay
- ▶ Best Video/Song





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

- 🏆 Call Centre Manager Of The Year (Ambassador) - Khurram Iqbal, Cupola Teleservices Ltd
- 🏆 Call Centre OSP Of The Year (Ambassador)
- 🏆 Longevity Award
- 🏆 Best Sales Program



**C**TS, Cupola Teleservices had another record year when they carried home, no less than four awards. That means that the judges and INSIGHTS have a lot to say about CTS. However, it can probably all be summed up quite easily by pointing out that among their other awards, CTS won the longevity award. In fact CTS have won the longevity award EVERY year. The longevity prize is awarded to the competing OSP who demonstrate the longest standing call centre outsource contract. CTS are probably the longest established outsourcer in the region (they are certainly the longest established outsourcer in the competition) and they have at least one contract that has been in existence since they began operations. If a recognised multinational trusts CTS with their business for that long – there’s probably not a lot more that needs to be said about their overall performance.

CTS also scooped TWO premium awards. Their call centre manager, Mr. Khurram Iqbal was awarded the title “Call Centre Manager of the Year” in the large call centre category and the entire CTS organisation won the highly-sought “Outsource Service Provider of the year” title and are recognised as the regional industry’s ambassadors. CTS are based at Dubai Outsource Zone so it was all the more fitting that “Outsource Service Provider of the year” award was presented by Mr. Ammar Malik – Director Operations – Dubai Outsource Zone.

In addition to all those awards, CTS also won the award for the best sales program. Not only have CTS implemented some incredible sales processes and techniques but their wide and varied regional sales experience equips them to deliver higher, faster sales returns for their clients. CTS’ sales

experience transcends geography, vertical and language. It is true to say, they’ve done it all. And it is also true to say that they have done it successfully with more client testimonials than one could fit into a typical awards submission.

So what does it take for an OSP to become the OSP of the year? In the words of the judges: - “It’s not about achieving KPI’s or implementing clever “trickery”. It’s about doing a good job, honestly. “We are looking for good all-round skills that treat employees fairly, provide good working facilities, be honest to clients and deliver on their promises”. Being a great outsourcer has to include making profits. A great outsourcer therefore needs to invest enough to be able to do the job required, at a competitive price and still “turn a profit”. Many regional outsourcers try to cut back on quality or they provide inadequate facilities for staff. While this may seem to be unimportant for the business, it fractures the long-term sustainability of contracts and as CTS have proven, sustainability is not a problem for them. Winning contracts is relatively easy – keeping them is a lot more difficult!

CTS recognise the core competencies of great call centre staff (agents, team leaders, managers etc.). Their recruitment process is strong but they are not trying to find “rocket scientists”. CTS’ training and mentoring program is very strong and their personal development methodologies rank among the best in the region. CTS’ senior management team have grown within the organisation. They understand the agents’ job and they understand the business instinctively. As a result, once trained, new recruits are well managed to help them achieve business performance

results while also helping them to manage stress and other pressures associated with the job role.

Support functions at CTS are very capable. These functions include Workforce management, performance management, quality assurance, training etc. Most of the support function managers at CTS have been certified for their particular role. They understand the “art” and “science” of their business function and as a result they do an incredible job.

Of course, success like this almost inevitably stems from the top-down. In CTS’ case, the senior executives rank among the most experienced and most competent in the region. The executive team value each and every employee for the contribution they bring. They recognise and reward individuals appropriately and as mentioned above, they actively partner with employees in personal development. Staff satisfaction is very high and probably most interesting of all is that the staff truly respect their senior managers. They don’t just say that they respect them, they genuinely do respect them.

So no matter what angle you view CTS from, you will find an organisation that “sets the bar” on regional performance. The CTS brand excels because the organisation stands true to its brand strategy. CTS’ operational performance excels because the senior executives “live” the brand within the organisation. CTS’ business development is accelerating because they do what they promise, when they promise with no “clever trickery”. The judging panel commented that “a few multinational outsourcers could learn a thing or two from CTS”.



