

Introduction

Lufthansa Global Telesales Cape Town is a leading service provider for the airline industry. As a subsidiary of Lufthansa German Airlines GTS Cape Town employs more than 400 employees and provides excellent customer services in five languages for clients such as Lufthansa, Swiss International Airways, Austrian Airlines and other travel related industries.

Biggest plus

The company is a proudly South African market leader for outstanding service delivery, constantly investing in serving customer and employee needs. Sustainability and continuous growth are achieved by empowering people to provide excellent service quality and added value.

Biggest challenge

The business environment is ever changing and highly competitive. Therefore the company has to constantly adapt their processes and align their service offering in order to meet increasing demands.

Facts and figures

Total number of staff employed (full-time): **382**

Annual turnover for 2009: **Figure not published**

Industry sector: **Professional services**

Black employees: **46%**

Previously disadvantaged individuals in management: **15%**

Women employees: **55%**

Women executive (senior) management: **35%**

Employee Assistance Programmes: **The company's 'Life on Board' staff engagement programme creates an attractive work environment by focusing on learning and development, reward and recognition, as well as staff wellbeing.**



The business

The company was established in Cape Town in 1999 as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Lufthansa German Airlines, initially with 40 customer service consultants to handle overflow calls from Germany. Today Global Telesales (GTS) Cape Town employs more than 400 people in various shift models and handles around 2 million customer events a year. The business, which runs around the clock 365 days a year, has grown over 300% in the past six years alone.

GTS Cape Town operates two business units – namely the Customer Service Center and the Global Load Control Center. Customer services include general flight information, direct sales, reservations, ticketing, a customer loyalty programme, airport services such as baggage claims, online bookings and travel agent support. MD Birgit Thümecke explains the development of new media has changed the face of the call centres of the '90s which have evolved into contact centres. 'It's a touch point where you communicate with the client via email, the phone or you can meet them in a chat room.'

The company is also the supplier of all infrastructure and manpower needs of the

Global Load Control Centers, providing professional station support for all aircraft loading related queries from 35 different customer airlines and more than 80 stations worldwide.

In June 2009 Global Telesales Cape Town was ISO 9001:2008 certified by SABS as the first Service Center in South Africa, thereby awarding the company's commitment to quality and customer service delivery.

Talent management and development

For GTS people are the pulse and the backbone of the company. The company therefore spends more than five percent of payroll on training. 'In that sense, we are extremely reliable, conservative almost,' says Thümecke. 'This is why in return I like loyalty in people. It's a two-way street. We need to be able to count on one another.'

To drive employee engagement and loyalty, GTS has reward and recognition, as well as training and development tools in place. The GTS Academy, for example, is an online training portal tailored to individual needs. Furthermore, the international work environment within the global GTS Group »

opens diverse possibilities for development, global networking and collaboration.

Due to its phenomenal growth, the company is constantly in need of new talents. Innovation is a key factor in recruiting potential candidates to work in a culturally and linguistically diverse environment that operates on a 24/7 basis. The company therefore increasingly uses online recruitment tools, such as its corporate website (www.globaltelesales.co.za) and recently added social media to its portfolio. The internal GTS Ambassador programme, where staff members are incentivized to refer new employees, has proved to be very successful. Thümecke explains: 'I value word of mouth because no one can describe a position better

than the person who is in the job. Even better is if our employees benefit from that.'

Salaries, rewards and benefits

Apart from a competitive salary package and the usual legislated benefits, GTS employees enjoy flight discounts of up to 90% for staff and their families. Furthermore, the company offers 21 vacation days annually, pays two thirds of medical aid contributions, has a provident fund, and offers life and disability insurance.

Black economic empowerment

As a foreign-owned company with a global procurement system, obtaining a good BEE rating is a challenge. Nevertheless in certain



'To deliver outstanding customer service, we have to motivate and engage with our staff, employ talents with the right skill and mindset, and provide them with the right training.'

Birgit Thümecke
Managing Director



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criteria, such as employment equity, skills development and social investment, GTS Cape Town scores high.

Responsible citizenship

For GTS it's important to give back to the community they operate in. The company has an established corporate social responsibility programme in place.

The focus of GTS' work in the community is on education. 'If you want to make a difference, you have to start with the young ones,' maintains Thümecke. In 2006 GTS founded the iThemba Pre-Primary School in collaboration with HelpAlliance – a non-profit organisation run by Lufthansa employees – to improve the level of education of children at grassroots level in disadvantaged communities in Cape Town. This year the company opened its second school, iThemba School Capricorn in

Vrygrond, Cape Town. Many employees were actively involved in making this happen.

International stance

Global Telesales Cape Town is a subsidiary of Lufthansa Commercial Holding – one of Europe's leading airlines, with more than 100 000 employees, in 150 nations, handling over 60 million passengers each year.

The Cape Town branch belongs to the GTS Group, a global network of eight Lufthansa Service Centers with 1750 employees located in Germany, Czech Republic, Ireland, Turkey, Australia, China, Canada and South Africa. Within the group, GTS Cape Town is the largest service center with the most diverse service portfolio.

The individual centers complement each other and the network benefits from its diversity and multifold expertise to provide outstanding



Activities range from health days to various social get-togethers. The company even supports and promotes their own employee soccer and cricket teams.

customer service, as well as a sustainable and competitive work environment. According to Thümecke, 'We do not believe in 100% alignment. As a global player we embrace our local assets.'

The future

In line with changing customer needs GTS Cape Town is diversifying its service portfolio into a multi-media service environment, as well as expanding its operation to encompass new services. Thümecke says the future looks bright for GTS Cape Town which could double its business in the next year. The Cape Town operation is very well positioned from a capability, quality, and cost efficiency perspective ensuring that we are able to drive additional business in the future.'

The people

Birgit Thümecke, who has been MD since 2003, is passionate about service excellence. 'People who are successful at GTS have that "can-do, want-to-do" passion and enjoy what they do,' she says.

To make it in this demanding environment with a continuous buzz, a potential employee must like people, be adaptable, creative and curious. Working for GTS means working within a young, dynamic and vibrant environment: 70% of the staff are under 35 years old and 26% are international.

Thümecke is full of praise for her staff who had to deal with four times the number of incoming calls due to the disruption caused by the volcanic ash cloud, bringing world travel to standstill for a week earlier this year. 'We

experienced an unbelievable team spirit and dedication. Our staff really went that extra mile.' She is a great believer in visible leadership and making staff feel that their contribution is valued, a point not missed by staff who made their feelings known by presenting her with a giant 'Thank You' card inscribed with personal messages of appreciation for the support and pampering they received while fielding calls related to the ash cloud.

Company culture and style

The team spirit, vibe and loyalty keep staff at GTS, says Thümecke, who acts as a mentor to others. She is a firm believer in allowing people to help themselves. 'We are reliable employers. We never let our people down and are there when problems arise. I am sure that people sense that.' She sums up the GTS culture as: 'Being a complementary, diversely inspired group of passionate people.'



'This company has offered me numerous opportunities as many doors are open to you. This means growing as a person and constantly improving my skills and abilities. I love talking to people and understanding the problems of clients around the world. It helps to build my confidence. I also enjoy working in such a diverse environment and the vibe created by colleagues who speak many languages.'

Stanley Swana
Customer Service Consultant

