

Connections



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Virtual contact centre concept put to the test

Contact centre workers in the north of Scotland will work from their homes in a trial which could create new jobs and revolutionise the way call centres are run in the UK.

BT has teamed up with Highlands & Islands Enterprise to pilot a new style of working, known as homeshoring, in Caithness.

Advisers at the BT contact centre on the outskirts of Thurso will test equipment which replicates working from home. Then 15 volunteers will operate online direct from their homes, using broadband links to carry out exactly the same work as they were doing in the contact centre.

Homeshoring, a new entry in the Macmillan English dictionary at the end of last year, literally brings the contact centre home. But it is a much more complex proposition than traditional teleworking.

Systems and processes are carefully designed to allow managers to supervise their teams, enhance security measures and manage resource allocation as easily as if the agents were working in an office.

Brendan Dick, director, BT Scotland, said: "This could herald major changes in work practices for BT and the wider contact

centre industry. Homeshoring is poised to become the next big trend in the industry and Scotland, as a fertile recruiting ground for contact centre operations, is well placed to create new jobs from it.

"A skilled and flexible workforce, low staff turnover and even the Scottish accent have been cited as factors in the sector's Scottish success story. Homeshoring will be an additional plus factor because the skill pool will not be confined to people who live within commuting distances of the contact centre or want to work traditional hours.

"It's also an ideal vehicle for bringing employment back to socially excluded sections of the community. It enables people who may have difficulty finding jobs – parents with childcare issues, mothers returning to work after having a baby, disabled people, the over-50s and people who care for sick or elderly relatives – to work from home at times which suit themselves and their employers."



What's going on at Hampden?

(Turn to back page to find out.)

The pilot is being supported with a £100,000 grant from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). Roy Kirk, HIE's area manager for Caithness and Sutherland, said: "We are very pleased to have collaborated with BT to bring this scheme to Caithness. This pilot is at the forefront of a new generation of working practices and illustrates our region's appetite for innovation, and eagerness to embrace new ideas which I hope BT, and companies in other sectors, will want to further explore."

The concept of homeshoring is predicted to grow considerably over the next few years. Despite around 7.5 per cent of the UK's workforce working from home at least one day a week – according to the Office of National Statistics – very few "traditional" contact centre advisors are afforded this option.

Yet according to research, a homeshored strategy could save the UK contact centre industry around £6000 per agent per year, along with the benefits of job creation, reduced carbon footprint and improvement in customer experience.

For BT contact telephone numbers please see your local BT Phone Book

Glasgow man to lead BT

Scot Ian Livingston will be the new chief executive of BT.



Currently chief of BT Retail, he will succeed Ben Verwaayen on June 1. The latter leaves BT after more than six years, during which he has led its transformation.

Ian, 43, joined BT as group finance director in 2002 and took over as chief executive of BT Retail in 2005. Under his leadership, BT Retail has returned to growth and sharply increased profitability.

Prior to joining BT, he was group finance director of the Dixons Group, a position he held from 1997. He joined Dixons in 1991 and his career with the electrical retailer spanned a number of operational and financial roles, both in the UK and overseas.

BT Chairman Sir Mike Rake said: "Ian was the board's unanimous choice to succeed Ben in June. His record of achievement at BT and before that at Dixons is outstanding. He has a deep understanding of BT, having served as both group finance director and CEO of BT Retail.

"He will continue to deliver on a proven strategy. We share a vision of the future for BT as the leading communications services company both in the UK and globally."

Ian added: "BT is a great company with a strong history and an even more exciting future. I am very proud to have been chosen as its next CEO."

IT central to climate change challenge

BT is urging the Scottish government to make information communication technology (ICT) central to its climate change strategy.

The company highlighted how ICT can be used to reduce carbon emissions in its submission to the Government's consultation on its Climate Change Bill.

BT Scotland director Brendan Dick said: "ICT has a significant role to play in helping Scotland reach its ambition to cut carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050.

"Introducing forms of flexible and home working and use of conferencing facilities as an alternative to work-related travel has enormous potential.

"We still have perceptual hurdles to overcome where people think technology won't support major change. The reality is that today's technologies are stable, cost effective and address security, employee management and monitoring.

"Cost savings, flexibility, better recruitment and retention and environmental impact are all contributing to growing interest."

BT public sector Scotland director Tom Kelly reiterated the message in an article in Scotland's political publication Holyrood Magazine.

Tom stressed ICT must not be sidelined when the final Bill is drawn up. He said that Scotland's public sector, with more than 500,000 employees, could have a major positive impact by adopting flexible working.

He pointed to BT's success in extending forms of flexible working to 75 per cent of its workforce, including 15,000 full and part-time home workers. In the year to March 2006 BT home workers reduced their CO2 emissions by around 3660 tonnes.

