



Call Center Framework In the Arab Republic of Egypt

National Telecom Regulatory Authority

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Call Center Regulatory Framework

Prelude

Whereas the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Egypt (NTRA), pursuant to Law No.10 of 2003 on Telecommunication Regulation, is the sole entity authorized to regulate telecom sector through implementing the policies set to develop and disseminate telecommunications, in different types, in line with the recent technology thereof, and to ensure all the requirements of individuals, and corporate, productive, administrative and servicing sectors are met with respect to telecom services, and at the most affordable prices, and to encourage investment on non-monopolistic basis under the umbrella of free and open competition among national and international expertise, guaranteeing the transparency of information, provision of inclusive services and protecting user-rights;

Whereas NTRA is the sole entity authorized to grant licenses and permits to companies or organizations wishing to provide and/ or operate telecom services, or work in telecom sector, and oversee and track the performance thereof, and set the general rules to ensure legitimate competition;

And due to the significant progress witnessed in outsourcing Services across the Arab Republic of Egypt, with a market size of more than EGP 1.6 billion per annum achieved by the industry of exporting technological service via Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), especially call centers, technical support, data/ content management, software/ app support, consultancy and training, and search engine support services, it is worth noting that Egypt aims to achieve a further progress with a twofold increase in revenues coming up at EGP 3 billion per annum.

Whereas call centers' outsourcing is deemed a developed and promising field within the Arab Republic of Egypt, a home to several multinational, pioneering and professional corporations of business outsourcing worldwide, and whereas Egypt enjoys a distinguished geographical location and highly-trained manpower available for relatively low wages than many countries across the world, Egyptian cadres also master many foreign languages and dialects than their counterparts in many other states;

In line with Egypt's Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), NTRA studied the impediments to said business, most importantly the high cost of the international calls required

for call centers to operate, and thereafter came up with methods to drive service development for call centers within Egypt and overcome obstacles.

In witness thereof, NTRA decided to establish a Call Center Framework in the Arab Republic of Egypt, pursuant to the terms and conditions of Law No. 10 of 2003, on Telecom Regulation.

First: Definitions:

1. **NTRA:**

The National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Egypt

2. **Call Center Services:**

Services used to establish communication between the call center and users without the need to meet users in-person, where call center infrastructure is established to technically take in the required telecom operations.

3. **Call Center Outsourcing Services:**

Services provided by the call center operator to others, to establish communication with users on the behalf of service owner including call center Seats and Agents in addition to other supplementary services.

4. **Call Center Agent :**

Natural person in charge of making phone calls to/ receiving phone calls from users.

5. **Seats:**

Seats used by Call Center Service Provider (Call Center) to receive inquiries/ conduct surveys and may vary in number according to the number of Agents, where one seat may take in one or more Agents as per work shifts.

6. Client/Customer:

Juridical person entering into contract with Call Center Outsourcing Service provider to avail the services mentioned herein.

7. User:

Natural person receiving phone calls from/ making phone calls to call centers.

8. Interactive Voice Response (IVR):

A technology-based service allowing voice interaction with users either via computers or humans, by using voice or Dual Tone Multi Frequency (DTMF).

9. Private Branch Exchange (PBX):

A call-exchange within the entity/ corporation/ call center, which controls phone calls. It also undertakes Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) across available Agents via (IVR) and further records calls to track service quality, all while retaining connection to a landline network.

10. Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) Trunks:

Virtual trunks, which operate via IP to transmit voice through Voice over IP (VoIP).

11. Private Call Center Operator:

A natural or juridical person who operates the call center for his own benefit only to provide services to the users thereof, and does not provide any outsourcing services to others whatsoever.

12. Public Call Center Operator:

A juridical person who operates the call center to provide outsourcing services to others.

13. Call Center Service Provider:

A natural or Juridical person providing call center services to users, and could be a Private or Public Call Center Operator (Providing call center outsourcing services).

14. Landline Service Provider:

Companies licensed by NTRA to provide landline services within the Arab Republic of Egypt.

15. Call Center Outsourcing Provider:

A juridical person providing call center outsourcing service to others, including (BPO) and Information Technology Outsourcing (ITO), which entail Captive/ Shared Service Center for the entity/ company's branches abroad.

