

**Belize**



The Natural Niche

A Country of Offshore Opportunities

# BUSINESS PROCESS OUTSOURCING



# Outsourcing

## Industry Overview



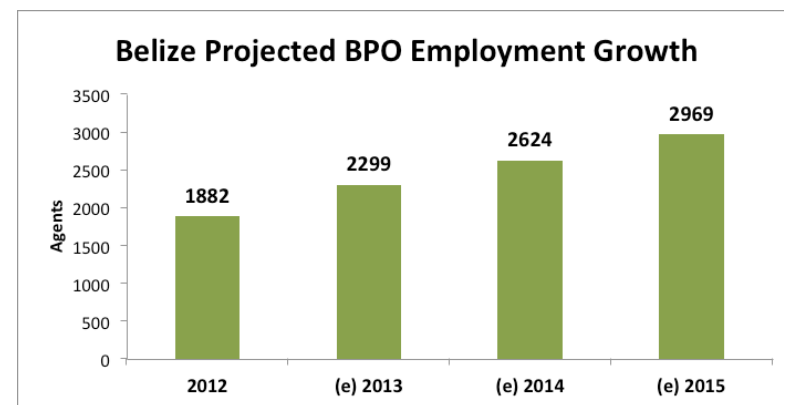
Belize: the world renowned tropical destination reputable for its beautiful beaches, excellent diving opportunities in the 2nd largest barrier reef in the world and its adventure eco-tourism. The hidden gem nestled in the Yucatan peninsula between Mexico and Guatemala, is quickly becoming known also as the rising star in the Caribbean and Central American region as a 21st century outsourcing destination offering numerous competitive advantages and investment incentives.

As the information technology enabled services (ITES) sector becomes more competitive and globalized amidst escalating costs to outsource in Asia, organizations are quickly looking to re-locate their offshore outsourcing operations to nearshore destinations like Belize, which offer the same agility, access to new markets, talent and ultimately cost savings. The business process outsourcing (BPO) industry has been recognized as a specialized “niche” area and priority sector for Belize’s socio-economic growth by the government of Belize (GOB) as well as the private sector.

Historically, the Offshore Services Sector of Belize has experienced tremendous growth of over 80% in the past few years starting with only 1 center opening its doors in 2005 to over 18 centers presently employing over 1,800 agents. Various operations of diverse sizes are underway along with several investments in the exploratory or planning stages. Most centers in Belize currently focus on inbound and outbound call center operations since it is the only Latin American and Caribbean location offering the dual advantage of being a cost effective nearshore location with ‘accent neutral’ English language skills; English being the official language. Belize also hosts a 46% Spanish speaking population making it a truly bilingual destination. (2000 census)

Though a new player in the global outsourcing industry, the Belize BPO sector is on a strong growth trajectory owing to the advantages of a young population, natural flair of a service based economy, a competitive business environment, world class telecom infrastructure, Special Incentive Zones and strong active government support. Furthermore, Belize is a great value destination due to its high workforce availability, BPO salaries that are 60-80% lower than US locations and low attrition rates of less than 5%. Belize City, the largest city in Belize, is the hub for BPO activities and also home to some of the largest BPO’s offering a range of service including voice/non-voice customer support, sales, data processing, and documentation services. Ladyville, Belmopan, and Orange Walk County are some of the other emerging locations.

Indeed, Belize has an established BPO sector that has been registering considerable growth over the past few years alongside active government support for the national BPO Strategy and continued investments in the industry’s infrastructure, labor pool and ecosystem. The existing employee base of 1,800 agents is expected to touch over 3,000 agents by 2015 providing employment opportunities amidst a high unemployment rate of 14.4% and 19.5% specifically among youth of 15 - 24 years of age (2012). With call center wages as low as **US\$2.25** at entry level and **US\$5-6** at supervisory levels, Belize offers one of the best costs to value quotients in the Latin American and Caribbean region.



**Source: Belize BPO Final Strategy, Avasant March 2013**

It is pertinent that you come discover for yourself, why Belize is not only the perfect BPO destination, but also your Natural Nearshore.

