



# Study factors necessary for the implementation of a customer service center for SMEs in Colombia

## Factores de estudio necesarios para la implementación de un centro de atención al cliente para PYMES en Colombia

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#### ABSTRACT:

In this document is proposed the study factors that should be taken into account in the implementation of a customer service center for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Colombia. The methodology used starts with the study of the current situation of the company, managing to identify the factors that are involved when making decisions regarding a business plan. Thereafter, multiple studies are carried out within which is the analysis of the general environment of the sector and internal analysis, to finally establish the possibility of consolidating that expansion opportunity within a company.

**Keywords:** Call Center, Contact Center, SMEs, Customers, PESTL, IT

#### RESUMEN:

En este documento se proponen los factores de estudio que deben tenerse en cuenta en la implementación de un centro de servicio al cliente para pequeñas y medianas empresas (PYMES) en Colombia. La metodología utilizada comienza con el estudio de la situación actual de la empresa, logrando identificar los factores que intervienen al tomar decisiones con respecto a un plan de negocios. Posteriormente, se llevan a cabo múltiples estudios dentro de los cuales se analiza el entorno general del sector y el análisis interno, para finalmente establecer la posibilidad de consolidar esa oportunidad de expansión dentro de una empresa.

**Palabras clave:** Call Center, Contact Center, PYMES, Clientes, PESTL, IT

## 1. Introduction

Currently, it is common for several telecommunications companies in Colombia governed by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to use Call Center systems to answer calls from customers, in order to achieve a solution to different type of issues, which can be executed by qualified personnel to carry out this activity. Likewise, for the centralization of large numbers of calls, Contact Centers are used, which function as an

office with telephone, fax, mail and messaging channels, among others. Thus, giving more comprehensiveness to the functions of each aspect that It is involved within and having more effectiveness for what the company intends to carry out within its business plans.

For the start-up of the Contact Center, it is necessary to implement a study aimed at giving direction to the project. All the factors that are involved both internally and externally to the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) must be considered first, making a thorough analysis of these in order to finally identify the possibilities of generating new business plans that directly and indirectly benefit the companies of the telecommunications sector.

Once this is done, it is necessary to identify and guarantee the functionality of the factors that are involved inside and outside the companies and that are, in some way, important axes when making decisions to carry out the correct implementation of a customer service center. Which is achieved by ensuring to keep acceptable profit margins and above all by keeping customers satisfied. This does not mean that the analysis studied in this document solves the problems by itself, but apart from that, a strategy must be followed in which aspects such as being clear about the objectives, being agile in responding to the requested service, among others, must be considered.

According to the authors: Agajo, Onyebuchi, Okhaifoh, & Okpe (2015) "Telecommunication is a concept aimed at effectively filtering desired information for preventive purposes, the challenges posed by unprecedented rise in volume, variety and velocity of information has necessitated the need for exploring various methods Big Data which is simply a data sets that are so large and complex that traditional data processing tools and technologies cannot cope with is been considered" (p.20), once the concept of telecommunications is analyzed and understood, the have an effective process to achieve what was raised within this study.