United Arab Bank congratulates

*cts*

subsidiary of Cupola Group for winning

# Call Centre OSP of the Year 2012

at the Middle East Call Centre Awards



Above from left: Mr. Tom Smith, Group Head - Retail Banking, UAB, Mr. Kazim Awan, CEO, Cupola Group, Mr. Paul Trowbridge, CEO, UAB, & Ms. Humaira Majid, COO, CTS



**United Arab Bank in the UAE has been voted Bank of the Year by the Financial Times London**

**CUPOLA**



**البنك العربي المتحد  
UNITED ARAB BANK**

P.O. Box 500220, Building No. 8  
Dubai Outsource Zone – U.A.E  
Tel: +971 4 366 2000, Fax: +971 4 366 2002  
[www.cupolagroup.com](http://www.cupolagroup.com)

H.E. Sheikh Abdulla Bin Salem Al Qassimi Bldg, Al Qassimi Street  
P.O. Box 25022, Sharjah, U.A.E  
Tel : +971 6 573 3900, Fax : +971 6 573 3906  
[www.uab.ae](http://www.uab.ae)



## The INSIGHTS Call Centre Awards '12 Night

The 2012 awards night was truly a night to remember. The entire ballroom filled up with participants from across the region, many of whom were accompanied by 'C-level' executives, CEO's, Director Generals, Ministerial secretaries and other VIP's. The atmosphere was "electric" from the start as the evening provided not just an opportunity for INSIGHTS to recognise the region's best performing callcentres it also provided an opportunity for the Middle East Call Centre Family to enjoy an evening together. It was an evening of celebration, recognition and above all else, an evening of fun.

As in previous years, the event was hosted by INSIGHTS and the evening was sponsored by Saudi Arabia's leading Contact Centre Outsource Service Provider, Smartlink, along with the body that has probably done more for call centre outsourcing than any other organisation in the region – Dubai Outsource Zone and also by BPO+, the Oman and Qatar-based OSP that, as a result of delivering a regionally consistent branded experience has enjoyed one of the fastest growth rates among regional outsourcers. Without the support

of our sponsors, the awards night could not take place and we urge all participants to support our sponsors wherever possible.

With all guests present, Dominick Keenaghan delivered his annual industry address. Keenaghan welcomed the VIP's, the participants and all the guests. He congratulated all those who had been nominated for awards and provided some eye-opening statistics:- The growth in the number of award entries increased by 33% compared to last year, resulting in an annual growth rate of 43%. More interestingly, was the fact that the number of submissions received in 2012 increased by 23% (compared to a 16% increase last year). This demonstrates that the awards program is continuing to grow but it also indicates that more and more companies are investing in the resources required to present well-structured submissions.

After thanking the sponsors, Keenaghan unveiled INSIGHTS plan to kick-off the awards 2013 program in October 2012. He highlighted that this would provide participants with maximum opportunities to prepare timely submissions for the 2013 awards and to

ensure that their submissions meet the judging requirements. In closing, Keenaghan congratulated regional call centres for outstanding achievement within the global industry.

In keeping with tradition, the evening's Master of Ceremonies was INSIGHTS' Dr. Brownell O'Connor. O'Connor was quick to follow Keenaghan's statistics and highlighted that the attendees represented the top 5% of Middle East Call Centres. That is something that EVERY nominee should be proud of. The strict judging methodologies and the fact that INSIGHTS, above all else, need to protect their brand position ensures that only truly worthy call centres are nominated for awards. The region is filled with good call centres but



Dominick opens the proceedings



The cream of regional Call Centres were in attendance

there are only a few GREAT call centres and the best of the best, the top 5% were gathered in the Crowne Plaza's Jumeirah ballroom.

In a light-hearted address O'Connor examined the impact of some of 2012's world events and their relationship to call centres. The Mayan calendar's apparent prediction that the world would end in 2012 was examined by O'Connor and admittedly, his analysis of Mayan hieroglyphs had an element of reality – including his concern that the "woman" hieroglyph appeared to be wearing a headset. O'Connor pondered if the Mayans were predicting the end of the world or merely complaining about the weak

performance of the 95% of call centres who were not represented in the Jumeriah ballroom.

The other big event of 2012 was the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic. O'Connor spoke about the "forefathers" of today's call centre agents – ships' radio officers and demonstrated how a string of communication failures prevented rescue ships from assisting the Titanic. He wondered why the other 95% of call centres continue to make the same mistakes today when they place statistical performance and adherence to "protocol" ahead of problem resolution or even First Contact Resolution.

With the introductions complete, the banquetting staff of Crowne plaza began to serve dinner. The Crowne plaza staff have always worked hard to ensure satisfaction and this year was no exception.

Before commencement of the main course, O'Connor took to the stage and introduced the BEST in category awards. These are the awards given for specific facets of contact centre performance such as Quality Assurance, Training and IT. A number of special awards were also announced, recognising unique contributions by individuals and businesses. The awards were presented by Dominick Keenaghan.