# Why Belize?

Belize, with its high quality human resources, infrastructure and progressive business environment, makes it an ideal nearshore location for your world class BPO operations. The fairly new yet growing industry provides ample opportunities that make Belize your natural nearshore BPO destination. Here are the Top 15 Reasons why you should choose Belize for your outsourcing operations:

1. Neutral English Accent - Only Central American country with English as the official language offering a young and adaptable workforce.
2. Bi-Lingual Language Skills - Only Central American and Caribbean country with truly bi-lingual capabilities (English and Spanish)
3. Cultural Affinity - Labor force is heavily influenced by U.S. media, trends and customs
4. Time Zone Advantage - Belize mirrors U.S. Central Standard Time (CST)
5. Competitive Salaries - agents cost 60 - 80% less than U.S. location
6. Stable Currency - Belize Dollar (BZD) fixed at 2:1 against U.S. Dollar (USD)
7. Telecom Infrastructure - Modern telecom infrastructure using 2 main fiber optic hubs (ARCOS & TELMAX) and a third to come with high redundancy rates countrywide
8. Stable Environment - One of the most stable Political, Social and Business Environments in Central America
9. Ease of Employment - Easy availability of work permits for non-residents and expatriates requiring no visa for U.S., Canada, EU and the Caribbean Community
10. Geographic Proximity - Within 2 to 4 hours of direct flights from key U.S. cities while also being physically situated in Central America with links to the Caribbean region.
11. Strong Government Support - BPO identified as a priority sector and a national strategy has been developed.
12. Incentive Programs - Multiple incentives including Free Repatriation of Profits, Dividends and Capital, etc.

13. Regional Integration - Belize is signatory to multiple FTA's and Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements including Regional Trade Agreements and Partial Scopes with the EU, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Central America.
14. Top Tourist Destination - Prime Tourist / Retirement Location in the Central American and the Caribbean region
15. International Connectivity - Belize offers direct flights from Dallas, Houston, Charlotte, Atlanta and Miami as well as connectivity to Central America.



These reasons, along with Belize's recent growth and experience in the BPO realm will enable your organization to secure an investment opportunity in the outsourcing industry like no other. Essentially, Belize is only a quick flight away and is waiting for your visit!

The following subsections provide detailed explanations of why Belize is your next best outsourcing hub:

## Talent Pool Like No Other

Belize's young talent pool and their skills are quite unique for the Latin American and the Caribbean region. The government of Belize recognizes the importance of developing the BPO industry focusing on a high quality skilled labor pool, committing a significant portion of the national budget on

educational and skills development programs. The education sector is also communicating with the industry through BELTRAIDE to develop outsourcing and BPO specific curricula.

Around 65.2% (148,000) of the total population of Belize forms the core of the labor force with a median age of 21.3, one of the lowest in the region. This would then provide an abundant pool of young trainable talent. High unemployment levels, especially in the BPO suitable 14-24 age category, ensure availability of trainable resources in turn easing the recruitment process, limiting wage rate escalations and staff turnover. Currently, about 26.3% of BPO employees are below 20 years of age while 58.1% are between 20 and 29 years.

Over 5,000 graduates are churned annually from the Universities and Junior Colleges offering high quality secondary and vocational education. Most of these graduates hold business related degrees such as Management and Accounting. As a fast emerging offshore banking hub, there is also a high availability of trained accounting and management professionals especially suited for F&A BPO services. With English being the official language and medium of instruction alongside the fact that 46% of the population speaks Spanish, Belize truly offers a bilingual talent pool for BPO services. Neutral accent, high levels of service orientation, cultural affinity to the U.S. all add towards providing high standards of BPO services. A high school graduate in Belize with supplemental subsidized BPO training from various vocational institutions such as the ITVET, is considered skilled enough to be employed in a center.

## Business Friendly and Cost Effective Labor Laws

Belize has a clear labor regulation safeguarding both business as well as employee interests under the Labor Act and Chapter 297 of the Laws of Belize. Other acts include the Social Security Act which is the only required payment deduction for employees. Medical and dental benefits can be provided in courtesy.

## World Class Power & Real Estate Infrastructure

Belize offers high quality infrastructure specific to the requirements of BPO operations. High quality buildings, reliable electricity supply, efficient international transport all account for Belize's excellent infrastructure.

A reliable electric network spread across the country ensures minimal downtime for critical real time BPO operations. Belize Electricity Limited (BEL) ensures optimal power supply through a national electricity system, which in turn is connected to the Mexican electricity grid. Charges vary between US\$0.23 and US\$0.25 for 10,000 Kwh.

With two operational Special Zones and an incubation facility under development, Belize offers the requisite facilities to meet the requirements of large as well as small and medium BPO's. The Belize E Business Free Zone Park, a newly developed IT park, offers over 50,000 sq. ft. of office space spread over seven (7) buildings for BPO and other back office business services. The park provides complete background fiber optic network for both voice and data communication, International Private Lines (IPL), Direct Exchange Lines, and dedicated internet services suitable for BPO operations. The park is conveniently located near the Phillip Goldson International Airport.