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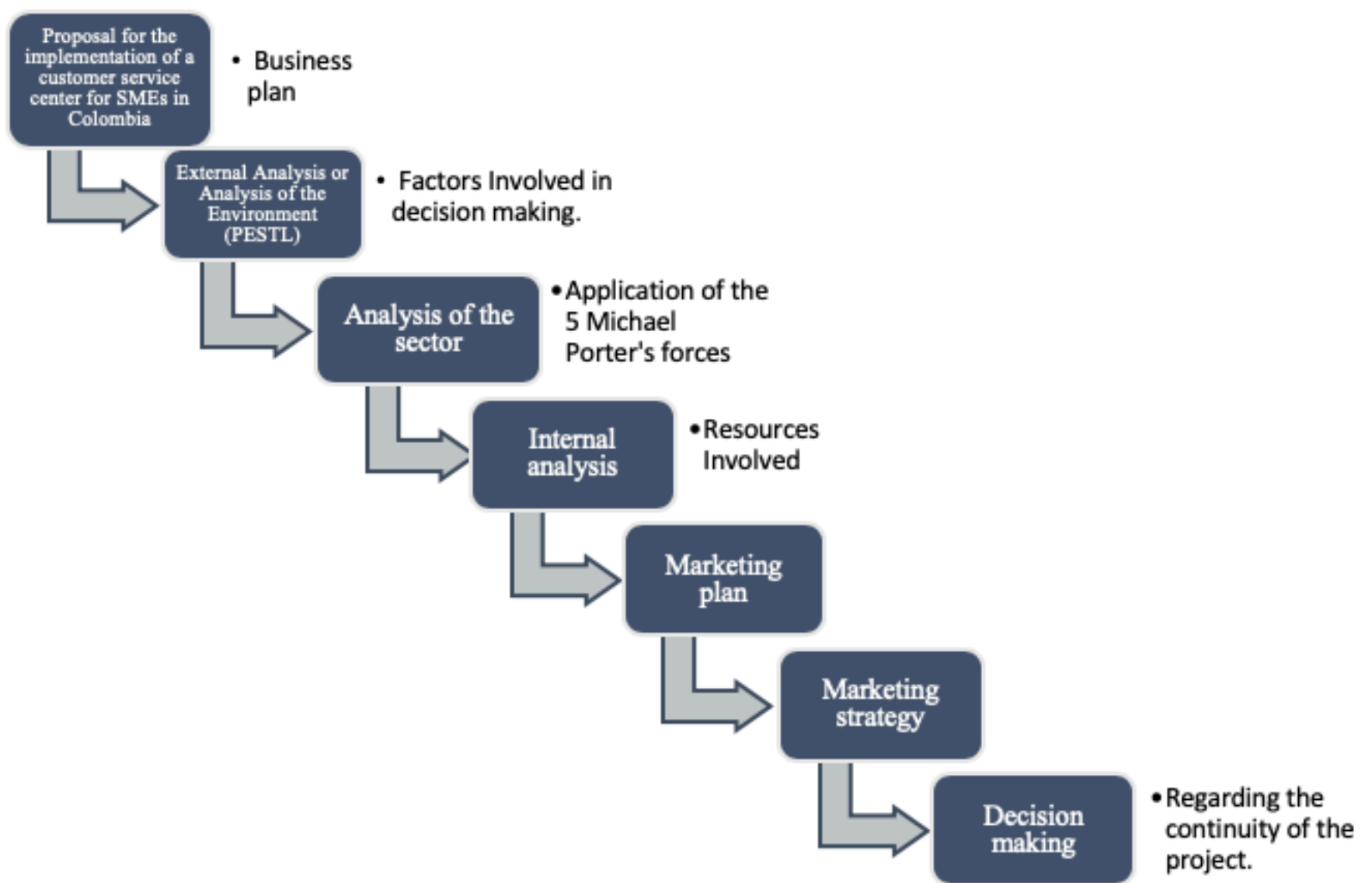
## **2. Methodology (Proactive Model of Studies carried out within a Business Plan).**

Before considering a viable business plan, all the factors that are involved inside and outside, directly or indirectly to the business plan and are necessary for decision-making from the general management of SMEs in Colombia, must be correctly analyzed. Figure 1 is a favorable tool to understand the step by step that should be considered before making decisions that may affect the good performance of companies.

It begins with the study and analysis of the external environment, then the analysis of the sector must be implemented to finish with an internal analysis of the SME in Colombia.

