



Strategic Case Study Examination

November 2026 – February 2027
Pre-seen material

Context Statement

We are aware that there has been, and remains, a significant amount of change globally. To assist with clarity and fairness, we do not expect students to factor these changes in when responding to, or preparing for, case studies. This pre-seen, and its associated exams (while aiming to reflect real life), are set in a context where current and ongoing global issues have not had an impact.

Remember, marks in the exam will be awarded for valid arguments that are relevant to the question asked. Answers that make relevant references to current affairs will, of course, be marked on their merits.

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Introduction

Vennlisk is a quoted company that offers call centre services for clients. It specialises in the management of inbound calls, assisting callers on behalf of the businesses that have outsourced their inbound call centre activities to Vennlisk.

You are a senior manager in Vennlisk's finance function. You report directly to the Board and advise on special projects and strategic matters.

Vennlisk's head office is located in Westland, a developed country that has an active and well-regulated stock exchange. Westland's currency is the W\$. Westland requires companies to prepare their financial statements in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Call centres

A call centre is a unit in which employees make or receive large numbers of telephone calls. These units are usually equipped with technology that can be used to improve the management and servicing of calls.



Call centre employees are often referred to as “agents”, to reflect the fact that they generally act as representatives of their employers when handling calls from customers. Call centres can vary in size from one or two agents to entire floors that accommodate dozens or even hundreds of agents. The agents wear headsets that comprise headphones and microphones, leaving their hands free to operate keyboards.

Typically, the agents are equipped with digital workstations that are connected to the company's customer call management system so that the process of answering or making voice calls can be automated. They also have access to data files that enable them to respond to customer queries or to process transactions.

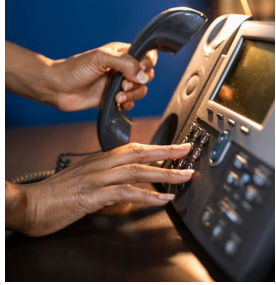
Call centres can take many different forms. For example, an insurance company writes to its customers each year with written quotes for the renewal of their insurance policies:

- The written quotes usually provide customers with a telephone number that can be used to connect with the insurer's call centre. Customers who call to accept the renewal may be identified automatically from their telephone numbers or they may have to identify themselves by keying in their account numbers.
- Customers may be offered a selection of reasons for their calls, with each reason corresponding to a single digit that they can press on their telephones. For example, pressing "1" might indicate that they wish to renew a policy and "2" might indicate that they wish to cancel.
- The customer call management system is programmed to connect calls to available agents who are able to deal with the customers' requests. If no agents are available, then customers hear a voice message asking them to wait until they can be connected.
- Calls are connected automatically to agents as soon as they become available. Agents' workstations will bring up relevant information, such as customer files and details of the renewal terms that they have been offered. The customers can then explain their needs and ask any questions. The agents will provide assistance and may also offer advice on upgrades that are available to accounts or might ensure that customers understand any conditions attached to their accounts that could affect claims.
- Agents input data during calls. They may be required to add further information once the call has ended, such as whether any follow-up is required. Agents are logged as available when calls, including any updating of records, are terminated.

While many of the functions associated with call centres could be carried out online, many customers prefer to talk to a human operator to whom they can explain their needs and to whom they can ask questions if anything is confusing them. Call centres are an efficient means of processing transactions and dealing with queries. They are also well suited to obtaining relevant details relating to complicated transactions, such as assisting customers who need to report an insurance claim. A human agent can resolve any ambiguity and ensure that all necessary details are obtained and recorded.

Call centres can take different forms:

Incoming calls from internal customers	Call centres are often established within organisations to provide support and guidance. For example, companies often have IT help desks that can advise staff on dealing with any problems with their computers or software. These call centres often provide an efficient means of diagnosing any problems that arise. The agents know what questions to ask in order to identify the likely cause
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	of each caller's difficulty. Employees can obtain assistance quickly by making an internal telephone call.
Incoming calls from external customers 	Call centres can be configured to deal with calls relating to requests for service. These requests are often associated with customer service, including: • Purchasing goods or services Customers might buy items for home delivery or book holidays or other services, such as arranging healthcare appointments. • Resolving problems or seeking support Customers might use a call centre to report problems, such as informing a utility provider that electricity supplies have been cut off or to report a disagreement over the amount charged in a bill.
Outgoing calls to external customers or potential customers 	Call centres can be used to sell products or services. This usually involves call centre agents making unsolicited telephone calls to potential buyers of goods or services. These calls could be to existing customers, perhaps offering an upgrade for a recent purchase or a replacement for an item that was purchased in the past. Alternatively, the calls could be to potential buyers whose telephone numbers have been obtained from directories or other publicly available sources. Outgoing calls can also be associated with customer service. Calls might be reminders that a customer's car is due to be serviced. They might also be requests for payment of overdue balances.

