

TOP TIPS FOR REVIEWING YOUR LOCATION CHOICES



**OU EST
VOTRE TÊTE?
DANS LE
SABLE?**

**IF BREXIT
DOESN'T
CONCERN
EU NOW - IT
SOON WILL!**

We are in the midst of one of the most progressive and pivotal decades in history. This creates uncertainty and, as a famous surfer once said, “Everything’s okay until it isn’t!” You need now more than ever to be clear on the strategic implications and consequences of the needs of your customers, staff and stakeholders. Many organisations are now actively planning for a reducing pool of specialist skills as a consequence of Brexit, and whilst we cannot be certain of the outcomes for our economy or our access to skilled staff one thing is certain, you cannot afford to get caught with your head in the sand as the tide turns.

With Brexit implications already starting to take hold (see the net EU migration figures for last year), competition for the depleting pool of talent is increasing – and if you have a specific language requirement this challenge is yet further magnified. And while customer demands continue to intensify, you would be right in thinking that now is the right time to review your operations location strategy.

Typically, reviewing your location strategy is driven by company led expansion or cost-related drivers, but with current instability and disruption threatening from all angles, cost is no longer the only reason to consider where your support and service centres should be based – the ability to maintain BAU is enough of a challenge.

The team at Ember has been supporting organisations with their sourcing strategies for over 15 years, so before you plan your next move, or even the viability of staying put, here are our top tips for making the right location choice.

1. The Business Case: You need a clear understanding of your future needs and the resource implications of this; which also considers the opportunities that new and emerging technologies provide, how that changes the shape of your organisation and how you deliver service. These fundamentals will underpin the business case for establishing your future operating model. Whether it’s cost, talent or customer driven or all three, your strategy needs to be well considered and formed. This will have a huge impact on the optimum locations to deliver your services from. APAC and South Africa might still offer good cost-based solutions, but as regions of excellence in quality, multi-lingual skills and IT emerge across the globe, there could be a smarter way to support your business needs to take advantage of this specialism.

2. Onshore, Off-shore, Near-shore, Hybrid: There are multiple ways you can source your talent pool. What is critical is that you understand your target operating



model, the drivers of contact and the value of delivering the right customer engagement, to you and to the customer. Make sure you do a thorough operational audit first and know exactly what it is you're looking to relocate, taking a critical view on what services could and should be delivered offshore vs those which you want to retain on shore or in house. And there can be a certain amount of uncertainty here. Exchange rates are one of the factors most difficult to build into the business case and the scenarios considered.

3. Right for You – Wrong for Your Customers:

Even for your most valuable or high risk contact types, retaining these in-house might not be the best solution for your customers. Keep an open mind when it comes to selecting both the location and the reason for choosing it, whether you move your operations or not.

4. Emotional Affinity: And speaking of an open mind... this is not the same as selecting a holiday destination! It's easy to be swayed by the glamour of a location or how you felt when you visited but this does not necessarily lead to good decision making for locating your site, no matter how nice the people are!

5. Culture Fit: Having said that, it's vital that you study the culture of your shortlisted locations and understand how they match your current workforce and the values of your organisation/customer demands. Don't just rely on the brochures; there are other ways to understand cultural compatibility when selecting a location.

6. Do Your Research: Don't skimp on your due diligence. From desktop research to sourcing high quality location data, you need to do your research and know what data points to look for. Whereas a few years ago economic stability was the hot topic, it's now political stability. Make sure your research is thorough, well validated and specific to the contact centre industry. You may have an internal location team that is great at sourcing a retail site, for example, but a contact centre operation could prove to be a very different prospect.

7. Make Friends and Influence People:

Build relationships with development agencies, investment groups and recruitment agencies. These organisations will not only help your decision making but will make or break your implementation.

8. The Value of Locals: Know people on the ground; if there is just one tip you take away, this is it. Speaking to the right, experienced practitioners in the industry and people living and working in the locations is the most worthwhile activity you can do. Even when you believe you've selected the right location, the reality of day to day working can change everything. When you visit your shortlisted locations, make sure you spend time with these critical people who can share their experience.

9. The Value of Experience, Insight and Hindsight:

There are many business model options available. For example, have you considered using BPO's and outsourcers to help establish your centre? Global outsourcing companies have done this many times and know the locations inside out. They can take the pressure off and reduce the risk of set up, speed things up and

give you greater peace of mind and an easier business case to get past risk averse board members. Models such as Built Operate Transfer (BOT) and other methods may also be appropriate to consider.

10. The Value of Experts: Get the right team in place. From a strong legal team, to experienced implementation managers to your own subject matter experts and management – a well sourced project team will save you time, effort and improve the time it takes to get your fully functioning site up and running.

You need a clear location plan for the next 3-5 years and beyond, even if that re-affirms the current location and that no change is required – it will be better to have reviewed the threat and have a management plan in place, rather than be caught unprepared.

And if a secondary site, a move or any other form of additional contingency is needed, Ember can help you with any or all of these tips. We know it can be a daunting task – a roller-coaster that's fraught with uncertainty and risk, and with realities not always delivering upon the expectations. Having the right information and experience can both eliminate risk and ensure a successful relocation at the right cost to deliver.

The Ember team can help guide you through the process; provide insight and analysis; broker new connections, define the operating model and, most importantly, ensure the location of your contact centre

operations will enhance the quality of your customer engagement to drive value for your company, not hinder it.



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HOW WE CAN HELP

Want to participate in our Brexit planning consortium research? Get in touch with Simon Foot at **simon.foot@embergroup.co.uk** to discuss how this can help to inform your business.