Within Figure 1 it will be possible to demonstrate the sequence that is carried out as a Proactive Model of Studies carried out within a Business Plan:

**Figure 1**  
Favorable sequence for analysis and studies carried out within a business plan



As the authors (Burgos, Gomez, Bedoya, & Severiche, 2018) tell us in their article, where they comment that the same is designed to show the tools used in the analysis of the processes, products and human resources implemented in medium-sized companies. The results obtained from the evaluation of the techniques employed are: the use of creativity to develop innovation, strengthen the motivation and involvement of the main resource of each organization, the human one. The processes are developed with better methods and technologies that help to optimize the activities that are being carried out in it, and the product shows good manufacturing practices and some errors, which can be mitigated by being always one step ahead of their competitors. This article will discuss those analyzes that are required to achieve continuity decision-making with the implementation of a customer service center for SMEs, which may be adopted as documentary support to accomplish the correct viability of projects related to a business plan.

## 2.1. External Analysis or Analysis of the Environment (PESTL)

One of the most effective tools that allows knowing the approach of a company and the location within the market to which it belongs is the PESTL analysis, where bearing in mind the factors involved there, such as: political factors, economic factors, social factors, technological factors and legal factors. It will be possible to define in detail the aspects that identify, evaluate and show the management capacity that SMEs would have within a highly competitive market such as the Technological is in Colombia.

### 2.1.1. Political factors

In Colombia there is an effort to strengthen the sector of information technologies, an approach led by the department of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This unit of the government of Colombia contributes to the transformation of the sector, taking into account the high competitiveness and the high standards that allow the improvement of a quality service and / or product as a competent country in the technology market and to a large extent of the integrality to which today the companies of the sector have dedicated themselves, through the dynamization of different lines of action

within the market in relation to telecommunications and their offerings, this according to what comments them (Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones, 2017). Taking into account the government's support for research, innovation and the development of improvements to give greater competitiveness to the other companies, it is promoted to find a solution to the proposed business plan.

These benefits offered by the state are increasing foreign investment and therefore can be seen as a threat to domestic companies by the entry of new companies with large investment capital and improving the companies already established in the country as Atento and Digitex. In its effort to prevent this from happening, the Ministry promotes and supports national companies so that they can grow, thus being much more competent as mentioned above.

## **2.1.2. Economic factors**

Colombia, with approximately 48.9 million inhabitants, is the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world after Mexico. It has multiple development poles: 10 metropolitan areas with a population greater than 500,000 inhabitants, as mentioned in (Procolombia, 2016). Colombia shows a strong devaluation of its currency, which historically has negatively affected the growth of the information technology market, according to (Business Monitor International Research, 2017). However, each company aims to greatly strengthen its economies by seeking to generate business, innovating and developing large projects at a technological level to cope with the general crisis of the country. This means that every day, companies are much more competitive contributing economic benefits to the country.

In previous years between 2014 backwards the services sector had a very small participation in the economy of the country, being this a problem due to the lack of support and importance from the government. This missing scheme was changing between the years 2015 to the present day with the support that nowadays the government headed by the Ministry of the TIC gives, as expresses (Procolombia, 2016). Within the present article will be achieved to observe the importance that today takes the services sector at the time of wanting as a company to have high levels of growth, competitiveness and credibility before the society in general.

## **2.1.3. Social factors**

As part of a business plan is the strengthening of human talent which is one of the priorities of the company and based on the criteria proposed by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Colombia. With it, is intended to increase the skilled workforce that will be supporting this and future projects within the company. In the implementation of the customer service center are specifically sought engineers, technicians and technologists in the IT area and with the suitable personnel to qualify their professional profile to make it more convenient to the needs of the project and the company. This is intended to help in the same way as proposed by the Ministry where it cites " for 2018 the goal is to have 75 thousand new students in IT careers, likewise seeks to achieve an increase in the number of accredited IT programs, the idea is to increase the offer of engineers to close the gap of IT career professionals, going from 35,000 to 93,000" (Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones, 2017). With this business plan the qualified personnel will be given the opportunity to meet the requirements to carry out the full development of the project, where the most relevant topic for the company is the constant training and daily learning for each one involved in it.