The tasks undertaken by agents who handle outgoing calls are often very different from those who work with incoming calls. Outgoing calls frequently work to a detailed script that agents are required to follow. Incoming calls can require some discretion on the part of the agent. For example, companies that sell electronic goods might use their call centres to provide technical support. Agents might have to ask questions in order to ensure that customers' queries have been fully understood before deciding on appropriate responses.

Deviations from scripts are easy to identify because call centres generally record all calls made and received. Supervisors can monitor calls that are in progress or can listen to recordings of completed calls.

Outsourced call centres

While many entities operate their own in-house call centres, there are companies that provide outsourced call centre services. Typically, the call centre provider operates from its own site and updates files on cloud-based servers. Clients have constant online access to these updated files.

Clients of outbound call centres are usually charged on the basis of an hourly rate paid for an agreed number of agents. When outgoing calls are for marketing purposes, the call centre might receive a commission for every sale made or sales lead obtained.

Inbound call centres can take different forms:

- **Shared inbound call centres** have pools of agents, with each pool receiving calls on behalf of multiple clients. Clients pay for the actual time spent by agents on calls relating to their business. Time is logged by the software and is charged on a per minute basis. This model is best suited to clients that have unpredictable or low call volumes. Clients do, however, run the risk of incurring substantial expense if circumstances bring about an unexpected spike in call volumes.
- **Dedicated inbound call centres** assign pools of agents to individual clients. This can allow for more in-depth training on clients' needs from inbound calls and so can be suitable for more complex calls. Clients usually pay hourly rates for agents' time, regardless of whether they are fully occupied by incoming calls. This approach to pricing is most suitable for constant call volumes.

Organisations outsource their inbound call centres for several reasons:

- Outsourcing can reduce costs and improve efficiency. The service providers manage the investments in IT and so relieve their clients' management teams of that responsibility.
- Outsourced call centres are generally more scalable than in-house call centres, which means that the number of agents employed can be increased or decreased quickly in response to client needs.
- Outsourced call centres can offer a higher quality service. Providers have a wide experience of meeting client needs and can be responsive to the availability of new technologies. The cost of testing and implementing new technologies can be shared across all clients.
- Outsourced call centres may offer more robust data protection, including effective backup of all customer data.

Metrics

The effectiveness of inbound call centres can be tracked using several metrics:

- **First call resolution** is the percentage of customer queries that is dealt with during the initial call and without the agent who first answers the call having to transfer it to a

colleague or a supervisor. Repeat calls and transfers require additional agent time. Customers can also find it irritating if they have to call back or hold the line while waiting for another agent to pick up their call.

Low rates of first call resolution might suggest that agents require additional training or greater authority to resolve typical queries. For example, a credit card company might authorise agents to increase customers' credit limits by up to, say, 10% without referring the request to a supervisor, provided there is no history of late payment.

- **Customer satisfaction score** is a measure of how customers feel during their call. Satisfaction can be measured by means of a survey that customers complete after their calls terminate. It can also be tracked during calls using software that monitors customers' tone of voice or their use of keywords that indicate confusion or dissatisfaction.

Low average scores might indicate that agents require additional training in handling complex transactions. Low scores associated with specific products or other issues might suggest that agents require additional training in relation to those matters.

- **Average handle time** is the length of time spent by agents both talking to callers and updating files after the caller has left the call. Long averages can suggest inefficiency, but there can also be a risk that short average handle times can be due to agents rushing to complete calls, perhaps requiring repeat calls to resolve the callers' problems.

Average handle times might be best evaluated in relation to first call resolution and customer satisfaction. There is very little point in encouraging agents to push for low average times if callers are not receiving the support they need.

- **Service level** is often measured in terms of the proportion of calls answered quickly. It is an industry standard to aim for 80% of calls to be answered within 20 seconds, either by a human agent or by an automated response that asks callers to hold until an agent becomes available.

A low service level can suggest insufficient resources in terms of the number of agents available to receive calls.

