A Virtual Customer Care Workforce

Ramp up fast when you need it, scale back easily when you don’t.
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The Virtual Workforce: Today’s Reality

The virtual workforce is no longer a concept of the future or a growing trend: It’s a reality right now. Not only does the world’s top talent want flexibility — they expect it. Data from Indeed shows that job searches for flexible work, such as working from home, jumped about 58 percent in the past two years. Companies who are looking to deliver the highest level of customer care must be able to recruit the best talent without being restricted to one geographic location. They also need the ability to increase customer capacity as demand spikes without compromising quality.

As a 20-year pioneer in the virtual customer–care industry, SYKES has helped some of the world’s largest brands with a revolutionary work-at-home solution that drives growth and profitability through premier customer experience.

In this e-book, we’ll tell you how our SYKESHome work-at-home system can help you deliver better customer service, increase your profitability and scale your business whenever you need to.
Pioneering the Work-at-Home Model

What Is SYKESHome?

SYKESHome is a work-at-home system that allows companies to recruit, hire and train the most qualified candidates 100 percent remotely.

**Hire the Best, Wherever They Are**

Our talent acquisition team is able to recruit without local geographic limitations, allowing them to target specific traits such as background, education, unique skills and brand affinity.

**Around-the-Clock Care**

Our flexible service team is distributed across four countries, 40 states and in more than 4,700 home-based locations to ensure your customer support operations go uninterrupted.
Secure Solutions

- We are a secure HIPAA and PCI-certified platform.
The fact that we can hire from such a large employee pool allows them to get highly qualified, highly trained employees. And their customer satisfaction scores and resolution scores, and all other key indicators are higher through SYKESHome than they are through any other supplier.

Jim Farnsworth
Executive Vice President
Sykes Enterprises, Incorporated
Solving the Customer-Care Industry’s 5 Biggest Challenges

By Jim Farnsworth
Executive Vice President
Sykes Enterprises, Incorporated

After nearly two decades of experience managing virtual contact center employees, SYKESHome has seen proven benefits that address five key challenges in the customer service industry:

1. Recruiting Without Boundaries

- Employers can cast a much wider net to attract the best candidates
- Larger labor pool enables targeting for unique skills, backgrounds, education and brand affinity
- Opens the opportunity to millions who can’t participate in traditional work environments (people with disabilities, veterans, those without transportation, military spouses, etc.)
Higher Service Quality

- Experienced agents who are more satisfied in their jobs translates into higher customer-satisfaction levels
- 95 percent of employers say telework has a high impact on employee retention*
- 46 percent of employers permitting telework say it reduces attrition*
- Telecommuting employees are 15 percent to 45 percent more productive than their in-office counterparts*

Accelerated, Virtual Training

- Unrestricted by space limitations
- Trainers can present from anywhere and handle higher volumes when needed
- Online learning program blends live group interaction and self-directed learning, and incorporates hands-on practice, group activities, peer-to-peer small group collaboration and live call shadowing
- Ongoing training and assistance available through a support team of facilitators, coaches, team leaders and technical troubleshooters
Rapid Scalability

- Able to ramp up a high-quality customer service program in 60 to 90 days
- Free from constraints of location-specific recruiting, real estate space and training resources that prohibit brick-and-mortar models from keeping up with the current rate of change

24/7/365 Coverage

- Service availability any time customers need it, day or night, especially during seasonal and high-volume peaks
- Saves employers the cost of maintaining around-the-clock physical office facilities

“The work-at-home option has enabled us to hire more than 1,000 veterans and military spouses.”

– Jim Farnsworth, Executive Vice President and General Manager

Telecommuting employees are 15 percent to 45 percent more productive than their in-office counterparts.

Source: Global Workplace Analytics
From Brick-and-Mortar Retail
to SYKESHome

Our Brand Partner
The brand partner, a brick-and-mortar retailer founded more than 100 years ago, saw its business recede after 2007 due to the e-commerce explosion. As the recession intensified, mall traffic declined, forcing many of the company’s brick-and-mortar stores to close.