In this way, the aim is to have a highly qualified workforce within each project and supported by the quote (Procolombia, 2016), where it comments "According to the IMD ranking for 2014, Colombia has the most qualified workforce in South America. Colombia excels countries such as Brazil, Chile, Peru, Argentina and Venezuela, among others in the region, "from there, we collaborate socially with having the suitable personnel for each activity that is required within the business plan, not before doing a preliminary study of the

psychosocial factors as Pulido (2016) mentions it in his article: "The results indicate the preponderance of the approach of the intra-labor factors in general, and the labor harassment and Burnout syndrome in particular, the lack of investigations of psychosocial factors outside of work and individual, the focus on determining the effects on the welfare of workers, the omission on the effects on productivity and economy, as well as the lack of evidence on intervention studies of psychosocial factors in general" (p.90)

In relation to the impact of technology in the social sphere, the author (Cortés, 2015) indicates that "the relationship between technology, the social impact of and inequality in current scenarios such as those in humanity that have embarked on a "journey of no return." All activities connected to technology, even social relations are mediated by technology; for example, the social gap that increases mirror actual resource access, not limited to information, but also economic and educational to be an actual and evident cause of distancing the social classes."

#### **2.1.4. Technological factors**

The changes and the evolution of technologies have been raising very rapidly in the world today, the new technological advances have made many companies in the sector get out of comfort and undertake new alternatives that generate high-level benefits, not only to the company but to the same country. Nowadays, the boom not only of mobile devices but of the internet as such, are of great measure for all types of society; 5G tests are currently being done, the opportunities for other markets have grown like electronic commerce. This is where counting as a company with a customer service center called Contact center plays a great role for companies that look for recognition. Additionally, it should be noted that Colombia has an infrastructure capable of supporting world-class operations, with 10 submarine cables that allow the use of 4G technology according to (Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones, 2017) for the 2017 investment in data center facilities and the increase capacity and coverage of data networks will help to expand the adoption of cloud technologies and intelligent services, boosting the growth of the IT services market; thus, sales of IT services for the country are expected to be 3.66 trillion pesos in 2019 being 2.28 trillion in 2014.

#### **2.1.5. Legal factors**

Currently, Colombia seeks to generate or promote the development and innovation of the information and communications technology (ICT) industry. Hereby, involving everything related to it: applications, content, technological advances, among others as a fundamental mechanism in the economic, social and legal development of the country; pillars for the strengthening of all those involved with technology. The companies legally constituted under the regulations required by the country and that support the development, have benefits which help to the continuity of internal and external improvements that give way to being at the forefront of the country. In the case of companies related to technology information including telecommunications within these, are required to pay a much lower source withholding; for this purpose, Decree number 2499 of December 6, 2012 of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit was issued, which shows that those engaged in activities of analysis, design, development, implementation, maintenance, adjustments, testing, supply and documentation, phases necessary in the development of technology projects, as well as the design of web pages and consulting in computer programs are required to pay a withholding tax at the source of the respective payment or payment of (3.5%) being this much smaller than for companies that are dedicated to other activities, it is according to what is stated in (Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público, 2012). Likewise, Decree 2223 of 2013 of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit has applicability, where companies that provide services directly related to software development are considered exempt from sales tax with right of refund, understanding this from the conception, development, collection of requirements, analysis, design, deployment, implementation, maintenance, management, adjustments, testing, documentation, support, training, consulting, and integration with respect to software, applications, digital content, licenses and rights of use, that are

protected by copyright and others as reported by (Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público, 2013). These decrees already established by the Government of Colombia show the initial start of the government to support the development and strengthening of the IT sector, but it still has shortcomings and legal gaps in this sector.

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### **3. Analysis of the sector: Michael Porter's 5 forces**

To carry out the analysis of the sector, it is necessary to examine the 5 forces proposed by Michael Porter, which will contribute and show the level of competition within the sector to which the SMEs company dedicates itself and thus be able to develop the necessary business strategy to carry out the proposed business plan. This analysis proceeds to assess Porter's 5 forces, competition and rivalry that exists within the telecommunications sector, and therefore, it leads us to define how attractive this sector is in relation to investment opportunities and profitability. To achieve the effectiveness of the analysis, Porter's 5 forces will be evaluated, which are composed of:

- Rivalry among competitors.
- Threat of substitute products.
- Threat of new entrants.
- Bargaining power of buyers or customers.
- Bargaining power of suppliers or sellers.