After the main course was served, Brownell announced the winners of the "BEST of the BEST" awards. These are the awards for the Best operations such as the BEST (small) call centre, BEST (large) OSP, etc.

The awards presentations culminated with the announcement of the winners of the "ultimate" awards for call centre of the year, OSP of the year etc. Keenaghan, once again, presented the awards with the exception of the "Outsource Service Provider of the Year" award, which was presented by Mr. Ammar Malik – Director Operations – Dubai Outsource Zone.

In the middle of the proceedings, Brownell introduced the evening's entertainment. This year's entertainer was Gaston Quieto. Gaston is a world renowned illusionist. He hails from Argentina where his Father and Grandfather were also renowned illusionists. He has performed for Royalty and heads of state and was recognised as the "Magician of the Year" in 2010. He returned from performances in Las Vegas in order to perform at the Call Centre awards ceremony.

In one of his opening illusions he "skewered" his assistant with a dozen or so swords. Many of the agents present on the night thought it was a new performance



management methodology! Thankfully, his assistant was later freed from the swords and she walked off the stage unharmed. Then began the audience participation. In one illusion he levitated one of the participants on stage. He proved there were no ropes, supports or pulleys supporting the lady who remained perfectly rigid as she floated about a meter above the stage floor.

In another illusion, he asked a member of the audience to loan him some money. The ease at which he secured the money would indicate that the participant was not an accountant. Once the 100 Dirham note was signed by the participant it promptly disappeared. The participant may not have been an accountant but he was intelligent enough to refuse to provide another 100 Dirham note. Later, Gaston retrieved a Kiwi fruit and asked the participant to cut it open. The fresh Kiwi was found to contain the signed bill loaned by the participant – thus supporting the INSIGHTS philosophy that the fruits of your effort should always be a positive cash return!

Gaston drew the audience's attention to a locked box that he had left on the foot of the stage. It was in plain view of the audience at all times. He told us that the box contained a prediction that he had made earlier. At this point he became a little troublesome as he started to throw bricks at the audience. Whoever was hit by the (rubber) brick had to answer a hypothetical question and then throw the brick to another participant. The first participant was asked to choose a travel destination. He chose Riyadh. The next was asked to choose an airline by which to travel. He chose "Saudi Arabian airlines" and the third person was asked if he was to finance the trip, how much would he expect to pay and he responded 10,000 dirhams.

The locked box was now retrieved from

the front of the stage and with the assistance of one of the awards participants, Gaston's predictions were removed from the locked box. His predictions were – Riyadh, Saudi Arabian airlines and 10,000 Dirhams..... That left the audience speechless (and that's not easy to do to a room full of call centre professionals).

In yet another jaw-dropping illusion, Gaston demonstrated how agents feel when they are stuck at a desk for hours on end. He took a standard table on the stage and asked a volunteer to help him. He then proceeded to levitate the table and make it float around the stage. The volunteer was free to touch and manoeuvre the table as it levitated under Gaston's command. One considers that if all agents were trained to harness the "force" they could take their call centre desks with them when they go for lunch - or anywhere for that matter. Just think of how that would improve adherence!

In his final illusion, Gaston sat on a chair on the stage and he made it snow in the Jumeirah Ballroom, in Dubai in June!

Upon completion of the illusionists performance, Brownell highlighted INSIGHTS "Mantra" that basing call centre performance analysis on data such as ACD statistics is JUST an ILLUSION. The reality of business success is always strategic!

Overall, 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 know of two award winners, 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 the awards just wouldn't be. The superior performance of the 2012 call centre awards winners is NO ILLUSION and that is why they are in the top 5% of regional call centres!



Mohammed Saleh H. Al-Marri, Chief Sales & Service Officer of Qtel Qatar receives their Award

## Best VOC Program - Large Company (>1000 Employees)



2012 marked QTEL's first entry into the competition and they managed to walk away with the award for Best Voice of the Customer (VOC) program in the large call centre category. QTEL are, of course, the Qatari incumbent Telco and they operate in one of the most (if not the most) competitive markets in the region. Staying ahead in such an intensely competitive environment requires absolute clarity of focus and determined reasoning.

QTEL's call centre has been operating for 11 years and now boasts more than 500 agents. In addition to building the capabilities of their call centre, QTEL are also very focused on improving customer self service, particularly in e-channels and e-services in order to enhance availability and customer satisfaction.

