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## FINDING OFFSHORE CUSTOMERS FOR A CALL CENTER STARTUP

Finding offshore customers for a call center startup is a difficult proposition. The real challenge, however, comes afterwards - delivering and meeting the expectations of those customers!

First things first though - how to go about finding your initial customers? The first question that you need to ask yourself is why some organization should outsource work to you? For them outsourcing is certainly an attractive, but high-risk proposition. It is attractive not only because it lets them concentrate more on their core activities, but also because of cost-savings. Their risks are primarily quality and reliability related. As a startup you should be prepared to address these risks in a satisfactory manner.

For starters, you should be able to back the quality and reliability of your service. This can be done in many ways: you should try to do them in as many as possible. A standard device guaranteeing the quality and reliability is a Service Level Agreement (SLA). You should develop an SLA defining industry-standard performance criteria for your company.

You should also show the prospective customer some evidence about your track record (e.g. list of customers and testimonials) in the running of call centers. As a startup, you may not have such testimonials. In that case, you should highlight the call-center-related experience of your key team members.

Call center customers prefer specialists over generalists. Try to select a niche for yourself, e.g., order taking, helpdesk, telesales, etc., and try to build your whole selling pitch around that niche.

Before making a pitch to prospective customers, try to understand how their business work and be ready to tell them the following: how they can make-more-money or save-more-money or get-more-business or enhance-the-quality-of-their-service or improve-their-product by outsourcing their call center function to you?

Do tell them about the processes that you have in place to assure the quality of your services. An industry-standard quality certification will be invaluable in this regard. Do develop a disaster-recovery plan and share it with the potential customer.

Here are a few more suggestions: get in touch with your country's expatriates in the target country for leads and other assistance. Register your company with country-specific organizations (like NASSCOM in India, PSEB in Pakistan) and international portals like offshoreexperts.com. Write to other offshore companies in outsourcing powerhouses like India, Philippines, and Canada and see if they would like to develop a partnership with you.

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