With a favorable land to population ratio of 8,867 sq. miles for 334,297 people, Belize offers multiple opportunities for commercial real estate development.

## Fiber Optic Networks

Currently, Belize is connected through the ARCOS & TELMAX Fiber Optic Networks with ample redundancy and unmatched uptime. Starting 2013, additional capacity is being added to the existing network to further improve redundancy and to make the services more cost effective. Belize has also set up a domestic fiber optic network connecting all major cities and towns. The government is committed to further reducing telecom tariffs to competitive levels over the years to come.

# Stable Business, Political and Legal Environment

Belize has over a thirty year history of strong democratic leadership at all levels since independence. These democratic values enable Belize to offer the most stable business and political environment in the entire Central American and Caribbean region.

As a former British colony, Belize follows the English Common Law based on established case law. This is unlike other Latin American countries that follow the Civil Law legal system.

A positive business environment with strong legislative and regulatory support safeguarding investor interests is central to the Belizean trade regulations. As an emerging offshore banking location, the government of Belize (GOB) has enforced strict confidentiality and privacy regulations under the International Business Companies (IBC) Act, Code of Conduct and Belize Trusts Act. Since 1990, over 25,000 offshore businesses or trusts have been registered in Belize.

- Exemption on property and land taxes, excise sales, consumption taxes, taxes on trade turnover, foreign exchange and transfer tax - lowering operational costs locally and further improving service competitiveness
- Dividend tax exemption in perpetuity - No tax on dividends paid out
- No restriction on operating foreign currency bank accounts in Belize and abroad - ease in foreign exchange and overseas transactions
- No import and export licensing requirements
- No trade licenses required to commence operations quickly
- Assistance with preliminary recruitment - BELTRAIDE
- Assistance with real estate selection
- BPO Specific curriculum and training program in education
- Investment and start up facilitation through application fast tracking.

BELTRAIDE through a dedicated BPO cell assists investors at every stage of the investment process ensuring a smooth transition and initiation of operations.

# Investment Incentives & Opportunities

## Government Incentives & Programs

- BPO operations automatically qualify for all tax benefits under the EPZ (Export Processing Zone) program
- 20 year tax holiday with option to deduct loss from profits
- Import / Export duty exemptions - Exemptions on imports of equipment related to operations
- Full repatriation of funds - both capital and profits thus ensuring high degree of investment safety

## Investment Opportunities

Currently, Belize City is the major hub for BPO operations in Belize; however, there are local investors and operators seeking to shift the center of focus to other areas such as at the capital of Belmopan and the western Cayo district, in the Northern Towns of Orange Walk and Corozal and also the Southern town of Dangriga. These untapped locations would enable any potential BPO investor to experience the first mover advantage in a growing sector nationwide.

Local and foreign investors have also recognized the needs to build data parks that are BPO specific offering incubator and turnkey solutions. Opportunities in the ITO and KPO areas are also available with proper capacity building.



## Beltraide Support

Serving as the country's Investment Promotion Agency, BELTRAIDE is committed to help potential investors in any priority sector or industry to:

- Secure the requisite business establishment information,
- Meet the key decision makers pertaining to the proposed undertaking,
- Access the financial and intellectual capital that is required to make business happen.

In the quest to investment promotion, we have dedicated a **Business Development Unit** with emphases to:

- Coordinate the participation of local enterprises, and other agencies in relevant trade/investment shows, trade/investment missions, national tours, and other promotional events;
- Develop and execute strategies and activities for increased market access for Belizean products and services;
- Develop, manage, and improve investment and trade business relationships;
- Continuously seek potential Investment opportunities for Belize;

- Coordinate the development and continuous update of relevant industry information for the ease of information sharing through promotional collateral material;
- Develop standardized promotional/marketing presentations, proposals;
- Analyze and identify trade opportunities by coordinating with Business and Investment Facilitation Unit and networking with other stakeholders;
- Provide facilitation throughout the entire investment experience;

The key to the success of this Unit depends on keeping investors satisfied and motivated through our unique business development strategies. We ensure that each investor receives the support of an experienced team that is dedicated to the business growth of the local industries in the priority sectors, and strive to create and to leverage market opportunities to enhance the success of the country.

We utilize our experiences and skills to provide innovative and competitive programs, marketing solutions and operational assistance to investors.

So go ahead, schedule a visit to Belize with BELTRAIDE and our team is here ready to ensure that we build a customized agenda with relevant meetings to suit your needs.