Challenge Presented
The client needed to move from a brick-and-mortar model to a virtual work-at-home model with the goal of providing a broader market of agents. We had nine months to accomplish this and several hurdles to overcome, including concerns about the customer experience, reluctant agents and security.
Our Solution

By implementing SYKESHome, we were able to quickly and successfully help our brand partner build a robust and qualified team of virtual customer care agents.

Our virtual learning platform made it easy for existing and new brand partner agents alike to acquire the knowledge and proficiency they needed quickly. These tools include recorded training videos with viewing metrics and the ability to assign training to individuals.

We conducted interviews and training sessions via Adobe Connect, which provided attendance monitoring, chat capability and breakouts for weekly one-on-ones.

With fewer geographical barriers, SYKES could recruit beyond city limits. Additionally, potential agents possessed a higher level of education and customer service experience.

Partnership Outcomes

Company revenue soared in 2016. In addition:

- Executed and maintained our high key performance indicators during the transition
- No additional client costs associated with the changeover
- Same high level of Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) compliance within the SYKESHome landscape
- 75 percent retention of our team leadership staff
- Average tenure rate doubled on the account to two years
- 97 percent sustained customer satisfaction
- Agent satisfaction maintained at a robust 96–97 percent
Creating Secure Work-at-Home Environments

Protecting Our Clients (and Yours)

By Jim Farnsworth
Executive Vice President
Sykes Enterprises, Incorporated

While more and more companies are beginning to recognize the benefits of working from home, one primary concern comes up over and over again: security. The truth is, technological advances have literally transformed our ability to keep your remote employees as secure as their brick-and-mortar counterparts. Here are five strategies SYKESHome uses to create secure work-at-home environments.
1 Ensured Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliance.
The PCI Data Security Standard applies to companies of any size that accept credit card payments. You need to plan how your IT system securely stores customer information, how you will protect that data from any security breach and how your firewall can allow secure remote access.

2 Controlled access through multi-factor authentication or biometrics.
Remote workers should never be able to access your system just because they know a username and password. Using multi-factor authentication (MFA), our two-step authentication process means users can only login by a) entering the correct username and password and b) using a numeric key fob or thin client device. Biometric verification (scanning devices for fingerprints, palm prints or eyes) is another cost-effective option many companies are moving toward.

3 Insulated personal or financial information with automation.
Protect customers and employees by using automated systems to handle personal financial information. For example, when taking payment, your virtual agent can transfer your customer to an automated system to process credit card details. This ensures your agents never hear or have access to your client’s personal or financial information.

4 PC desktop lockdown.
We use Virtual Desktop Interface (VDI) to make sure your employee’s PC is locked down while they’re working on your business. That means all non-business functionality — including printing the screen or saving data to the hard drive — is disabled while the system is being used for your business.

5 Encrypted calls.
We encrypt any communication undertaken by your remote workers, so if their connection is hacked, it’s impossible to make sense of the data transfer — only the sender and receiver will have the key to the encrypted communication stream.
SYKESHome Helps Retailers Ramp Up for Seasonal Demands

Challenge Presented
During holidays and peak shopping seasons, retailers need a customer care provider that can find, onboard and train the right people as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Our Solution
SYKESHome is uniquely equipped to recruit the best, most qualified agents, and onboard and train them within 60-90 days.

Hiring the Best People, Wherever They Are
Over the past 20 years, we’ve perfected our three-step process for finding the perfect fit for our brand partners.
Outline Specific Requirements
We work with each brand to define the brand-specific requirements, certifications, language proficiencies, subject-matter expertise and skills the employees we hire need to succeed.

Assess Each Candidate Thoroughly
Our online application process allows us to screen and test potential candidates via real-life simulations, allowing us to evaluate customer service and sales skills such as phone manner, tone of voice, service fluency and multitasking competency.