The company has also been able to reduce its UK buildings estate by more than a third as a result, multi-million pounds a year.

Scottish Water taps in to IT expertise

Scottish Water has announced a £41.5 million contract with BT which will consolidate its communications services to reduce IT costs and deliver improved services.

The eight-year partnership will bring Scottish Water's entire data and phone network under one managed contract with BT.

Previously these services, including mobile communication, voice, internal and site-wide networks and firewall security, were provided by a number of suppliers.

Applications support and infrastructure services will be provided by two other major suppliers, Tata Consultancy Services and Fujitsu, respectively. The collaborative approach is estimated to result in initial savings of £8 million.

Mark Quartermaine, managing director public sector, BT Global Services UK, said: "Scottish Water is demonstrating real ambition in how it wishes to transform the way in which it delivers services to its customers.

"Its multi-vendor service delivery model enables Scottish Water to retain overall programme control and manage risk by appointing blue chip organisations with global reputations for excellence in their specialist areas.

"We look forward to working with Scottish Water and its partners to transform its communications network and make it a world-class platform to deliver new services."

David Brown, Scottish Water's general manager for IT, added: "This announcement is the culmination of a great deal of hard work from both the suppliers and Scottish Water. It is a rounded package of benefits that delivers significant cost savings, an enhanced service and the opportunity to exploit the extensive development capabilities of some of the most innovative companies in the business."



Mark Quartermaine says Scottish Water is transforming its services.

Rural Scots are UK's most switched on surfers

Surfers in rural Scotland are racing ahead of the rest of the UK thanks to their rapid adoption of BT's high-speed ADSL broadband.



The remote Shetland island of Fair Isle is flying high on Scotland's broadband map.

Figures released by BT Wholesale show that more than half the homes and businesses in Shetland, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland are linked up to the technology.

No fewer than nine of the Top Ten take-up areas in the UK were in Scotland, the only exception being the Scilly Isles at the number five slot.

Shetland had a take up rate of 57.3 per cent, just ahead of Aberdeenshire on 56.6 per cent. Moray surfed to third spot on 54 per cent, followed by Highland on 52.4 per cent and the Scilly Isles on 50.4 per cent.

The Borders and Orkney tie for sixth place on exactly 50 per cent and are poised to become the fifth and sixth Scottish local authority areas where the majority of homes and businesses now have broadband.

Completing the top 10 were Argyll & Bute, Western Isles and Aberdeen on 49 per cent, 48.9 per cent and 48.2 per cent respectively.

Brendan Dick, BT Scotland director, said: "Broadband is providing a major economic boost for our rural communities as it shrinks distance from markets and opens up new opportunities for smaller businesses who can compete on a more equal footing with much larger companies.

"I'm encouraged that employers are also seeing the potential of broadband to introduce more flexible work practices and recognising that working from home can reduce carbon footprints and help make their companies more sustainable."

"Broadband has become one of the most important high-tech initiatives of the 21st century and it's playing a growing role in enriching everyone's lives."

The average local authority area take-up rate of ADSL broadband in Scotland has reached 33.4 per cent, ahead of the UK average of 30 per cent.

BT consults on low-use Payphones

BT is consulting with Scotland's local authorities on the future of some of the country's least used Payphones.

Any Payphone removals are carried out in strict adherence to Ofcom guidelines and, where appropriate, with the consent of the local communities.

The company has stressed that kiosks identified by councils as serving a genuine social need will not be removed.

There are 5883 Payphones in Scotland and more than 60 per cent are unprofitable. BT plans to remove 482 kiosks where there is another nearby. In addition, it is consulting with local authorities on another 632 kiosks.

Ian Shanks, BT Scotland head of public affairs, said: "BT is committed to providing a public payphone service. However, over the years as usage has declined, we have been constantly reviewing and, where necessary, rationalising the estate in order to meet demand.

"The fact that Payphones usage has halved in the last two years alone, and demand continues to fall, means that we have little option but to continue to do so.

"I would like to make it very clear that we take our social obligations very seriously. If a local authority identifies a genuine social need for a particular payphone as part of the consultation, then it will not be removed."

For more information please see [Ofcom's guidelines on Payphones removal](#).

New broadband service goes live for ISPs

The first mass market product to be delivered over BT's 21st Century Network has been announced, marking an important step in the evolution of broadband services.

Wholesale Broadband Connect is a completely new broadband service which will support the rising tide of new multimedia applications and multiplay services.

It offers communications providers a wide range of functions, including greater service differentiation and the option to provide end users with broadband that delivers greater control, choice and flexibility, as well as higher speeds.

It will initially be available from exchanges serving around one million homes and businesses with a progressive roll-out offering a potential footprint of 10 million homes and businesses by the spring of next year.

