

## Rules of Operation for Contact Centers Operators

The purpose of this document is to clarify the rules of operation for Contact Centers services, the process of applications and decision making procedures for companies wishing to provide this service.

### I- **General conditions for operating Contact Centers**

1. According to the Telecommunications law 431/2002 Contact Centers, are not considered as telecommunications services, and therefore are not subject to a license. However; the services that consist in providing means of communications, whether wired or wireless, are considered telecommunication services subject to a license;
2. According to the Telecommunications Law 431/2002, Contact Centers, are considered value-added services that are covered by the framework of this law and are subject to Article 21 thereof;
3. Lebanese companies that are registered are allowed to provide contact center services on a non-exclusive basis;
4. Companies operating Contact Centers must warrant that they shall not make any changes to their partners or shareholders, whether foreign or Lebanese, as well as they shall not modify capital contributions without obtaining the prior approval of the Ministry of Telecommunications and according to the applicable regulations.
5. Contact Center Operators must start operating within nine months from the date of signature of the Contact Center Agreement;
6. Contact Center Operators must pay to the Ministry of Telecommunications all fees, dues and expenses associated with the services of communications lines and any other services provided by the Ministry.
7. A domestic and international Contact Centers service can be combined, as long as an independent network for each of the services is established; the Ministry will determine any exception to this rule on a case by case basis, provided that the company that chooses to use a single network for both of these services, as approved, is subject to strict monitoring and auditing.
8. The Contact Center Operator must inform the Ministry of Telecommunications about any add-on in Agents seats, before beginning of operations.

9. Contact Centers must not be used as Transit points of any kind whatsoever, and the provided services must be limited to calls terminating in or originating from the Contact Center itself.

## **II- Description of the Contact Center services**

A Contact Center provides some or all of the services described below on behalf of a Client:

- 1- Receiving calls from Callers on behalf of the Contact Center Client (inbound calls): these calls are made through calls to telephone operators, or to Interactive Voice Response (IVR), or through real time conversation via the Internet, or by e-mails or web inquiries or through a combined form of some or all of these means. When providing inbound calls, allowed services include the following:
  - a. Remote reception – The Contact Center Operator handles normal receptionist’s tasks for the Contact Center Client, such as receiving and delivering messages, providing Callers with general company and product information and booking appointments.
  - b. Catalog order entry – The Contact Center Operator acts as the order desk for callers who rely on direct response sales and marketing.
  - c. Booking – The Contact Center provides direct response for Contact Center Clients when Callers respond to an advertised telephone number for contest entry, seminar registration, information supplying or market research participation.
  - d. Customer service and support – These may include, for example, inquiries about credit card accounts, insurance policy accounts and claims, airline, hotel and car rental bookings and reservations.
  - e. Help desk – The Second Party provides help to Callers; these services could include, for example, equipment installation and operation, trouble-shooting and fault treatment.
- 2- Generating outbound calls to Recipients on behalf of the Contact Center Clients (outbound calls): these calls are typically live calls and are handled by Operators, employed by the Contact Center Operator, on a just-in-time basis using predictive dialers. Outbound call tasks that can be performed might include the following:
  - a. Telephone solicitations: which are sales calls that can be made as cold calls to everyone on a prospect list, or to every possible phone number combination in a given exchange area or area code, or to individuals with whom an active dialogue has already been initiated about the subject matter of the call. Telephone solicitation may also include solicitation of charitable donations or other non-profit purposes to legally licensed organizations.

- b. Follow-up calls: they are calls issued by the Center in response to a previous request received by the Center from a Caller.
- c. Courtesy calls: for example, to notify the Recipient of new offers issued by the Contact Center Client.
- d. Informational calls: for example, notifying a Recipient of a delay or rescheduled flight, or an insurer calling it's insured to notify them of coverage changes and similar matters.