16. Cloud Call Center:

A call center whose call receiving, making and processing systems are hosted by online servers.

Secondly: Introduction

Call centers are used by several companies, authorities and organizations which use phone calls to promote, sell and provide products or services, or enhance user-experience of sales departments, telemarketing companies, technical support and maintenance desks, courier services, restaurants, poll services, charity and other organizations.

Each & every call center contains a PBX, whether a TDM-PBX or IP-PBX, performs phone call functions and conducts ACD.

Furthermore, a virtual call center can be established where Call Center Agents could be geographically distributed at different areas (At office or home) and answer phone calls via Cloud Call Center Technology.

In some cases, ChatboT Technology can be used in call centers to accurately determine and answer customer inquiries via a smart software, otherwise (IVR) system could be adopted to

answer phone calls, share instructions with users to follow by pressing the (DTMF) and consequently getting directed to a Call Center Agent via (ACD).

Call center systems include:

1) Inbound Call Center

Where a Call Center Agent receives calls from users regarding account management, reservations, fund raising, technical support, complaints or inquiries about products or services and how they could be bought from companies.

2) Outbound Call Center:

Where a Call Center Agent makes phone calls to reach out for users to do telemarketing, raise funds, conduct polls, collect debts or set appointments.

3) Blended Call Center

Where a Call Center Agent both receives inbound and makes outbound calls.

2-1 Call Center Types

Call centers could be classified per location as follow:

2-1-1 In-house Call Center

Whereas the entity/ company owns and operates the call center as well as the PBX thereof, employs Call Center Agents and provides the environment and technology necessary for the call center to either receive inbound or make outbound calls.

2-1-2 Call Center Outsourcing:

Whereas the entity/ company agrees with another professional party (which owns a call center) to provide communication services on their behalf, so as to reduce expenses, operation costs, cost of investing in call center technology and PBX-upgrading, and remove the burdens of employing Call Center Agents and providing training courses thereto.

Thirdly: Call centers status quo

3-1 Current procedures

- Call centers are presently established and operated within the Arab Republic of Egypt without any license granted by NTRA, Call Center Services or Call Center Outsourcing Services do not also require an NTRA-license at the present time.
- The company wishing to provide Call Center Services may establish their own call center or head to any Call Center Outsourcing Service Provider to sign contract with to provide Call Center Services to users, where the call center operator would be in charge of providing the technical solutions, techniques and required methods of connection as such.
- Non-Egyptian Call Center Service Providers shall head to the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA) which provides an umbrella of services to support and foster the companies wishing to expand their business in Egypt, including financial support, provision of training courses for human cadres to overcome language barriers and broaden knowledge of services, as well as obtaining the required certificates.
- Providers of Call Center Services may not presently acquire the necessary connection methods to receive and make calls except through any of the licensed companies to provide voice telecom services.

3-2 Current technical solutions

3-2-1 Communication with users in the Arab Republic of Egypt

- Contract shall be entered into between the Provider of Call Center Services and a Landline Service Provider to provide landline services including phone numbers and Primary Rate Interfaces (PRIs) to have access to the landline network.
- Landline Service Provider shall receive inbound calls on the call center number via a summing point, and distribute such via PRIs to the call center which can also make local phone calls.

3-2-2 Communication with users abroad:

Call center Service Provider shall communicate with users outside the Arab Republic of Egypt through:

- Entering into contract with a licensed company which provides international telecom services to others, to rent an International Circuit Connection – Point to Point – between the call center and a summing point abroad, the solution which is deemed expensive due to the high price of international circuit as well as the high cost of the acquisition thereof.
- Entering into contract with a Landline Service Provider to make and receive international calls via licensed international gateways, which is further deemed expensive due to the high cost of international calls per minute.

Fourthly: Regulatory Framework

In line with the role assumed by NTRA to provide a polarizing environment for investors in Call Center Outsourcing through removing any barriers they might encounter, NTRA established the aforementioned Framework to provide such a business with the necessary technological alternatives to expand in Egypt benefiting from Egypt's geographical location, qualified human cadres and available infrastructure especially at the different technology parks distributed nationwide.