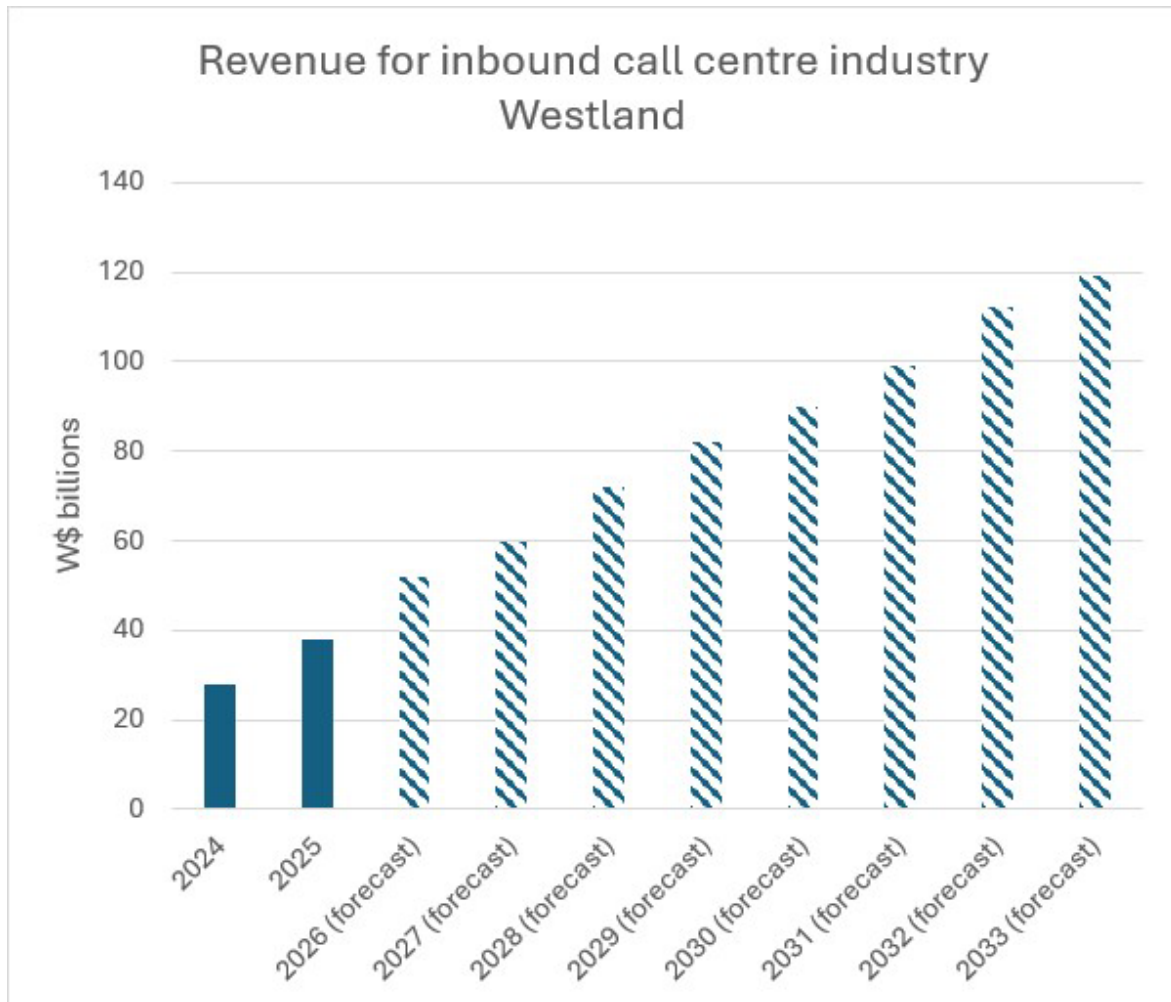
- **Call abandonment rate** is the percentage of calls that are terminated by callers before they are able to talk to an agent. Callers find it irritating to have to hold the line while waiting for their call to be answered and many simply hang up.

Analysing this metric can indicate whether there are any particularly busy times of day, which might benefit from employing additional agents.

Different businesses might use additional or alternative metrics, depending on the purpose of the call centre. For example, a travel agent might measure the percentage of incoming calls that lead to the sale of a holiday package or the average amount spent during each call.