Conduct One-On-One Interviews
After candidates pass the initial screening, one-on-one interviews are conducted by their prospective manager to ensure every agent we hire is a good fit with the team, the product and the brand, and exhibits the appropriate skills and personality.

Implementing Lean-Forward Training
Our new hires learn by doing as our highly trained instructor facilitates and guides them. Learners are further engaged through carefully constructed tasks that give them hands-on access to the information and systems they will use on the job. Enriched-media exercises and gamification keep them engaged while animated content that instructs using stories helps improve connection and retention.

Partnership Outcomes
Our ability to scale quickly and effectively saves clients millions of dollars by avoiding the consequences of understaffing. Shorter hold times, lower abandon rates, higher first-call resolution and positive brand perception are all potential improvements our solution offers.
Major Highlights

2,000+
New retail agents recruited, hired and trained in less than 90 days

100%
Retention levels with our active classroom training

6%
Increase in first-call resolution rate

“Everything should be done remotely and everything should be done virtually. That’s the magic behind SYKESHome.”
– Jim Farnsworth, Executive Vice President

Watch the video
An Inside Look at Our Training Process
Changing Perceptions: Busting 3 Common Myths About Work-at-Home Services in the Healthcare Industry

By Jim Farnsworth
Executive Vice President
Sykes Enterprises, Incorporated

It's time to set the record straight — these common misconceptions are keeping many healthcare companies from taking advantage of all viable options for solving difficult skills, staffing, cost and service challenges. Here’s the truth behind three common myths regarding work-at-home services in the healthcare industry.
Myth #1: A work-at-home model isn’t HIPAA-compliant or secure enough for handling sensitive healthcare information.

Busted: There are work-at-home outsourcing service providers that use advanced security and privacy measures that are fully HIPAA compliant, which can and should be verified through third-party auditors. SYKESHome, for example, is audited annually to certify compliance with both HIPAA and PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) requirements.

Myth #2: A virtual workforce doesn’t offer the right qualifications to meet specific needs in the healthcare industry.

Busted: The truth is, when your recruiting isn’t limited to a specific city or state, you actually have access to more qualified candidates. You can even source talent in specific states to meet requirements of government-sponsored healthcare plans. In addition, because today’s complex healthcare environment is more consumer driven than ever, consumers want to speak with educated agents who understand the myriad plan options and changes in benefits. In this case, it’s beneficial to have work-at-home agents who live in the same market as your target customers, because they are navigating the same choices themselves.

Myth #3: Healthcare consumers don’t want to access services virtually.

Busted: As telehealth services rapidly expand, a recent survey shows more than 75 percent of healthcare consumers would be willing to “see” a doctor virtually. Just as telecommuting has gained popularity among the workforce, the work-at-home model has become increasingly attractive to healthcare companies and consumers.
Leadership Insight

Training without classroom constraints allows us to significantly increase graduates without extending lead time.

When disaster strikes, SYKESHome continues to provide uninterrupted service due to our distributed workforce.

Removing geographical recruiting boundaries results in a dramatically different talent pool.

Jill Johnston
Director
SYKESHome
Let’s start building your virtual workforce today!

ARE YOU READY TO …
Hire the best, no matter where they are?
Give your customers around-the-clock care?
Have happier, more engaged employees?

About SYKES
Sykes Enterprises, Incorporated is a leading provider of multichannel demand generation and customer engagement services for Global 2000 companies and their end customers. SYKES’ differentiated full lifecycle solutions and services — digital marketing, sales expertise, customer service, technical support and more through multichannel delivery platforms — effectively engage customers at every touchpoint of the customer journey. Our complete service offering helps clients acquire, retain and increase the lifetime value of their customer relationships through cost-effective solutions that enhance the customer service experience, promote stronger brand loyalty, and foster high levels of performance and profitability.

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