The Contact Center services are limited to calls terminating in or originating from the Contact Center itself, and there shall not be any transfer or replacement or direction or altering or routing of any call to a third party, except in the case where this transformation is relevant to the Contact Center operation based on a specific escalation procedure or call handling hierarchy as set by the client, exclusively in the context of allowed services.

### **III- Application Process**

The Company must submit an application requesting the authorization to establish and operate a Contact Center, by filling out the "Contact Center Operator Application Form" of the Ministry. This application form must be signed, stamped with the Company stamp (seal) and submitted with the following documents:

1. Letter from the company with logo and stamp/seal addressed to the Minister of Telecommunications requesting the evaluation and approval of its request for the establishment and operation of a Contact Center;
2. Commercial record of the Company
3. Commercial Register of the Company, with the object of the Company clearly stating that the Company activity is restricted to Contact Centers.
4. By-laws of the Company.
5. Copy of the ID/Passport of the partners/owners of the Company and authorized signatory..
6. A copy of the delegation of authority to sign on behalf of the Company, if available.
7. Financial clearance from the Ministry of Telecom Financial department.
8. Required capacity for the means of communication with the justifications for use.
9. The number of seats in the Center, which must not be less than ten (10) seats.

10. Schematic diagram of the Contact Center layout, Physical and Logical Network diagram; with complete equipment list details, technical specifications and configuration.

**N.B:** All documents must be either original or certified photocopies, except for the ID / passport photocopy.

The application and two copies of it must be submitted to the Registry of the Ministry of Telecommunications, located on third floor of the building of the Ministry in Riad El Solh Street.

#### **IV- Application Evaluation Phase**

1. The Supervisory and Coordination Committee at the Ministry shall study the application and render its decision thereon within fifteen (15) days from the date of filing of the application fifteen days; this initial fifteen day period could be extended for another 15 days in the event there are technical or practical reasons that require doing so.
2. In the event and once the request of the Company is approved, the Agreement for operating a Contact Center is then signed between the Ministry and the company.
3. Upon signature of the Agreement, the Company has the option of either providing a bank guarantee in the amount of \$/100,000.00/ (one hundred thousand United States dollars) for each international line E1 with speed of 2 Mbps (this guarantee shall be presented upon reception of the E1 decision) or a personal guarantee of the authorized signatory or main partner/shareholder of the Company personally guaranteeing the commitment of the Company not to provide international and domestic phone calls services or any other services outside the framework of the Agreement (this guarantee shall be presented at the signing of the Agreement.)

#### **V- Preparation for operation phase**

1. In a letter sent to the Minister of Telecommunications, the Company must nominate 2 representatives/delegates proxies in a letter whom will be coordinating with the Committee, one of these representatives must be a technical specialist.
2. The Company then proceeds with the necessary preparations for equipping the Contact Center, and must continue to submit all required

documents as detailed below, and must answer any questions and clarifications by the Ministry:

- a- Technical file: this file consists of all the technical documents, maps and designs of the physical and logical network diagrams, list of equipment, Operating System, Software and Applications related to the mode of operation of the Contact Center, for the assessment and approval of the First Party within a two week period from submission date.
  - b- Information about remote monitoring equipment, setup and mode of operation, traffic monitoring. Remote Monitoring system Hardware, Software, License, connectivity. This system shall be capable of comprehensive view of the Contact Center, read only access to Network setup and configuration, traffic routing distribution and configuration, real time monitoring, statistics viewing storing and reporting.
  - c- Training requirements, training course outline and prerequisites.
  - d- The financial statements of the company related to the Contact Center business.
  - e- Number of seats in the Contact Center
  - f- List of the Contact Center employees, their jobs, nationalities, and foreign languages.
  - g- Description to the nature of the business in the Contact Center and the offered services.
  - h- Quarterly traffic report of Call data records, including number of calls, minutes inbound and outbound and its distribution within the Contact Center.
  - i- Any other reports and suggestions that may be useful in the development of the sector and its competitiveness.
  - j- Any updated information as requested by the Ministry.
- 3- Once the Committee agrees on the technical file aforementioned and informs the Company of such, the Company shall have the right at that point to apply for the means of communication, international and/or domestic, and which are required to start the process of operation; the application for the international or domestic means of communications must be submitted to the Registry of the Ministry on the third floor, according to the adopted forms.
  - 4- The Committee will evaluate such relevant application and render the appropriate decision.
  - 5- Upon the Committee's approval on the technical file and the international line, the Committee shall forward the request with its approval to the

attention of the international exploitation department for the preparation of the decision