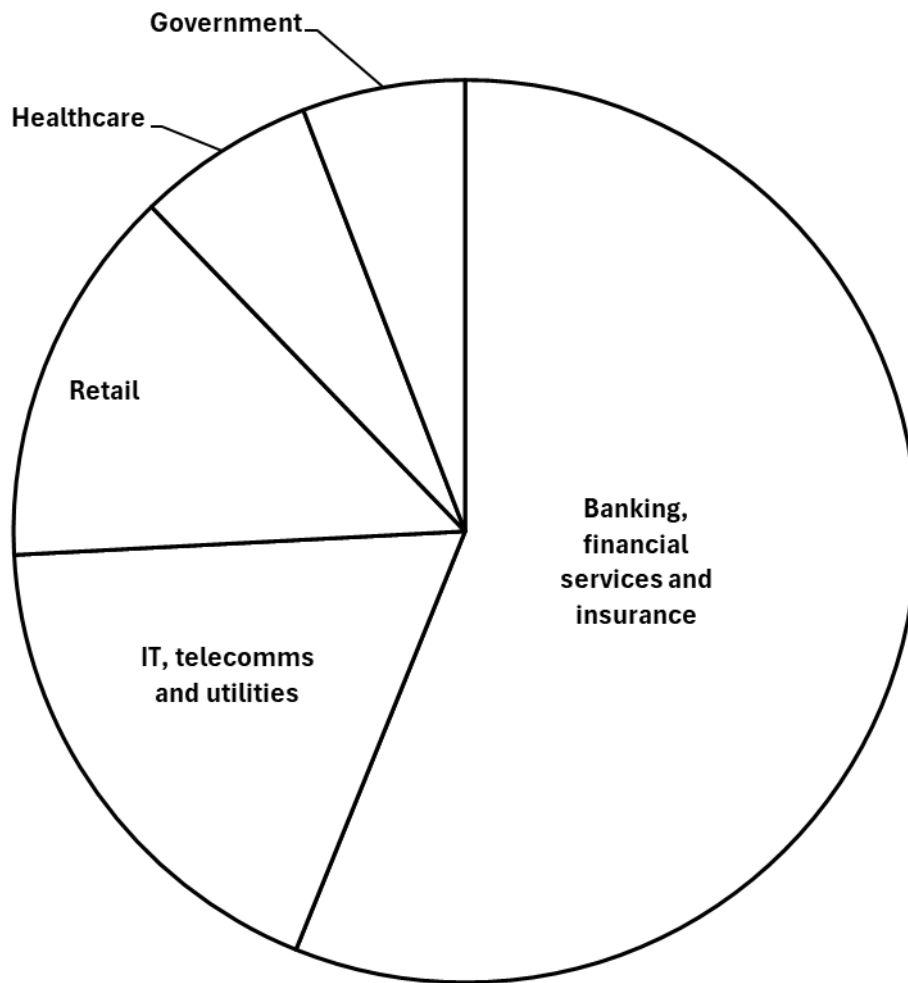
Call centre industry in Westland

Westland has seven major inbound call centre providers. Collectively, these generated W\$38 billion in revenues from the client companies during the year ended 31 December 2025.



These revenues were spread across several industries.

OUTSOURCED INBOUND CALL CENTRE MARKET BY CLIENT INDUSTRY



About Vennlisk



Vennlisk provides inbound call services to many of Westland's leading companies. It has a strong reputation for employing and training competent staff. Clients are generally satisfied with the feedback that they receive from their customers and other stakeholders whose inbound calls are handled by Vennlisk.

The company was founded in 1994 and was quoted on the Westlandian stock exchange in 2002. It has grown steadily through a combination of acquisitions and organic growth. It now employs 5,000 agents in five call centres, each of which is located in a major city in Westland.

Vennlisk serves a diverse range of clients, including:

- Utilities such as telecommunications and energy providers
- Healthcare
- Banking and financial services
- Insurance
- Online retail
- Public sector
- Travel
- Hospitality

All of these clients use Vennlisk for support with inbound call services. Most clients employ Vennlisk to provide dedicated inbound call centres, but some have shared inbound call centres.

Vennlisk owns five large call centres that are located in different parts of Westland. Each call centre occupies a high-rise building, with most of the floorspace occupied by workstations that are used by agents. The workstations have the necessary wired connections to enable agents to be connected to inbound calls through their headsets and to operate computers that can access the files and software needed to handle callers' requests for assistance.

Training and staff development

Vennlisk invests heavily in training. All new agents are required to attend a training course that covers the basics of customer care. This includes practical training in handling calls, focussing on addressing callers' expectations and needs. Each call centre has a training suite that is equipped for basic training. Once new staff complete their basic training, they receive further preparation that focusses on the client or clients whose calls they will be handling as agents.



Agents receive ongoing training throughout their employment with Vennlisk. There is a structured training package that is delivered online through workstations. Staff are provided with opportunities to study that material during working hours and are required to pass online assessments that are incorporated into all of the training materials.

Training covers both practical and emotional matters, with content tailored to meet the needs of clients' callers. For example, agents who will handle claims for a car insurer will receive training in assessing the nature of accidental damage and in advising on the steps required to proceed with the claim. Those agents will also be trained to allow for the fact that callers may have been traumatised by an accident and so need to be dealt with in a sympathetic manner. Agents who will handle calls for an online retailer may require extensive product training and have the ability to engage with callers in a bright and friendly manner that encourages them to complete their purchases.