Moreover, the mentioned Framework shall aim to set rules and international criteria to regulate Call Center Service's operation, security and provision to achieve a double growth of Call Center Outsourcing Business and increase the number of human cadres working therein.

4-1 Operating module

Call Centers Service Provider can use the following connection methods:

A- Local Connectivity between call center and users within the Arab Republic of Egypt:

- Entering into contract with a Landline Service Provider to make and receive local phone calls using PRIs leased by a Landline Service provider to connect with the landline

network, or using mobile lines provided by a Mobile Operator via Numbering, including but not limited to toll-free and special-tariff numbers.

B- International connectivity between call centers and users abroad:

1. Entering into contract with a company licensed to provide international call services to others, to rent an International Circuit Connection – Point to Point – between the call center and a summing point abroad.
2. Entering into contract with a Landline Service Provider to make and receive international phone calls via licensed International Gateways using different Numbering types including but not limited to toll-free and special tariff numbers.
3. Using internet lines to transfer audio/video calls offshore, or vice-versa, by VoIP Technology; namely, SIP, Real Time Protocol (RTP) and WebRTC.

4-2 Regulatory module

• **Private Call center Operator:**

- Private Call Center Operator shall register at NTRA’s database in accordance with the registration steps stipulated in “Sixthly” in the present Framework.
- Private Call Center Operator is entitled to connect to landline network via lines/ circuits leased by a Landline Service Provider.
- Private Call Center Operator may distribute calls only via a Landline Service Provider, and may not by any means distribute calls using VoIP Technology via internet cables whatsoever.
- Private Call Center Operator may not use a Cloud Call Center to provide service to the users thereof.
- Private Call Center Operator may not, by any means, use Call Center Outsourcing Services without NTRA’s prior consent.
- Private Call center Operators shall commit to NTRA’s regulations pertaining to call center regulations.

- **Public Call Center Operators (Call Center Outsourcing Service Provider)**
 - Service Provider of Call center Outsourcing shall obtain a license from NTRA to establish and operate public call centers, and provide outsourcing services therefor within the Arab Republic of Egypt.
 - Service Provider of Call center Outsourcing has the right to distribute calls using interfaces identified hereinabove, and may not use other interfaces without obtaining NTRA’s written consent in advance.
- Services provided by present call centers shall be regularized in accordance with “Seventhly” in the present Framework.
- Call Center Service Provider shall commit to all decisions and regulations made by NTRA with regard to Call Center Services.
- Call Center Service Provider shall take all necessary institutional and technical measures as well as steps to protect the confidentiality of users’ information and data.
- Call Center Service Provider shall commit to the terms and conditions of Telecommunication Law No.10 of 2003, in addition to all legislations, laws, regulations and decrees applicable presently or expected to be issued in future, in Egypt, particularly Law No. 151 of 2020 on the Protection of Personal Data, Law No. 175 of 2018 on Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes and the Executive Regulations thereof, and where no specific mention is made in the present Framework, the terms and conditions of Telecommunication Law No.10 of 2003.
- Call Center Service Provider shall obtain all necessary legal as well as administrative approvals subject to the jurisdiction of the aforementioned authorities in accordance to the terms of law, so as to as carry out the tasks thereof in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations including the approvals issued by national security authorities.
- Subject to the terms and conditions of Part 6 (Article No.64) of Telecommunication Law No.10 of 2003, Call Center Service Providers shall not, by any means whatsoever, use endangering systems to the national security.

