

# at your SERVICE

A DIRECTORY TO GENERAL SERVICES

Monday, March 22, 2010

South China Morning Post

## Profits are virtually assured

Businesses looking to make profits without having to pay huge sums for a prestigious office space can take advantage of advanced platforms.

These give the user a virtual or serviced-office capability while working from home. A user in Hong Kong can have a phone number in a major city on the mainland or the United States.

Overseas phone numbers give small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) a global presence, professional image, prestigious addresses and the ability to book meeting rooms at any location in Australia, Asia, the Middle East and the US, says Marcus Moufarrige, Servcorp's chief information officer and general manager for Asia.

Servcorp operates out of Two IFC and plans to open in Tsim Sha Tsui's No 1 Peking Road and at another location in Central on August 1.

"The beauty of our service is you can

**The beauty of our service is you can handle calls the way you want**

**MARCUS MOUFARRIGE,**  
SERVPCORP CIO AND GM FOR ASIA

handle calls the way you want," Moufarrige says. "If you want to spend time with your kids, the receptionist will see that in the system and will transfer your calls to your colleagues."

For those who don't need a full-time office and employees, but "require a business identity" and access to clerical personnel and facilities, it's a cost-effective way to do business.

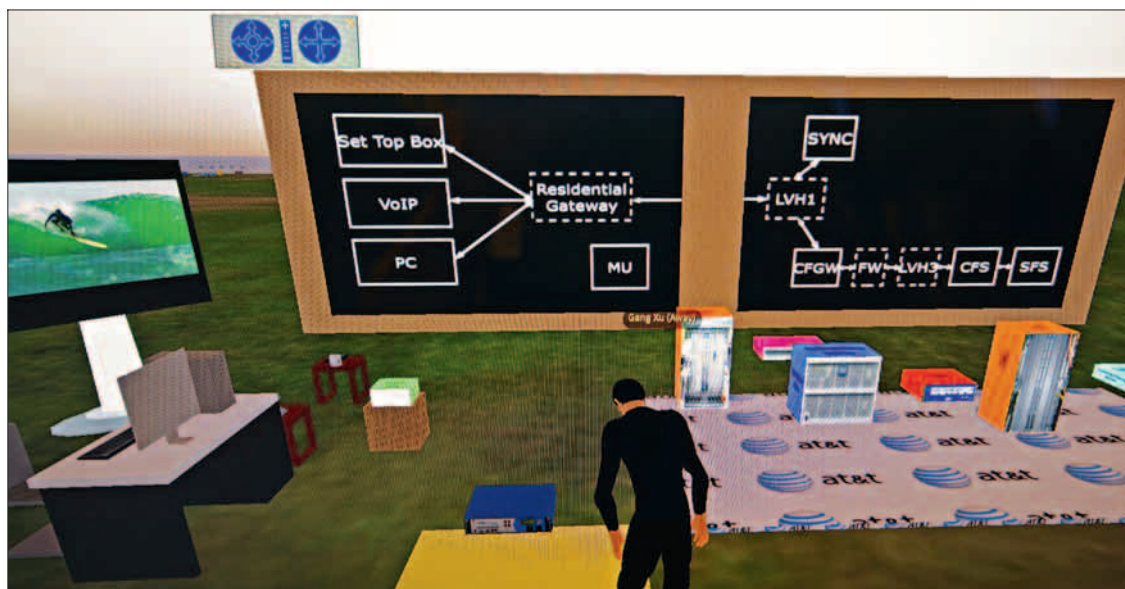
"You have access to all the facilities and services the office programme offers without the expense of a full-time office," says Andy Chan, general manager for the International Business Centre (IBC), which offers facilities in Tsim Sha Tsui East.

IBC offers virtual office services for HK\$400 per month, with a HK\$2,000 deposit. Its executive programme is HK\$2,500 per month, with a HK\$5,000 deposit. Servcorp's rates run for as little as HK\$500 for a IFC Two address, up to HK\$25,000 monthly for an on-site workspace for five staff.

Moufarrige says: "It covers not just the rent but fixtures and fittings, cleaning, technology, utilities, management fees, coffee and tea, flowers and newspapers."

According to Moufarrige, serviced offices are prudent "if you have less than 10 people", and are 30-50 per cent cheaper than setting up your own office.

Servcorp's platform enables clients



A computer monitor shows a presentation on how virtual offices can interact with home users. Photo: Bloomberg

to take calls from Shanghai and direct them to Hong Kong, with a Putonghua speaker on the ground at minimum cost. "We're offering an enterprise-sized platform for [foreign] branches and businesses to expand their operations and reach," Moufarrige says.

In 1999, Servcorp had 3,000 virtual and physical clients globally. It's now servicing 27,000, with 1,800 in Hong

Kong. IBC has 300 virtual clients and 20 furnished office tenants.

Moufarrige would like to grow his local numbers to 4,000 customers - 200 physical clients and 3,800 virtual clients within 18 months. "Sixty per cent of our clients are overseas branches and the rest are SMEs that want the IFC 2 address," Moufarrige says.

He expects "20 per cent annual

growth" as the company "expands across secondary mainland cities, the Middle East and the US", and believes virtual offices are ideally suited to profit because most predictions are the coming recovery will be Asian and SME-led.

Chan is more cautious and says his firm does "not have any expansion plans yet, at least not for 2010".