Vennlisk aims to treat its staff well in order to motivate them and to retain good agents. Staff performance is tracked in some detail, focussing on first call resolution, customer satisfaction scores and average handle times. Supervisors hold regular feedback sessions with individual agents and seek to resolve concerns such as any reduction in performance. Those feedback sessions are also used to encourage staff whose performance is above average.

Artificial intelligence

Vennlisk is evaluating artificial intelligence (AI). AI software could be used to support and manage agents' activities.

AI could support agents with recommendations that might be of value in handling a call:

- AI software might provide a useful summary of a caller's file that can be used to assist the agent to reach a satisfactory conclusion to the call. For example, an agent receiving a call to an online retailer might be informed that there are accessories that can be used to upgrade the product that the caller is interested in buying.
- AI software could monitor conversations for signs of stress. Concerns about an ongoing call could be flagged on the screen of the supervisor who is in charge of the agent's team. The supervisor could then listen to the call and might intervene if there are serious problems.

AI could also be useful in tracking metrics and identifying problems:

- Changes in metrics could reveal patterns that assist supervisors in the management of agent performance. For example, an agent who advises callers on online purchases might have increasing sales figures but decreasing customer satisfaction scores. While the client will welcome the additional revenue, the agent could lose business in the longer term through the application of excessive pressure for callers to complete their transactions.

Extracts from Vennlisk's annual report

Vennlisk's mission, vision and values

Our mission

Vennlisk's mission is to offer an outstanding experience in every inbound call.

Our vision

Vennlisk's vision is to be Westland's leading provider of inbound call solutions, both in terms of quality of service and innovation.

Our values

- Integrity – Vennlisk is honest, transparent and ethical in its operations.
- Excellence – Vennlisk's innovations are driven by customer need.
- Innovation – Vennlisk continuously innovates in order to improve its processes and the quality of its service.
- Work environment – Vennlisk strives to be a great place to work, encouraging staff to commit themselves to excellence.

Vennlisk's Board of Directors

Murat Mutlu, Non-Executive Chair

Murat had a successful legal career, specialising in contract law. He held several senior positions with one of Westland's largest law firms. He served as managing partner for 5 years before he retired.

Murat serves on the management committees of several charities.

Murat joined Vennlisk's Board as Non-Executive Chair in 2023.

Chen Yue, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Chen is an electronic engineer, specialising in telecommunications. She has worked in research and development in several major companies in Westland.

Chen joined Vennlisk as Head of Network Administration in 2011. She was promoted to the Board in 2018 and was further promoted to CEO in 2023.

Farrukh Jamil, Human Resources Director

Farrukh studied human resources at Central City University and subsequently completed an MBA degree. He has held senior positions in the HR departments of several large companies.

He served as Director of Human Resources at a major quoted car manufacturer before joining Vennlisk as Human Resources Director in 2023.

Dr Maria Chandler, Operations Director

Maria has a bachelor's degree in management science. She completed a doctorate in the application of queuing theory to the optimisation of customer service in probabilistic demand scenarios. Maria worked for Westland Telecommunications after graduation, reaching the position of Head of Strategic Planning.

Maria joined Vennlisk as Operations Director in 2021.

Tshepo Batane, Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

Tshepo is a professionally qualified accountant. He completed his professional qualification while working in the Finance Department of one of Westland's largest chains of car dealerships. He has since held a number of senior positions in the finance functions of a variety of businesses in retail and service industries.

Tshepo joined Vennlisk in 2018 as Assistant Financial Officer, being promoted to Chief Financial Officer in 2023.

Noor Ebbini, Marketing Director

Noor joined Vennlisk as a management trainee after graduating from university with a degree in modern languages. She joined the Marketing Department after completing the training programme and has progressed steadily through a variety of roles.

Noor was promoted to Marketing Director in 2024.

Kyle Keimer, Senior Independent Director

Kyle was in government service for most of his career, holding a variety of administrative roles within the Westlandian Health Service. He was responsible for the introduction of a number of efficiency measures that reduced costs and enhanced patient care.

Kyle serves on the management committees of two major charities.

Kyle joined Vennlisk as Senior Independent Director in 2025.

Mirjana Churlin, Independent Non-Executive Director

Mirjana's early career was as a schoolteacher, teaching mathematics. She was subsequently promoted to headteacher, serving in that role for eight years, after which she joined the Westlandian Education Department as an Inspector of Schools.

Mirjana serves the Westlandian Education Department as an adviser on mathematics education.

She joined Vennlisk's Board as an Independent Non-Executive Director in 2024.

Alaor Leite, Independent Non-Executive Director

Alaor has held senior finance positions in a variety of manufacturing companies. He served as Finance Director of a major quoted manufacturer.

Alaor joined Vennlisk as an Independent Non-Executive Director in 2025.