- Companies applying for Call Center Outsourcing License shall meet the following criteria:
 - The applying company shall be of an Egyptian origin founded as per the laws applicable in Egypt, with telecommunications being the core business thereof.
 - The applying company, a number of shareholders therein or affiliated companies thereto shall possess an adequate experience in telecommunications, particularly call centers.
 - The applying company shall have a considerable financial capacity to conduct such a business and meet the financial commitments pertaining to the License.
- The company wishing to obtain a License to provide Call Center Outsourcing Services shall submit a request to NTRA containing:
 - Company's structure, and the data of the shareholders thereof.
 - Company's portfolio.
 - Fiscal stance.
 - A five-year feasibility study
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall comply with the international performance benchmarks which regulate and measures to operate, secure and provide such services, including but not limited to COPC, ISO Security, ISO Business Continuity and PCI as well as other criteria or certificates deemed necessary by NTRA to conduct such a business.
- Service Providers of Call Center Outsourcing shall comply with security standards set by NTRA regarding the following fields in particular: Information confidentiality, integrity and availability.
- Service Providers of Call center Outsourcing shall comply with data classification rules, in addition to adequate security levels thereof, in accordance with the regulatory frameworks established by NTRA pertaining to such topics.

- Service Providers of Call Center Outsourcing shall provide the technical and logistic channels and systems allowing the Licensor to track the commitment thereof to all Framework's provisions.

Fifthly: Main features of License

5-1 License duration:

Five years effective the date of License signature, to be renewable for further durations, five years each.

5-2 Main financial commitments:

A- License upfront fees: To be paid once, upon License signature.

B- Annual fees: To be paid annually.

C- License burdens allowance: An amount paid annually

D- Credit/performance bond: A letter of credit to insure the Licensee is committed to the items of License.

5-3 Main terms, commitments and rights of License:

First: Licensed services

- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing has the right to establish and operate Call Centers, and provide Outsourcing Services to others, within the Arab Republic of Egypt, by assigning Seats and trained Agents, and shall commit to notify NTRA with all affiliated call centers as well as any updates thereto.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall commit, while establishing call centers, to all construction standards and specifications acknowledged worldwide, and shall also commit to all technical standards and specifications pertaining to such a process as specified by the Licensor.

- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing is entitled to connect to a landline network, operated by a Landline Service Provider, to make and receive the phone calls for the customers thereof.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing is entitled to establish an international connection through any of the following methods:
 - Entering into contract with a licensed company which provides international telecom services to others, to rent an International Circuit Connection – Point to Point – between the call center and a summing point abroad.
 - Entering into contract with a Landline Service Provider to make and receive international calls via licensed International Gateways, using different types of Numbering including but not limited to toll-free and special-tariff numbers.
 - Using internet cables to transfer audio/video calls offshore, or vice-versa, by VoIP technology in accordance with the terms and regulations specified in the present Framework as well as any regulations issued by NTRA in this regard.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall not use further interfaces otherwise specified hereabove, without obtaining a pre-written consent from NTRA.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall, to NTRA, submit an IP address list of all IPs sought to be assigned for Seats and that will be used to make voice calls, using VoIP Technology via data transmission/ internet circuits, and obtain NTRA's written consent before the activation thereof.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall not link the Inbound or Outbound international calls received or made hereby to any phone network operating within the Arab Republic of Egypt.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing is entitled to use a Cloud Call Center to serve users, provided that NTRA's written consent should be obtained in advance and in accordance with the rules and regulations made by NTRA in this regard.

Secondly: Customer relations

- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall draft contracts with customers as per a pre-acknowledged and approved unified module by the Licensor, entailing the nature, provisions and performance of service.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall pay remedies to the contracted customer, either for service disconnection or malfunctioning in accordance with the rules specified by the Licensor and without prejudice to emergencies, force majeure and other criteria stipulated in the said License.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall keep the database pertaining to all information and data of the transactions thereof with contracted customers, and the call recordings for one calendar year, to be at the disposal of the Licensor or any delegate thereof, and to be made accessible and available for data extraction, as deemed necessary by the Licensor or any delegate thereof.

Thirdly: Maintain confidentiality

- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing and the staff thereof, whether seniors or juniors, shall maintain the confidentiality of whatever information and documents acquired of any nature whatsoever, and commit to the non-disclosure thereof.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall commit to the non-disclosure of any information about users or contracted customers, which might have been received thereby or made available thereto.

Fourthly: Numbering

- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall commit to the National Numbering Plan developed by the Licensor and any amendments thereto.