In any competitive environment, customer retention is critical. Although admittedly, once retention is managed to acceptable level customer behavior becomes more critical. QTEL have already recognised this and they are perhaps one of the region's most retention-focused organisations. They have numerous retention-focused programs but one of the key drivers of their retention program is their Voice of the Customer program (VOC).

VOC is a process, whereby organisation behaviors are analysed and correlated with/against customer behaviors in order to understand how companies can best drive the desired customer retention behaviors. Customer interaction and, in particular, call centre Voice Of the Customer programs focus heavily on understanding the interaction attributes that have the greatest impact on driving the desired customer behaviors.

QTEL have begun the VOC process with very solid customer surveying methodologies that include BOTH Customer Satisfaction surveying (CSAT) and Net Promoter Score (NPS) in a clever "mix" that ensures a "panoramic" view of customer behavior. The customer survey data is co-reported with call centre performance data so that combined

defection). To implement a valid VOC methodology to cover all of that requires significant human and technological resources and it also requires multiple survey methodologies. Once again, the judges were very impressed with the multi-channel surveying processes implemented by QTEL. They include manual (face to face) surveying,

*"QTEL's VOC reporting interface is very well structured. It is clear, easy to interpret and ensures little ambiguity."*

interpolation can lead to a greater understanding of how best to drive the all-important retention results.

VOC is complicated and it often takes 2-3 years for VOC departments to reach a level of maturity that allows them to analyse, identify and reliably report upon intelligence matters but the judges recognised one attribute of QTEL's VOC program that is not often witnessed during early-stage development. The judges commented, "QTEL's VOC reporting interface is very well structured. It is clear, easy to interpret and ensures little ambiguity. While Voice of the Customer is critically important in any competitive environment, the return generated from VOC investments will only ever be as good as the reporting interface and in this regard QTEL have clearly made some very strong, early-stage gains."

Voice of the Customer programs also require customer behavioural analysis across all touch points (not just call centre) at every stage of the customer life cycle (from acquisition, through conversion and consumption, to retention and, where unavoidable, to

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) call tailing surveys, various e-surveys and they also, critically include outbound telephonic surveys to once again ensure that the highly-sought "panoramic" customer view is maintained. While multi-channel surveying in itself might not seem so impressive, the impressive bit is how QTEL combine multi-channel CSAT and NPS survey data to derive reportable intelligence. It's not just a random collection of surveys, QTEL operate a holistic, multi-touchpoint VOC program that presents real intelligence in a user-friendly reporting interface.

As QTEL continue to evolve and develop along with the Qatari market we expect that they will compete in more categories and that the competition they pose to the regional industry will become as intense as the competition in the Qatari telecommunications market. If QTEL apply the same resolute focus to the call centre awards program that they have applied to customer retention, the regional call centre industry will certainly be talking about their achievements for a very long time.



# Best VOC Program for large company > 10000 Employees



This Reward is Ensuring the Realization of our Mission:

“To be the preferred choice for world class communication services in Qatar”



Mr. Ibrahim of City Services Consultancy receives their Award

- 🏆 Best Call Centre Recruitment Program
- 🏆 Best Call Centre Quality Assurance Program



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 “Customized implementation at a UAE Ministry in 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 Ministry 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 Ministry 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.







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Mr. Khaled M. Ramadan, VP - Head of Alternative Delivery Channels, Retail Banking Group, BANK ALJAZIRA receives the Award

## Best New Call Centre



Bank Al Jazira entered the awards program for the first time in 2012. When they traveled back to Saudi Arabia they took with them, a premium award that recognises not only their accomplishments in a very short time but also their readiness to excel across the entire array of call centre and branded experience areas of performance.

The title of Best New Call Centre 2012 was awarded to Bank Al Jazira. Bank Al Jazira's call centre could form the basis of a case study in how best to build a call centre "from the ground up". The call centre management team is well experienced in call centres and in the awards program: - Khalid Ramadan and Luay Nimry were both involved with previous "premium" award winners and have worked with many of the region's leading call centres.

As a result of the wealth of Khaled's and Luay's combined experience and their ability to attract an experienced team of operations managers to their new call centre, Bank Al Jazira have managed to create a call centre that exceeds all of the expectations of a new operation, is perfectly poised to continue its developmental pace and perhaps most importantly the call centre is also fine-tuned to deliver fast, measurable, positive value returns to the banking organisation. It certainly appears as though this team of executives, managers, supervisors and team leaders have developed "the Midas touch".