Board responsibilities

Chen Yue Chief Executive Officer			
Farrukh Jamil Human Resources Director	Dr Maria Chandler Operations Director	Tshepo Batane Chief Financial Officer	Noor Ebbini Marketing Director
• Staff recruitment • Staff retention • Staff training • Health and safety	• Call centre operations • Software development • Sustainability	• Financial reporting • Management accounting • Treasury	• Marketing • Client liaison • Public relations

	Board committees			
	Audit	Risk and sustainability	Remuneration	Nomination
Murat Mutlu Non-Executive Chair	♦	♦		♦
Kyle Keimer Senior Independent Director	♦		♦	♦
Mirjana Churlin Independent Non-Executive Director	♦	♦	♦	
Alaor Leite Independent Non-Executive Director		♦	♦	♦

Vennlisk's Chief Internal Auditor reports to the convener of the Audit Committee.

Vennlisk's principal risks

Risk impact	Risk mitigation
Service quality is highly dependent upon the retention of trained and experienced agents.	Vennlisk provides agents with excellent remuneration packages. The company has a strong reputation for training and staff development, allowing agents to develop and grow in their careers without the need to consider switching to rival call centre operators.
Agents can become demotivated and careless, despite Vennlisk's competitive remuneration and staff development. Demotivated agents can have a negative impact on caller satisfaction, which can harm clients' reputations.	Call quality is monitored carefully. All calls are recorded. Team supervisors listen to samples of recordings on a regular basis and provide agents with constructive feedback. Supervisors can also monitor calls in real time and can intervene by taking over calls if necessary. Some systems use interactive voice response (IVR) software that enables callers to complete simple tasks without having to talk to an agent. Agents can then focus on more complex tasks, which are hopefully more interesting.
Agents can be susceptible to health and safety issues because they are required to spend long periods sitting at workstations.	Vennlisk monitors agents to ensure that they take regular breaks during their shifts.
Vennlisk's access to client files has potential implications for privacy. Failure to safeguard privacy could cause reputational damage and could lead to security breaches and fraud.	Agents receive extensive training in the protection of caller privacy, including the legal issues facing Vennlisk. All staff receive regular updates and refresher courses.
Operations are dependent on the availability of telecommunications links. Breakdowns can lead to poor call quality and interruption of service.	Vennlisk works closely with telecommunications providers, offering feedback concerning problems in real time.

Vennlisk Group
Consolidated statement of profit or loss
For the year ended 30 September

	2026 W\$ million	2025 W\$ million
Revenue	12,370.0	11,627.8
Cost of goods sold	(10,846.7)	(10,304.4)
Gross profit	1,523.3	1,323.4
Selling and administration	(72.3)	(68.7)
Operating profit	1,451.0	1,254.7
Finance costs	(436.8)	(436.8)
	1,014.2	817.9
Tax expense	(243.4)	(196.3)
Profit for the year	770.8	621.6

Vennlisk Group
Consolidated statement of changes in equity
For the year ended 30 September 2026

	Share capital W\$ million	Retained earnings W\$ million	Total W\$ million
Opening balance	450.0	7,541.9	7,991.9
Profit for year		770.8	770.8
Dividend		(509.6)	(509.6)
Closing balance	450.0	7,803.1	8,253.1

Vennlisk Group
Consolidated statement of financial position
As at 30 September

	2026 W\$ million	2025 W\$ million
Assets		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	3,397.4	3,261.5
Goodwill	6,274.0	6,274.0
Other intangible assets	2,249.0	2,114.1
	11,920.4	11,649.6
Current assets		
Trade receivables	1,437.3	1,365.4
Bank	986.1	997.3
	2,423.4	2,362.7
Total assets	14,343.8	14,012.3
Equity		
Share capital	450.0	450.0
Retained earnings	7,803.1	7,541.9
	8,253.1	7,991.9
Liabilities		
Non-current liabilities		
Borrowings	5,460.0	5,460.0
Current liabilities		
Trade payables	387.2	364.0
Tax liability	243.5	196.4
	630.7	560.4
Total equity and liabilities	14,343.8	14,012.3

Extract from competitor's financial statements

Vennlisk is one of seven major providers of inbound call centres on Westland. These companies compete against one another and also against overseas call centres who provide support for Westlandian callers.

Ringcoll is Vennlisk's closest competitor. The two companies frequently compete for the same contracts with potential clients. Ringcoll is based in Westland and specialises in inbound calls. Ringcoll is a quoted company.