Fifthly: Ownership of network

- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall own the network established thereby for the purpose to offer the services subject to Licensing, including the call center's devices and systems, Service Provider is further entitled to rent parts of the network thereof from another Licensee, and shall commit to keep the said network and all devices as well as systems thereof within the Arab Republic of Egypt, unless otherwise is pre-approved by the Licensor.
- It is prohibited for Call Center Outsourcing Service Provider to sell or assign, by any means whatsoever, the said network/ system, or any of the components thereof, without a pre-written consent obtained from NTRA, and given that the said sale or assigning shall not cause any violations to the commitments stipulated in License.

Sixthly: Telecom devices

- Type Approval certificate shall be obtained from NTRA, for all telecom devices used in call centers.

Seventhly: Security of information

- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall deliver an annual technical report to evaluate cybersecurity, comprising of Penetration and Vulnerability Tests conducted by a renowned organization with a bustling portfolio.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall deliver an annual technical report to evaluate cybersecurity, in case significant and important changes in service apps or devices take place, or when urgently requested, comprising of Penetration and Vulnerability Tests conducted by a renowned organization with a bustling portfolio.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall follow all instructions and directions made by national security authorities pertaining to the service subject to Licensing, and provide the necessary technical requirements to carry out such instructions at the own expense thereof.
- Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing shall deliver an annual Cyber Resilience Review (CRR) on cyber risks and flexibility, to ensure business continuation.

Sixthly: Main registration features

Private Call Center Operators within the Arab Republic of Egypt shall register at NTRA in accordance with the following measures and standards:

- Registration process shall take place via NTRA's website or a written request submitted.
- Company data shall be filled in including: (Company name, commercial register, address, phone, facsimile, points of contact, etc...)
- Data about the nature of activity and connection methods shall be filled in.
- Registration process shall not be deemed complete unless NTRA's consent is pre-obtained.
- **Registration fees:** Value of registration fees shall, by NTRA, be determined.
- **Registration duration:** Five years effective the completion of registration, to be renewable should registration terms and conditions be complied with.

Seventhly: Regularization

- Regularization period for the present call centers is 9 months effective the date the regulatory framework is set, in accordance with the following measures:
 - A. Regulatory Framework published, requests submitted to obtain license:**
 1. NTRA shall publish the Regulatory Framework including regularization measures once the acknowledgement thereof.
 2. Call center operators and the staff working therein shall, within 3 months of setting the Regulatory Framework, submit a registration request to NTRA in accordance with “Sixthly” in the present Framework.
 3. Service Provider of Call Center Outsourcing and the staff working therein shall submit a request to NTRA to obtain a license, in addition to the following documents:
 - Company’s structure, fiscal stance and shareholders thereof.
 - Company’s portfolio and countries where business is conducted.
 - Company’s customer list classified into: (Juridical persons, content providers and public entities).
 - Entire technical data about the infrastructure used to provide services including:
 - Number of call centers affiliated and the location thereof.
 - Data about infrastructure especially connection methods as well as the numerical value and type of local and international capacities.
 - Certificates and technical approvals obtained from different authorities, identification of such authorities, and the date the certificates or approvals were obtained as well as the validity thereof.
 - Type of devices used and a supplier list.

- Any technical data required by NTRA to evaluate the company's status for granting License.

B. Requests looked into and Licenses granted by NTRA:

4. Regulatory, technical and fiscal aspects of requests submitted by companies are looked into by NTRA within a period of time not exceeding 3 months post the submission of request, provided that all previously identified data shall be completed as follow:
 - Should the company's request be approved, the company shall pay all financial dues before License is issued/ registration is completed.
 - In case the company's request is rejected, the company shall be notified with rejection reason and has the right to re-submit the request thereof within one month at maximum effective the date of rejection notification, given that NTRA shall look into the re-submitted request of the company within one month from the submission date.
 5. NTRA shall, within 6 months of granting the License to the company, inspect and evaluate the compliance of the licensed company with all commitments acknowledged in the Framework, and should any of such commitments be wriggled out of, License shall be terminated and all legal and regulatory measures shall be taken as such.
- In case call centers are operated or Call Center Services are provided in violation to the present Framework, after 9 months of having been established, violators shall have full liability in accordance with Telecommunication Law No. 10 of 2003.