#### **3.1. Rivalry among competitors**

Today in Colombia there is a greater number of companies dedicated to the provision of telecommunications services in a comprehensive manner. Every day the competition becomes stronger for the sector due to its constant technological evolution. Competitive rivalry is increasingly high and for this reason, the company seeks continuous improvement for not only internal but external benefit.

The rivalry between competitors is manifested in an effort to achieve a privileged position in the telecommunications sector, through price competition, the introduction of new services to be offered, and the same interaction with customers or end users.

The strength of the rivalry depends on the following causes, as literally commented (Valbuena, 2009):

- "The competitors are very numerous or approximately equal in size and power.
- The growth of the sector is slow, which precipitates the struggle to obtain a market share, with the consequent impact on companies that have expansion projects.
- The service lacks differentiation, which prevents each competitor from protecting its clientele from the commercial aggression from the rest of agents.
- The rivals are different and disparate, both in strategy, origin and personality. They have different ideas about how to compete and continuously try to put them into practice."

This force shows that the fewer rivals in the market of the telecommunications sector, the more profitable will be my business plan, which does not happen at present in Colombia because there are large companies in the sector where competition is growing and becoming larger, are reasons to seek continuous improvements within companies. Always with the goal of being at the forefront of the market.

#### **3.2. Threat of substitute products**

"The possible entry of substitute services limit the possibilities of a sector, since they set a cap on the sales prices that the sector itself can set. Unless the quality of the service is improved or there is some differentiation, the sector will see its benefits greatly reduced and, possibly, its growth will be restricted," as comments textually (Valbuena, 2009).

When talking about Contact Center because it is such an integral and intangible service, it is not so important for the industry to look for or have substitute products; however, this does not mean that we do not have to be careful with the technological advances that may arise in the hard road of business and within the sector. It could be talking about mobile

applications such as Web or App that fulfill the role and functionality of a Contact Center. Also, it could be said of those companies that prefer low-cost developments with risks of low security levels such as those offered by ASTERIKS technological platform. Known by the telecommunications sector in Colombia for making developments of Contact Center and others at low costs, developments that at the end of their implementation do not offer the quality and security that is sought within the proposed business plan.

### **3.3. Threat of new entrants**

The potential competitors of companies in the telecommunications sector of medium and small companies (SMEs) can face entry barriers, one of the main ones in the technology market is the barrier of experience, because technological decisions represent an important investment for companies not only economically but also strategically, due to its great impact in the long term, companies consider as a very important factor the level of experience when selecting technology providers.

However, at present there is the penetration of several multinationals monopolizing the telecommunications technology market in the country, this is why it is essential to be updated and in a continuous improvement disposition. The competition is done every day stronger and it is vitally important that telecommunications companies are at the forefront of technology and innovating in their portfolio of services, in this way to ensure the loyalty of the customers.

### **3.4. Bargaining power of buyers or customers**

The costumers of SMEs in the telecommunications sector are basically related to information technology and telecommunications, although not all because they can be very varied and from different industries due to the fact that they handle integral technology solutions that clients outside the telecommunications sector may need. Among the most prominent clients are large companies such as CLARO, MOVISTAR, AVANTEL NOKIA, ERICSSON, ETB, EDATEL (all related to telecommunications) but also are clients such as: Euroetika, schools and some universities of the country (other industries). In the telecommunications and technology sector in general, the bargaining power of customers is at the beginning when a high relationship is being formed, but once the company begins to establish a closer relationship and understand the niche to which belongs the client, this approach is highly evaluated and taken into account by customers, giving added value to the company providing the service. Because with it, the telecommunications company that is the service provider is able to provide solutions according to the specific problems of customers, without hesitating at any time in the total satisfaction of customers with the provision of services. As this prior knowledge allows the diagnostic phase or also known in the sector as information gathering is more agile and fruitful for both parties, with all of the above, customer loyalty increases greatly.

