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New call centre promises 450 jobs for town

WORK has begun on a £55m building which will house a 450-strong BT call centre and 500 council staff.

It is part of a seven-acre development, which will total 245,000 sq ft of office space, to regenerate the centre of West Bromwich called All Saints.

BT has a 15-year outsourcing deal with Sandwell Council – called Transform Sandwell – which began in 2007 and its staff will move to the building.

Planning consent for the building was granted in May last year and it will comprise 75,000 sq ft over five floors with a central atrium overlooking a landscaped public park. It is set for completion in autumn next year.

The regional development agency, Advantage West Midlands, has committed £6m to the project.

Matt Burgin, director of the Birmingham-based developers, Stoford said: "We are very pleased that we are underway with the first phase of this key regeneration site within Sandwell. The start of works is testament to the significant efforts made by all the parties involved through a very difficult economic period.

Nearly 900 people are set to work in the new building, by the A41 Expressway and Cronehills Linkway, Sandwell

Site visit (from left) Fred Lynch, Transform Sandwell; Councillor Bob Badham, Sandwell Council; Matt Burgin, director, Stoford; Mick Laverty, CEO, Advantage West Midlands; and Councillor Ian Jones, cabinet member for jobs and economy at Sandwell Council

"It is a landmark scheme which is generating serious enquiries from many of the UK's biggest companies. We have very exciting times ahead."

The West Bromwich Building Society plans to move its head office to the site, from the High Street, in early 2012.

It says that it is looking to lease a 70,000 sq ft building to house 450 staff.

The chief executive, Robert Sharpe, said: "West Bromwich has been our home for over 161 years and I believe this development will mark a new era in the society's illustrious heritage within the town and the wider region.

"We are also delighted to be part of a formidable team – Sandwell Council, Advantage West Midlands and Stoford Developments – where, together, we can ensure the town of West Bromwich is firmly on the map with a vibrant and prosperous future ahead."

FRONT COVER PROMOTION

How web chat is cutting costs and increasing staff productivity

by Ian Rowley
Business Development Manager
Parker Software

CALL centres are becoming increasingly more dependent on live chat. They are rapidly adding it to their websites because this method of customer interaction lowers costs, improves staff productivity and increases revenue. Here are some of the benefits of WhosOn Live Chat:

Simultaneous chat WhosOn Live Chat allows an agent to handle multiple chats at the same time, increasing productivity and reducing costs. Our studies have shown that from the first day agents can take two chats simultaneously. And, depending on the conversation, they quickly progress to three-six simultaneous chats. Each customer has the impression that their query is being dealt with more quickly; canned responses allow the agent to insert strategic fillers whilst they are acting on customers' requests.

Web chat is popular; more than 25 per cent of online shoppers opt for this method. It allows them to multi-task while getting fast access to information about products, account information or support. And agents can to send files such as statements, specification sheets or photos.

Exploit the knowledge base Website FAQs are no longer enough; WhosOn Live Chat connected to the knowledge base enables agents to quickly answer more complex questions. Time and again, it has been proven that human contact is preferred. This approach not only provides more accurate information, it also improves first time resolution and online sales/upselling. It also helps reduce the number of unwarranted product exchanges and returns by aiding users to operate the product.

Workload balancing You can set the maximum chats each agent can take and allow agents to mark themselves as too busy to take another. WhosOn Live Chat also has a round robin feature to send the chat to the least busy agent with the appropriate skills, taking into account the number of current chats, the frequency of messages received from the visitor and the maximum number of chats an agent can take.

Integration WhosOn Live Chat provides out-of-the-box integration with CRM systems such as Salesforce and Microsoft Dynamics CRM and we can integrate others.

Be proactive Live analytics within WhosOn Live Chat provides a powerful insight into website activity. An end user who spends a significant amount of time on a site, views a number of pages during a single visit or focuses on a particular page, can be proactively engaged. The ability for an agent to send a tailored invitation to these users to chat significantly improves online sales.

Utilise remote, work at home or seasonal agents Home workers are more cost effective, more productive and achieve greater rates of first time resolution.

Analyse WhosOn provides 76 standard reports, downloadable data for all chats taken and the ability to create your own reports using the SQL Editor. We also offer a reports creation service.

First-visit resolution is vastly improved by providing the maximum amount of information to agents. And the inbuilt knowledge base is continually developed from inbound enquiries. WhosOn Live Chat also enables the agent to send a chat to another agent. We also have the ability to automatically send a chat to a group of agents based on what is known about the visitor.

Remote control enables an agent to take control an end user's PC, with their permission, so that for example the agent can help with the checkout process.

● Please contact me for further information about WhosOn Live chat: ian@parker-software.com