Midas touch aside, the management team faced an enormous hurdle in building their call centre. The call centre is new. Bank Al Jazira is not new. The call centre is one manifestation of the bank's evolving brand strategy and therein lies

the challenge. In the beginning, the call centre team were almost guessing how the bank's strategy might further evolve and were establishing KPI's and performance targets congruent with their best estimates. This situation is not unique for new call centres but it is very rare to find an organisation that puts enough faith in their call centre team to allow KPI's and targets to evolve with strategy. As it happens, the strategy and the call centre operations evolved and developed in exact accordance with the INSIGHTS evolutionary model that

"challenging" was not synonymous with "impossible". In keeping with the early focus on effectiveness, quality assurance was a focal point in developing customer service more than mere agent performance.

The management team were also acutely aware that the only way to achieve their performance goals and time to market constraints was to attract great call centre agents with great experience. Thus, they focused heavily on the working facilities and the general working environment and their efforts

The title of Best New Call Centre 2012 was awarded to Bank Al Jazira. Bank Al Jazira's call centre could form the basis of a case study in how best to build a call centre "from the ground up". The call centre management team is well experienced in call centres and in the awards program.

combines the works of a multitude of international business gurus. The entire call centre management team have demonstrated commitment competence and confidence and the results are plain to see.

In beginning the analysis of Bank Al Jazira's call centre the judges were first impressed by their KPI targets and performance results. Their goals were realistic and were congruent with the business strategy. A few of the targets were "challenging" but because everything was strategically congruent,

returned enormous dividends. The working facilities and working environment are often given least consideration in the rush to build something quickly but the management team knew that it needed to be done right in order to get the right people. Clearly, the right people came, they came quickly and in a very short space of time they were performing nominally.

The second point identified by the judges was that the bank's call centre has evolved along the lines of the INSIGHTS evolutionary model. To begin,



**Because we care...**

**Bank AlJazira Wins  
"The Best New Call Center in the Middle East 2012"**

they focused their initial technological implementation on critical contact technologies only. They avoided the temptation to over-invest in technology. Over-investment has many detrimental effects including, wastefully deploying capital that could be used for better purposes, increasing the difficulty of achieving call centre ROI and it also increases the implementation and integration risks. Bank al Jazira needed fast time to market so they got the basics specified and ensured that they were installed and working on time.

They also avoided the dangers of under-investment by planning the strategic evolution of the call centre and

TRANSITION (“effectiveness”) stage they began to achieve more and more KPI targets and the continued to identify increased opportunities to serve customers better. As they evolved the management team never lost sight of the need to focus heavily on EFFECTIVENESS, knowing that EFFICIENCY can only be built on EFFECTIVENESS.

The identified opportunities increased effectiveness and the bank were able to very quickly evolve to the efficiency stage. In the efficiency stage, the bank is investing very heavily in new, advanced technologies to provide better customer visibility, more business

the world, fail to realise that a call centre is engineered in exactly the same way as a car or a machine. Its design will dictate the performance level at which it “cruises”. Over-engineering a call centre places enormous financial and performance burdens on the operations team while under investment places enormous levels of stress on the operations team and that most often manifests itself as customer experience issues. A call centre that “cruises” at just the right level will naturally perform well in the areas required to deliver a branded experience. Because every brand should, by definition, be different, every call centre should be different and if the call centre is being designed from scratch then following the stages of evolution from the transition stage is the best way to ensure that the call centre has the foundation to become everything it needs to become without any over-investment, over-stressing or under-performing resources. Bank Al Jazira have ABSOLUTELY NAILED IT. We simply cannot say enough good things about what this team have accomplished”.

With such high praise coming from the judging panel there is little else for us to comment except to say that financial services and telcos are the largest call centre users globally. Dynamic banks, filled with energy and enthusiasm who seek ways to push the boundaries of banking towards the future are increasingly leveraging their call centres and customer self service to deliver comfort and convenience. Sadly, many of them get it completely wrong and their brands often fade into the anonymity of “banking”. Bank Al Jazira will not fade into anonymity. Their call centre is powering their brand and is energising the desires of their customers. With this call centre, with this executive team, with this management troupe and with this group of team leaders, supervisors and agents, Bank Al Jazira has the potential to become one of the most recognised banking brands in the region. And they will be recognised as a “customer” brand long before the organisations that pay mere “lip service” to customer centricity and customer satisfaction.

INSIGHTS and the judging panel look forward (with eager anticipation) to seeing Bank Al Jazira in next year’s awards. If they keep their development apace then Bank Al Jazira will continue to be a force to be reckoned with.