The customers can negotiate the conditions of the service, place of delivery, payment method and guarantees through a contract but as could be seen in the analysis of competitors the telecommunications sector is broad in Colombia, there are many suppliers, which increases the negotiation power of the clients looking for this kind of services and that is why the medium and small companies in Colombia look for the continuous improvements to be competent before the high level that is demanded nowadays in the sector.

### **3.5. Bargaining power of suppliers or sellers**

When it comes to telecommunications solutions, it is common to have external suppliers or collaborators to the company to carry out the good execution of the projects with clients and where each of them has their own way of implementation, whether the company wants to develop its own execution or that wants to use another company, it is necessary to work with a provider specialized in technology or in telecommunications. In the first case to obtain supplies correctly and in the second to establish strategic alliances, in any case it is a

decision that will have an impact on the portfolio of the company in the long term affecting significantly the quality of the service offered. In this industry, then, suppliers have a high bargaining power, especially for the high cost involved in changing of supplier once this has been selected.

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## **4. Internal analysis**

When talking about internal analysis, it is specifying that is the evaluation and identification of different internal elements that exist in a company, in order to know the capabilities and resources which a company has internally and with which it will be possible to verify the strengths and weaknesses, and in this way continue to increase in strengths and mitigate or reduce the weaknesses within the strategies proposed for the business plan specified in this article. Within this item, the internal resources that affect the SMEs in Colombia will be established and discussed:

- Intangible resources.
- Relational resources.
- Organizational resources.
- Material resources.
- Financial resources.

### **4.1. Intangible resources**

When it comes to the intangible resources of a company, there is talk of those resources and capacities that cannot be palpated or quantitatively measured, such as: technological (software) and human resources in terms of skills, knowledge and motivations generated by the company.

In the specific case, it is identified that for the implementation of the customer service center or Contact Center that is in the process of becoming a Business Partner of the company Genesys infrastructure provider of Contact Center and thus use the software offered that performs all the functions that are intended by them which is a world leader.

According to the report "The Magic Quadrant of Gartner 2017 offers a complete analysis of the Contact Center providers. It examines market innovations and compares suppliers based on what Gartner calls "breadth of vision" and "implementation capacity" (Genesys, 2017).

**Figure 2**  
Gartner Magic Quadrant 2017  
from Contact Center providers





(Genesys, 2017)

The report shows that Genesys is well positioned and that, with security, medium and small companies would be making a good alliance that will generate added value that will satisfy customers and users in general.

## 4.2. Relational resources

A customer service center or Call Center is an area of agents and operators who make or receive calls to or from customers, business partners, associated companies or others.

Currently, most companies use this type of service to interact with their customers, whether they are public services, sales, etc. They are even used for the development of internal functions, in which help desks and sales support are incorporated.

The services provided by an incoming Call Center include, among others, help lines, reception of calls, taking appointments, support, help desk. On its side, the outgoing offers telephone sales, surveys and data collection, collection services.

The technologies commonly used in call centers include the following structures:

- Telephone infrastructure.
- Data infrastructure.
- Automatic distributor of incoming calls.
- Interactive voice response system.
- Call recorder.
- Marker.