## Contact Agencies

Still don't believe that Belize is the right place for your offshore operations in outsourcing, ask our current existing and operating BPOs below. Being our ambassadors, they will point you to the direct benefits of locating your business operations in Belize taking advantage of the various tax benefits as well as the unique BPO Business Ecosystem available.

That said, Belize is definitely the next business hub you were looking for.

**Together, we are here to Make Business Happen!**

# BPO Contact Directory

Organization/Company: Fulton Data  
Location: Ladyville  
Contact Person: Mike Montenegro  
Position: Manager  
Email: mike@caribsports.bz

Organization/Company: Ready Call Center  
Location: Ladyville  
Contact Person: Ms. Nubia Ramirez  
Position: General Manager  
Email: nramirez@readycallcenter.com

Organization/Company: Administrative Corporate Services Ltd.  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Ms. Beverly Sutherland  
Position: General Manager  
Email: bsutherland@acs-inter.com

Organization/Company: Prospera Ltd.  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Ms. Fidelia Gomez  
Position: Office  
Email: fidelia@cititrustintl.biz

Organization/Company: Cititrust International Inc.  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Joy Godfrey  
Position: Director  
Email: services@cititrust.biz

Organization/Company: Infotel International  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Mr. Reynaldo Malik  
Position: Manager  
Email: rmalik@infotellimited.com

Organization/Company: Transparent BPO  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Mr. Scott Newman  
Position: Owner  
Email: scott@transparentbpo.com

Organization/Company: Clear Call  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Ms. Ruth Esquivel  
Position: Manager  
Email: info@clearcall.bz; ruth@clearcall.bz

Organization/Company: Invictus  
Location: Belmopan  
Contact Person: Juan Fontanes  
Position: CEO  
Email: juan@winstondevelopmentgroup.com

Organization/Company: Captain Marketing  
Location: Belmopan  
Contact Person: Albert Gilharry  
Position: Manager  
Email: albertg@captainmktg.com

Organization/Company: Troystar  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Mr. Emroy Castillo  
Position: Owner  
Email: ecastillo@socialsecurity.org.bz

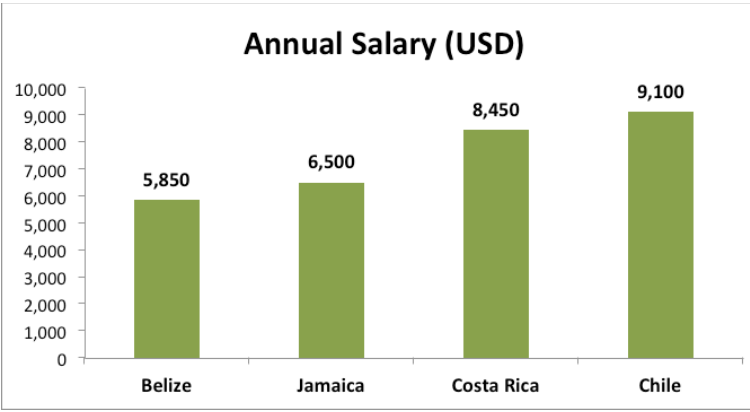
Organization/Company: Trextel  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Shamira Usher  
Position: Manager  
Email: susher@trextel.com

Organization/Company: BTL  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Karen Bevans  
Position: COO  
Email: kbevans@belizetelemedia.net

Organization/Company: The Office Gurus  
Location: San Ignacio  
Contact Person: Ms. Ahtziri Harrison  
Position: HR Coordinator  
Email: aaharrison@superioruniformgroup.com

Organization/Company: Protel BPO  
Location: Belize City  
Contact Person: Mr. Kevin Herrera  
Position: Owner  
Email: kevin2469bz@yahoo.com





**Source: Belize BPO Final Strategy, Avasant March 2013**

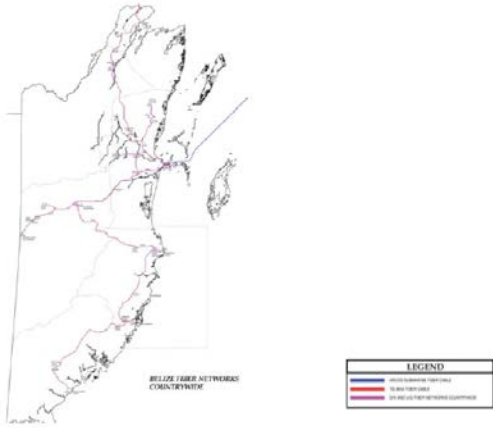


Figure 5-Belize Countywide Fiber Network