

## **Merchants scoops two industry awards.**

**Johannesburg, South Africa, 8 August 2007** - Merchants South Africa, the contact centre division of Dimension Data, recently scooped two awards that were handed out at the recent BPeSA/CallingTheCape awards, held in Cape Town.

The company won awards under the categories "Technical Innovation" and "Trainer of the Year" for its bwin operations in Cape Town.

bwin is one of the world's largest sports betting and online gaming companies and its relatively new 50-seat contact centre provides customer service and support for online players' queries from around the world.

Most of the players reside in Europe, Canada and the UK. The contact centre operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and provides a critical link to bwin's customers when and if they need it.

"We are delighted with the recognition that the Merchants bwin operation earned in this year's awards. In conjunction with bwin, Merchants and Dimension Data we have provided a state of the art contact centre that is not only an innovative technology solution in South Africa but across the globe. In addition, winning the Trainer of the Year award sends out strong and positive signals that Merchants South Africa has what it takes to ensure that our agents are well trained and deliver brilliant customer service to bwin's customers," says Chris Klampf, general manager for the bwin operations at Merchants SA.

"Whilst we at Merchants are particularly proud of the win, we also view this win as important for the industry in South Africa. As an outsourced and offshore operation with an international client such as bwin, the local industry can hold its collective heads up high and really say we can delivery world-class service," he adds.

In the technology innovation category, Merchants was nominated in conjunction with its parent company, Dimension Data, for its hosted contact centre platform, which allows any small-to-medium operation to set up a fully-operational contact centre on a pay-per-use basis without the need for huge capital expenditure.

The systems are fully redundant to ensure constant uptime, because a system failure can translate directly into financial loss for bwin. The bwin contact centre is also one of the only operations in South Africa to offer a fully-integrated multimedia approach to dealing with customer queries.

"This allows agents to engage with online gamers by voice, web-chat or e-mail, making it one of the most technologically advanced contact centres in South Africa," says Klampf.

“The systems are also able to route VIP traffic to the appropriate agents and interface with the company’s customer relationship management servers in Canada and Europe.”

On the training front, the award for best trainer was given to Merchant’s senior trainer for the bwin operation, Nandi Roos. She says that it is the company’s philosophy to continually develop its agents and keep them on their toes was key to winning the award.

“We make change management as much a part of our staff development services as training itself and, to that extent, we are able to offer our customers a whole lot more value for their investment,” she says.

“We consider our intake training to be key to delivering customer satisfaction, and we do not let anyone onto the floor until they are 100% comfortable with the product that they are working on, the systems and processes being used and their ability to make use of soft skills such as thinking on their feet,” Roos adds.

“It’s all about passion and I think that it was a combination of our tried and tested methodologies and that passion for the contact centre market that won us these awards,” says Klaf.

Merchants and Dimension Data will now go forward to the national BPeSA contact centre awards together with all the other regional winners from Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng where the bwin operation will compete against the best SA has to offer for the national awards.

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