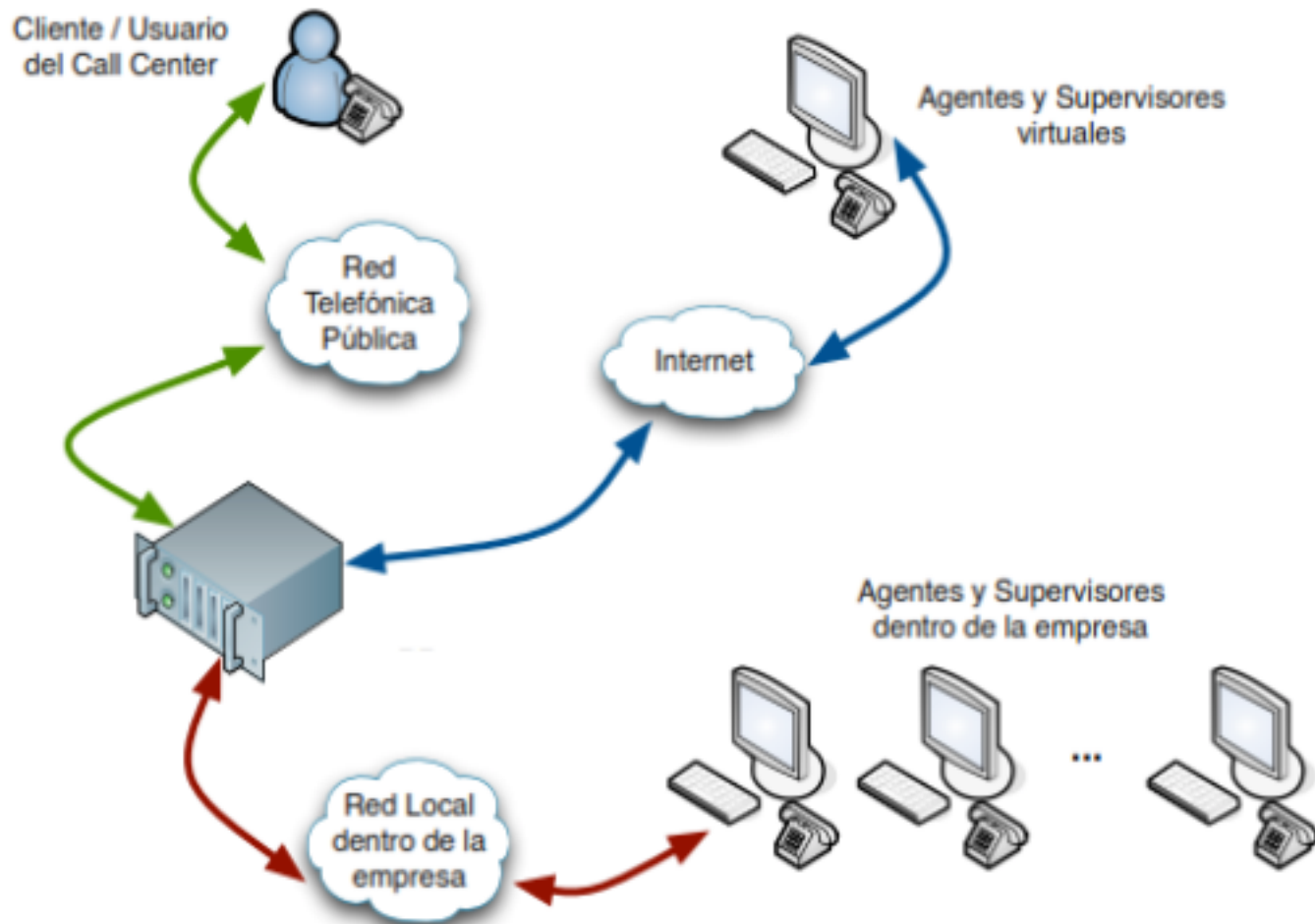
Generally, a Call Center is made up of a set of actors, which are:

- Agents that make and receive calls.
- Supervisors who perform control of the operation.

- Customers who call.
- Customers who receive calls.

In addition, it requires the use of a platform that allows interaction between the actors, being able to offer not only the operation of the call center but the optimization of resources and customer satisfaction, as can be seen in Figure 3 where the most common structure used for Call Centers is graphically identified.

**Figure 3**  
Structure of a Call Center



(Gecko, 2011)

The supervisor must generate a set of reports and briefings of at least the number of calls answered and made, the number of missed and overflowed calls, the average waiting time, the level of service, the duration of the calls and the level of occupation of agents (Gecko, 2011).