Ringcoll Group

Consolidated statement of profit or loss

For the year ended 30 September

	2026 W\$ million	2025 W\$ million
Revenue	10,514.5	9,568.2
Cost of goods sold	(9,002.8)	(7,922.5)
Gross profit	1,511.7	1,645.7
Selling and administration	(62.2)	(57.8)
Operating profit	1,449.5	1,587.9
Finance costs	(144.0)	(144.0)
	1,305.5	1,443.9
Tax expense	(300.3)	(332.1)
Profit for the year	1,005.2	1,111.8

Ringcoll Group

Consolidated statement of changes in equity

For the year ended 30 September 2026

	Share capital W\$ million	Retained earnings W\$ million	Total W\$ million
Opening balance	300.0	6,723.2	7,023.2
Profit for year		1,005.2	1,005.2
Dividend		(374.9)	(374.9)
Closing balance	300.0	7,353.5	7,653.5

Ringcoll Group
Consolidated statement of financial position
As at 30 September

	2026 W\$ million	2025 W\$ million
Assets		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	2,989.7	3,310.3
Goodwill	2,211.0	2,211.0
Other intangible assets	3,480.2	3,211.3
	8,680.9	8,732.6
Current assets		
Trade receivables	1,108.2	790.8
Bank	297.6	281.4
	1,405.8	1,072.2
Total assets	10,086.7	9,804.8
Equity		
Share capital	300.0	300.0
Retained earnings	7,353.5	6,723.2
	7,653.5	7,023.2
Liabilities		
Non-current liabilities		
Borrowings	1,800.0	1,800.0
Current liabilities		
Trade payables	332.8	649.4
Tax liability	300.4	332.2
	633.2	981.6
Total equity and liabilities	10,086.7	9,804.8

Vennlisk's share price history



Vennlisk's beta is 0.48

Vennlisk's sustainability

Governance	The management of sustainability is a key aspect of governance: • Board committee – Vennlisk's Board receives regular reports from the Risk and Sustainability Committee. • Executive director – Vennlisk's Operations Director has a specific responsibility for oversight of sustainability issues and brings concerns to the attention of the Board.
Strategy	Vennlisk has identified five aspects where its sustainability might have an impact: • The planet – Vennlisk constantly reviews the impact that its activities might have on sustainability and aims to make improvements where possible. • Employees – Staff are encouraged to assist in the creation of an inclusive and supportive workplace. • Trust – Vennlisk builds trust by requiring all staff to act with integrity at all times. • Innovation and technology – Vennlisk will develop and implement solutions that bring about positive change. • Communities – Vennlisk supports vulnerable communities through giving aid and support and by encouraging its employees to contribute their time and energy in order to assist with this work.
Risk management	Vennlisk regards three aspects of its operations as posing potential threats to sustainability: • Climate change – Vennlisk aims to comply with all rules and regulations relating to operational matters that could have an adverse effect on sustainability. • Staff welfare – Vennlisk pays close attention to the potential health risks associated with requiring agents to sit at workstations for hours at a time. • Privacy and security – Vennlisk complies with all legislation and contractual terms relating to the protection of personal data.
Metrics	Vennlisk tracks several key variables relating to sustainability: • Emissions of greenhouse gases – Vennlisk is aiming to obtain at least 80% of its electrical power from renewable sources by 2030. It is also aiming to reduce refrigerant losses from the operation of cooling and air conditioning systems in its call centres. • Waste – Vennlisk is aiming to either recycle or donate 100% of electronic items that are disposed of after 2030. • Staff commuting – Vennlisk tracks the methods used by staff when commuting to work. The aim is to eliminate the use of personal cars for commuting. Agents are eligible for interest-free loans to purchase annual season tickets for public transport or bicycles.

News stories

Extracts from the Chatty Talker's blog

My first day of training



It's the first day of my new job! I am going to be a call centre agent at Vennlisk, one of the largest call centre companies in Westland. The good news is that I don't have to make cold calls to people who don't wish to talk to me. My job is to respond to inbound calls, which means that everybody whom I have to deal with will be keen to talk to me. I just hope I don't get bored sitting and waiting for the phone to ring.

I am actually looking forward to getting started. I am very much a people person and I am sure that I will enjoy this job.

COMMENTS

Good luck in your new job. Just one thing – you will have very little time between calls, so there's no danger of you being bored. I have worked in a call centre for the past 5 years and I have had many very busy days.

Gude Listner

Empathy above all



I had to complete a 3-week training course before I could actually start work on handling calls. One of the things that surprised me most was the emphasis placed on empathy and the need to put myself in the caller's position when handling a call. Callers need to believe that we actually care about helping them and the right tone of voice and choice of words can be really helpful with that.

I didn't get to switch on the workstation on my desk in the training room until the final day of the course. I spent a lot of time before that acting out roleplays with titles like "talking to an angry caller" or "refusing a request".