The victorious Bank Al Jazira team

matching the technology upgrade path and evolutionary path to suit.

Thereafter, the key focus was customer comfort, convenience and satisfaction. By deploying teams of experienced agents the bank were able to gain fast traction in terms of comfort and convenience. Comfort and convenience is the very essence of what Bank Al Jazira’s call centre is all about so this became their measure of effectiveness. The experienced agents combined with an initially limited self service option allowed the bank to identify how service might be developed, based on customer needs and desires rather than the copy-paste approach that is adopted by many other financial institutions. All of this is “classic” TRANSITION stage deployment and Bank Al Jazira followed the “playbook” to perfection. As they traversed the

intelligence and they are further developing the customer comfort and convenience that has been such an important component of everything they have done to date.

So, Bank Al Jazira have managed to traverse 2-3 stages of evolution in one single year. They did it by hiring the right team and investing resources wisely. As they move into stage 3, we will need to see if the bank’s brand strategy requires them to evolve further or if they should optimise the call centre as a stage 3 operation but one thing is for sure, whatever this team decide to do, it will be done to perfection, it will be done quickly, it will be effective and it will evolve efficiently.

Upon analysis of Bank Al Jazira’s awards submission, the judges commented, “Companies across the region and indeed, companies all over

# Other Middle East Call Centre Awards '12 Winners Congratulated by INSIGHTS' President Dominick Keenaghan



Best Large Call Centre (>70 Seats)  
**Bupa Arabia**



Best Medium Call Centre (31-70 Seats)  
**RTA Salik**



Best Small Call Centre (<31 Seats)  
**DHL Qatar**



Market Pioneer  
**BPO+**



Market Pioneer  
**Contact Center Company**



Best Government Call Centre - Utilities  
**ADDC**



Best Government Call Centre – Support  
**Roads & Transport Authority – RTA**



Call Centre Manager Of The Year (<71 Seats)  
**Barbs Bold, OSN**  
Best Win-back Program



Best Large OSP (>300 Seats)  
**SmartLink**

## Other Middle East Call Centre Awards '12 Winners Congratulated by INSIGHTS' President Dominick Keenaghan



Best Career & Skills Path  
**SCECO**



Best Lead Generation Program  
**Abdul Latif Jameel**



Best Facilities  
Best Quality Of Submission  
**Etihad Airways**



Best VOC Program - Small Call Centre  
**National Water Company**



Best Call Centre Help Desk  
**Emirates IT**



Outstanding Industry Service  
**Hilti Emirates LLC**



Best Medium OSP (71-300 Seats)  
**CrystelCall**



Best New OSP  
Best Call Centre Technology Platform  
Best Reporting Systems And Processes  
**Silah Gulf**



Best Retention & Motivation Program  
**The Resource Group (TRG Pakistan)**

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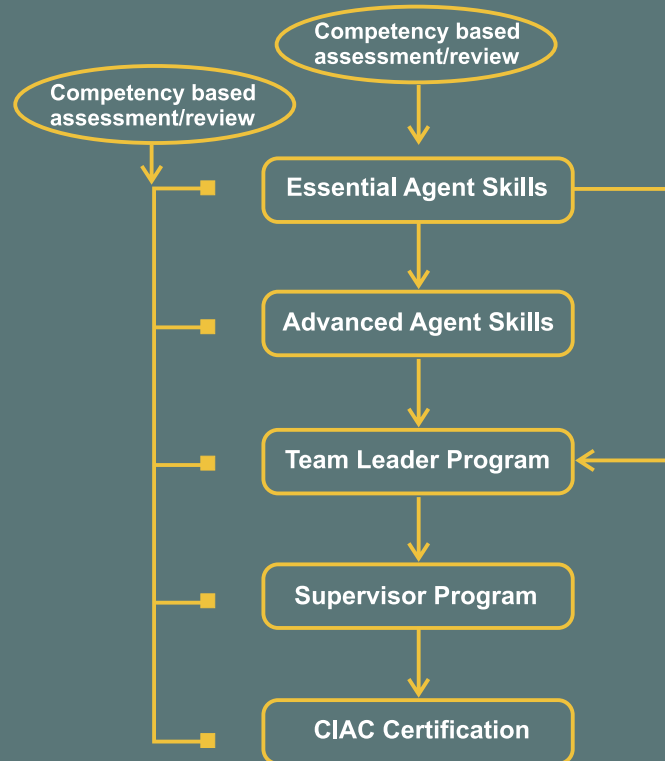
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