BT's move to a next generation network is well under way. Around 40 per cent of the UK communications infrastructure has been re-built to date.

Find out more about [next generation broadband](#).

'Open mind' call on PPP

BT public sector Scotland has urged the Government to retain an open mind on the future use of public private partnerships.

Senior consultant Martin Southern appeared before Holyrood's finance committee as part of its inquiry into methods of funding major capital investment projects.

He said he believed PPP worked well because it offered a range of options, giving scope for organisations to agree commercial arrangements that best fit the purpose. The option of multiple models could generate more room for innovation and creativity.

And while accepting raising money on the markets was not always the cheapest option, he cited other considerations such as improved public services and infrastructure.

"PPP can create the opportunity sometimes for the best of the public and private sector to come together," he concluded.

For a full article on BT public sector Scotland's views on PPP, please see our [February 2008 newsletter](#).

Openreach gives something back

Openreach has launched a new initiative in Scotland to help frontline engineers to support their local communities.

Openreach in Scotland's *Giving Something Back* campaign offers cash support for local projects which aim to help improve communication skill development in pre-school children.

So far nine engineers have won awards for projects as diverse as story bags for Kelso kids, bilingual books for Falkirk, talking puppets for tots in Taynult and technology aids for Campsie children with special needs.

Bob Downes, director of Openreach in Scotland, said: "Communication is at the heart of what we do as an organisation – ultimately providing the means for technology users to build links with both the local community and the wider world.

"Our *Giving Something Back* programme has been especially developed in Scotland to enable our people to engage in projects which are directly relevant to youngsters in their local communities."

Openreach is the BT Group business created to manage the UK's access network – sometimes known as the "first mile" of cable connecting homes and businesses to local exchanges.

Giving Something Back is part of a wider First Mile programme – Openreach's first independent venture into corporate responsibility.

Hampden roars again for BT Scotland!

BT has renewed its sponsorship of Hampden Park, Scotland's National Stadium, for another six years.

BT Scotland became the first official sponsor of the iconic stadium in 1998.

The old playing surface was sold off to fans, raising £9000 for Scottish charities, and the flagship South Stand and main entrance to Hampden became The BT Scotland Stand.

The new deal, engineered by Alan Bonas, BT Scotland's head of communications, will run to 2014, making it one of the longest-running sports sponsorships in Scotland.

Alan said: "Hampden has been an incredibly successful partnership for BT, so it's great news that we have taken it into extra time. We're really looking forward to extending our association with one of the world's best known stadiums – and one of Scotland's outstanding sporting assets."

Hampden Park director David Kells added: "This has been a long-lasting, excellent and successful relationship with BT Scotland. We are delighted that it will continue for some years to come."



Scotland manager George Burley celebrates the sponsorship with Sean Gallacher, 8, (left) and Liam Boyle, 9, whose granddad and dad are both engineers with Openreach, BT Group's local network division.

In tandem at Hampden...

Scots Olympic stars Chris Hoy and Shirley Robertson boarded a tandem at Hampden to help BT launch its team of Ambassadors for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The company celebrated its partnership of the Games by unveiling a team of sporting Ambassadors, representing the best of British from the world of sport. The team is made up of Olympic and Paralympic Games medal winners and also includes rising young hopefuls.

Olympic and World Champion cyclist Hoy, from Edinburgh, has just become the first Briton to win the world individual sprint title in 54 years, while double Olympic Gold medallist Shirley, from Dundee, is the greatest female Olympic sailor in history.

The ambassadors will inspire 106,000 BT employees and millions of customers to volunteer at, and during the run up to, London 2012, providing coaching, mentoring and support to young athletes hoping to compete in future Games.

BT has also become the founding partner of the Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust, which aims to provide essential life skills to aspiring young athletes.

BT is the official communications services partner and a sustainability partner of the 2012 Games.

Young entrepreneurs encouraged to go 'green'

BT Scotland has renewed its long-running partnership with the Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust for 2008.

An increased investment of £55,000 will help PSYBT with the set up costs of approximately 15 businesses across Scotland in the next twelve months.

At the end of the year, the beneficiaries of the BT Scotland Young E-ntrepreneurs programme will be eligible to compete for annual awards.

A new category has been introduced

for the Best Environmentally Responsible Business, as well as the existing awards for Most Visionary Business, Best Website and Best use of E-Commerce.

Alan Bonas, BT Scotland's head of communication, said: "Over the years the initiative has moved with the times and, while we will continue to recognise great use of e-commerce among our fledgling

businesses, we have noticed a growing interest in ethical and sustainable practices. This is very much in line with BT's thinking and we felt the time was right to introduce the new award."

To date, BT Scotland has invested more than £300,000 in the programme, helping around 125 young Scots develop and grow their own businesses.