At least I was on full pay!

COMMENTS

You'll be surprised how useful it is to be able to understand what makes callers happy. Nobody benefits from callers giving low satisfaction scores or submitting formal complaints.

Fone Fixer

Reflections on my first month



I have completed my first month of working in the call centre. It has been interesting. I take inbound calls for a travel company, so I get to talk to people who are happy because they are booking their holidays. That is less stressful than what some of the alternatives would have been. A friend from my training course takes inbound calls for a credit card company and has to deal with callers who wish to increase their credit limits or delay their payments and she often has to refuse their requests, which can lead to some stressful discussions.

My working hours are not always ideal. Some shifts start at 8.00 in the morning and finish at 5.00 in the afternoon, with an hour's break for lunch and two short breaks for refreshments. Other shifts start at 1.00 in the afternoon and finish at 10.00 at night, again with an hour-long meal break and two refreshment breaks. I work 5 days a week, but my working days vary according to the company's needs and I usually have to work on Saturdays and Sundays, with days off during the week.

Sitting at a computer all day can be physically tiring. My back can get quite sore even though I have an adjustable seat. Staring at a screen for hours at a time often causes eyestrain by the time I leave for home. The call centre can be noisy because of all the agents holding conversations with callers and so it can be difficult to concentrate. The biggest concern is that the system tracks the number of calls I process each day. It can be stressful when I try to get callers to choose their holiday quickly so that I can charge their deposits to their credit cards and move on to the next call. Clearly, nobody wishes to be rushed when they are committing themselves to an expensive holiday.

Luckily, I'm not ambitious. Each group of 20 call centre agents is managed by a supervisor. Supervisors work even harder than agents, but they are paid only slightly more. The next step up is manager, but there are very few manager positions in our call centres. Most call centre agents spend their whole working lives in that role, without a single promotion.

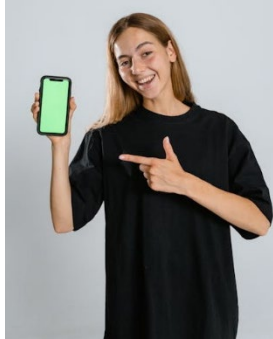
COMMENTS

Some people get used to working in call centres, but others do not. I've worked in a call centre for 6 years and I enjoy it. But I do still get tired at the end of a shift. I suggest that you try working there for another few months. You should also buy a pair of spectacles that are designed for reading computer screens. I have a pair and they make a big difference.

Elder Agent

Westland Business News

The business cases for and against chatbots



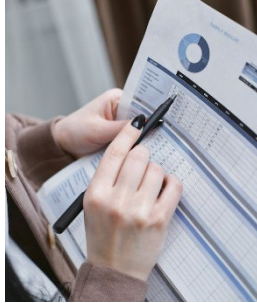
A chatbot is a piece of software that simulates human conversation with a user through either text or voice interactions. Chatbots rely on artificial intelligence to interpret queries and to create a relevant response.

Chatbots are used in a variety of applications, including providing aftersales support to customers and enabling potential buyers to seek tailored advice on products. Chatbots can avoid the need to employ humans to provide such assistance. It is also possible to leave chatbots running 24/7, offering customer support outside of normal business hours.

Unfortunately, chatbots can have significant limitations. They cannot usually interpret moods and emotions and so can offer responses that seem insensitive to their users. They often struggle with complex interactions, limiting their value to relatively straightforward applications. The training data that forms the basis of the models that drive chatbots must be constantly updated and checked for accuracy, otherwise chatbots can offer incorrect advice that seems credible.

Westland Business News

Analysts issue buy recommendation for Vennlisk



Vennlisk was once one of the most exciting shares on the Westlandian stock exchange, with prices briefly exceeding W\$500 in 2022. The excitement ended when the price declined to its current level of around W\$100. That decline was based on the fact that Vennlisk's labour intensive call centres were struggling to compete with call centres based in low-cost countries where suitably qualified staff can be recruited for a fraction of the hourly rate paid in Westland.

High speed communications links mean that call centres can be located almost anywhere in the world, with no additional cost to callers who dial local numbers, even though their calls connect to foreign call centres. Those foreign call centres can recruit competent staff. Their pay rates are significantly lower than those offered in Westland, but they are still much higher than those for comparable jobs in their home countries.

Recent analysts' reports suggest that Vennlisk offers a realistic return at its current price, despite the commercial disadvantages of competing with low-cost foreign competitors. Vennlisk's Board has a clear strategy of offering a good quality service, which is valued by the organisations who outsource their call centre needs to Vennlisk, despite the potential cost savings to be had from switching to foreign competitors.



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