- 6- In the event the Committee approves to grant the Company an international mean of communication (E1), the Company must then provide the above-mentioned bank guarantee before receiving the decision related to the E1 means of communication.

## **VI- Operational and technical phase**

1. The Ministry provides, exclusively, the necessary means of communication at the request of the Operator to connect the Contact Centers on the Lebanese territory, as follows:
  - a. With an international network through local leased lines connecting the location of the center to the international Gateway of the first party, followed by international leased lines to the global Internet, or by international leased lines known as IPLC (International Private Leased Circuit), according to a study of the traffic volume study and in accordance with the technical availability,
  - b. With a Disaster Recovery Site through local leased lines especially set to connect with this site, which shall become operational only in case of a disaster.
  - c. With another branch of the same Contact Center through a local leased line.
2. In the event the Company providing international services wishes to increase the capacity of the international leased lines or to change the POP, the Company must submit a request and obtain the approval of the Ministry of Telecommunications along with a technical and commercial study to justify such increase.
3. The Ministry of Telecommunications reserves the right to resort to alternative means of communication in case of emergency and in service interruption situations, and to connect to the DRS, as well as it has the right to assess and approve proposals of the Second Party in this regard, for reasons of security and redundancy.
4. The Contact Center must not rent or use the aforementioned means of communication, wired or wireless, local or international bandwidth from any party other than the Ministry of Telecommunications, which provides exclusively these resources to the Contact Center. The Contact Center

must notify the Ministry about any offer, request or need for any telecommunications services provided by any wired or wireless means, from any party whatsoever on the Lebanese territory or abroad, aiming at connecting the Contact Center with any component of the local or international communications networks. In the event the Ministry is unable to provide such required means of communications within a reasonable time frame, the Committee referred to in section V shall allow the Contact Center Operator to procure from a third party provider the means of communications necessary for its operation as well as the services needed, exceptionally and for the limited period of time in which the Ministry is unable to provide these required means of communications.

5. The Contact Center Operator shall comply with not providing services of international and local phone calls or any other services outside the framework of the agreement as follows:
  - a. The Contact Center Operator undertakes not to sell, in any manner, any services to others other than those that fall within the description and operation of a Contact Center. Thus, the Contact Center Operator undertakes not to violate the principle of exclusivity of voice telephony, and not to provide, or lease or sell voice services, image, facsimile, or transfer of recorded media, neither directly nor indirectly, domestically nor internationally or by Transit, by altering the country of origin (Refiling) or by Call back.
  - b. The Contact Center undertakes not to abuse the provided means of communication for him to conduct his business, as well as any new customer service communication, for any purpose beyond the commercial scope of business of its company as provided for in the Agreement to Operate a Contact Center, and undertakes not to seek international capacity exceeding its needs.
  - c. The Contact Center Operator undertakes to respect all instructions, procedures and technical and administrative controls issued by the Ministry of Telecommunications and relevant regulators afterwards and respectively.
6. The contact center operator shall not interconnect the contact center with providers of local telecommunications services, Internet service providers, and carriers of wired or wireless Data Service Providers, broadband

networks, and wireless transfer of information, directly or indirectly, except in the case defined in bullet 4 above.