### 4.3. Relational resources 2

Within the SMEs, the management style is one that is 100% committed to the growth of the organization in a general way, always bearing in mind that human capital is the most valuable entity, since they are the ones who form the organization, fulfilling each one an indispensable role for the development and evolution of the same. It is for this reason that the company seeks to create a sense of belonging among all the collaborating staff, giving them support, trust, frequent training and creating a growth plan for all those involved. The organizational structure of a company of this nature is usually completely docile in which each business management offered within the portfolio has appropriate hierarchies to have complete control of each project, counting in this way with a leader, with a manager of the project and with the number of technician teams per specific project. It is for the reasons expressed above that each leader or business manager has the autonomy to make decisions always seeking the complete satisfaction of the client. When this type of trust is generated between the employee and the employer, it has been shown that it generates surprising motivations not only with the collaborating staff, but also fill the company with great value.

### 4.4. Relational resources 3

SMEs in Colombia must have an office of approximately 180 m<sup>2</sup> divided into 2 floors so that the business plan for the implementation of the customer service center can be carried out without difficulty in terms of the impact that may arise in the sense of the financial resources that it represents. The office must be fully equipped and adequate with all its public services of first necessity and also with a line of broadband internet dedicated to the proper functioning and development of the projects, creating in this way an environment conducive to the tasks carried out every day.

The company must have sufficient infrastructure to carry out the implementation of the customer service center, this is achieved due to it would not have to invest in it, the office must have the necessary space for the implementation of the Contact Center.

## **4.5. Financial resources**

Nowadays, SMEs that wish to be at the forefront must have good income left from each of the projects that are carried out, in addition to what comes from the general manager and the shareholders. SMEs must be without debt, or unresolved loans. In short, the medium and small enterprises should be fully financially sound, therefore the proposed business plan is designed under the following financial structure: 80% of the total investment required for all the implementation and execution of the customer service center and the other 20% must be for financial credit.

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## **5. Marketing plan**

To describe the marketing plan of the proposed business plan for SMEs with problems in customer service, one of the classic elements of marketing is used: The Marketing Mix, this term created by McCarthy in 1960 is used to encompass its four basic components: product, price, place and promotion (Espinosa, 2017). These components are also known as the four Ps (4Ps), by the initials of their names, and are the controllable elements of the marketing plan that are adjusted until finding the right combination, to better meet the needs of the customers of the product, at the same time that it generates adequate income.

Leaving mentioned the importance that has each component of the Marketing Mix to analyze, evaluate and control within any business plan, it will be indicated the strategy suggested within the article to be followed for the correct implementation, execution and control of the concepts and the same plan (Hernandez, López, & Salcedo, 2019).

### **5.1. Marketing strategy**

Text Subchapter 4.1. One of the main objectives of SMEs is to create loyalty with customers, that is why the establishment of the proposed business plan aims to increase current revenues from sales of the services offered within each portfolio. This is due to the belief that a customer's loyalty strategy and adding quality, efficiency and effectiveness to the service provided would generate new business opportunities.

This means that the company is aware that it must be available when customers are the ones looking for the company to develop a project both nationally and internationally, if necessary (Hernandez, López, & Salcedo, 2019).

The Contact Center has another strategy and objective at the time of its creation and is to return to the SMEs much more competent compared to the companies that exist in the telecommunications market.

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## **6. Conclusions**

The development of the proposed business plan and embodied in this document seeks as a fundamental principle the strengthening of customer relationships and in addition, a growth in satisfaction and the entry of potential customers for SMEs, thus gaining recognition, experience and improvements in the image. After approaching each concept looking for the viability of the business plan, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Contact

Center for SMEs, besides being necessary, is feasible and practicable in all aspects, although this does not mean that it does not have threats or risks to face.

Therefore, it is considered that the business plan should be implemented as soon as possible for those SMEs which face this kind of difficulties, because in this way they will report medium and long-term benefits not only financially but also earnings raised with the main purpose of the plan, in customers, in satisfaction and in corporate image, compared to the increase of companies currently present in the telecommunications market; strengthening relationships and leaving the company well positioned in front of the attention given to customers, suppliers and users in general.

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