

Call centres begin to climb out of the economic downturn

FOLLOWING a dramatic decline, the number of agent positions in UK call centres rose slightly last year, says a new report.

The total now stands at 631,250 agent positions, equivalent to more than 1m staff after taking shift working into account.

Call centres now employ 3.56 per cent of the UK workforce; more than in the combined total in teaching, the police and armed forces.

The figures are from ContactBabel's report, UK Contact Centres in 2011: The State of the Industry, and are based on research among 3,000 of the UK's 5,500 call centres.

It reports that the industry has had a distinct dip in the past two years, with 2009 in particular experiencing a net decline of 21,500 agent positions. Last year,

there was a small rise of 2,750.

The report's author, Steve Morrell, said: "After many years of strong and steady growth, the economic downturn has had a very noticeable effect on the UK's contact centre industry.

"Some of the business sectors that had experienced double-digit growth rates have been checked strongly, yet a few are shrugging this off." He said 100,000-plus new jobs would be created between now and 2014.

Despite the take-up of offshoring, the industry had grown by 435 per cent since 1995. While retail and distribution sector accounted for 16 per cent of all UK call centres, many of this sector's contact centres were relatively small.

The utilities, communications, finance and outsourcing vertical markets all had average operations far in excess of 100 seats, with the manufacturing and engineering sectors the smallest on average.

● UK Contact Centres in 2011: The State of the Industry, which costs £1,095, plus VAT, quantifies the size, structure and future of the market.

See www.contactbabel.com or info@contactbabel.com.

Domestic & General held a day-long event to give its 800 call centre staff advice and tips on exercise and eating plans. And smokers they were offered kits to aid those who wish to quit. Advisors from Nuffield Health toured the building in Nottingham to give employees the chance to take part in assessments such as "body composition" and then advise them on how to maintain or improve weight and shape and stay healthier through both nutritional and exercise therapy. Jane Winfield (pictured), contact centre manager, said: "The day was a great idea and it gave me a kick start to get back to the gym and do some exercise. Since then, I have been swimming, booked in for Zumba classes and taken up lunch-time walking."



News Brief

RECRUITMENT DRIVE

CallCare, which operates a 24-hour answering service at its site in Salford Quays, Manchester, says that – due to increased business – it is seeking 50 more staff to add to the 100 already in place.



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