7. The contact center shall not link the network dedicated to the contact center service to the internal corporate network (serving the administration of the company).
8. If the Contact Center Operator offers both local and international services, an independent network should be established for each, and he shall refrain from linking or interconnecting the two networks. The Ministry of Telecommunications can consider the exceptional cases that require the use of a unified network for both services, local and international, and the use of the VLAN technology or the like may be permitted; the Ministry shall then consider such situations individually and on a case by case basis, and if approved it will be subject to strict audit and monitoring.
9. The contact center shall not terminate the inbound calls from clients or customers in any part of the Lebanese fixed or mobile telephone networks PSTN or PLMN, or to the customers of these networks, except in the event of call termination in the center itself. The call conversation shall not be allowed as well unless through the escalation procedure or call handling hierarchy as specified by the Contact Center client exclusively within the framework of certified services.
10. Outgoing international calls shall not be allowed to any third party outside or inside the center where the operators can only use outbound calls among the allowed services, without transferring them to any third party within or outside the center.
11. All calls activity shall be recorded accurately and in details, according to a format set by the Ministry, on a database spreadsheet, and shall be providing equipment and necessary means of communication to be used by the Ministry through a remote access, and recording them to be able to review and verify the contact center operator commitment to the agreement.
12. Retain all Call data records, and keep it over a period not less than three years, to be delivered to the Ministry of Telecommunications upon first request.
13. Assigned inspectors by the Ministry of Telecommunications shall undertake technical field visits in the contact center offices at any time they chose, without prior notice, to check the activity of these centers, their network technology and their compliancy with maps and designs



submitted to the Ministry. The Contact Center Operator provides the necessary information to these inspectors whenever they request it.

14. The inspectors delegated by the Ministry of Telecommunications, shall check all records and books of the company, without prior notice.
15. The Contact Center Operator is committed to provide, and at his own expense, all means of remote monitoring to the Ministry of Telecommunications or its representative, to be able to exercise its role in carrying out monitoring and verification continuously without any interruption; and through the establishment of permanent communication between the control center determined by the Ministry and the Contact Center, providing the hardware and software licensed applications at the disposal of the Ministry. (Real time remote monitoring read only open session, and all needed administration licenses).
16. The Contact Center Operator provides at his expense to the staff of the Ministry the necessary and appropriate training (Administrator Level) in line with all new technologies. This training will be completed upon any update or upgrade to the contact center equipment.

#### **VII- Disaster Recovery Site scope of work**

1. A Domestic Contact Center operator can establish a DRS Disaster Recovery Site, used only in case of damages, and during the disasters at the center, provided that the operator informs the Ministry of Telecommunications about the nature of the disaster and the demand to connect it to the DRS using the same setup of leased lines.
2. A Domestic Contact Center is allowed to be connected to the DRS Disaster Recovery Site during a disaster and break down on site of center, provided that the operator undertakes to provide the following:
  - a. A DRS router specified to the contact center.
  - b. Local leased line specified to the center and linked to DRS.
  - c. Local leased line specified to the center and linked to the Ministry of Telecommunications.
3. The domestic contact center uses the DRS only during the disaster, through a request to the Ministry of Telecommunications of transferring the local leased lines to the site of DRS.
4. The Domestic Center should be connected to a Domestic DRS only.
5. An International Contact Center operator can establish a DRS Disaster Recovery Site, used only in case of damages, and during the disasters at

the center, provided that the operator informs the Ministry of Telecommunications about the nature of the disaster and the demand to connect it to the DRS using the same setup of leased lines.

6. A International Contact Center is allowed to be connected to the DRS Disaster Recovery Site during a disaster and break down on site of center, provided that the operator undertakes to provide the following:
  - a. A DRS router specified to the contact center.
  - b. Local leased line specified to the center and linked to DRS.
  - c. Local leased line specified to the center and linked to the Ministry of Telecommunications.
7. The International Contact center uses the DRS only during the disaster, through a request to the Ministry of Telecommunications of transferring the local leased lines to the site of DRS.
8. The International Center should be connected to an International DRS only.
9. The Domestic and International DRSs should remain in completely separated sites, it is forbidden to interconnect them.