

2008-12-17 Show Notes

<u>Offset</u>	<u>Topic</u>
00:17	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intro
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CC6 Birthday Party in DC<ul style="list-style-type: none">• http://www.flickr.com/photos/sixteenmilesofstream/tags/cc6dc/• Couldn't find the band from SoundSprout
03:32	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listener Feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jed on MVC, unity and PHP
08:57	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Word of the Week: dot file
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• http://catb.org/jargon/html/D/dot-file.html
09:59	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rant: Race to the Bottom
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can easily spot off about off shoring<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It has hit my industry very hard• I have had friends lose jobs because a boss thought costs could be saved• In production, software or hardware, this is somewhat understandable• If the skills are there, then you can expect a minimum quality product• I am skeptical, based on first hand experience, that it is as cost effective• I have seen project managers have to spend more time• Often doing so during off hours because of the difference in time zone• Really, though, the economic motive is similar as in traditional manufacturing• Aside from materials, labor is the biggest cost• In software, labor is almost the sole cost• Off shore development rarely affects customers<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A real pessimist could make a point about lower quality• A good organization can manage these internally• The mind set that uses off shore labor for production governs other decisions• Customer service has been steadily marching off shore• Stories are rampant about how this has affected customers directly• Some companies are bringing customer service back on shore• Service providers in other countries are trying to adapt, improve• The land rush in off shoring has outstripped their ability to keep up• It is easy to hire relatively unskilled labor to answer phones• This has to be backed by trained resources to deal with escalated problems• The deeper support resources take time, more money

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- Undoubtedly some of the call centers themselves wish to fuel the perception of cheapness
- Reluctant to make their own investment and gamble that most calls can be field by level 1
- Customers deserve the same depth of support no matter who they get it from
- Dell is charging customers for accessing to US call center
 - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/10/AR2008121003574.html?hpid=topnews>
 - In every other instance of off shore manufacturing or service, this is not the case
 - Whatever choices the company makes are built into the cost
 - Dell says it is addressing customer demand
 - They are clearly missing the point, that quality of support is suffering
 - What they are doing is throwing gasoline on a fire
 - They want to avoid increasing their sticker price
 - It amounts to the same thing
 - Worse, after a customer is angered by communication issues
 - They will be angered further by the suggestion they could have paid a fee to avoid it
- Computers are complex goods
 - Far from perfect, you will need help to use them
 - If you offer support at all, it should be clear and up front
 - I don't know if I agree to the notion that it should be built into the product
 - Warranties on software are impossible
 - How do you know what really caused the problem?
 - It could have been an after market add on
 - It could have been any other piece of software on the system
 - It could have been a bug in the operating system
 - Dell should be willing to work as a customer advocate, though
 - Microsoft doesn't support their customers well
 - Take quickly take the stance that the problem resides with a third party
 - Dell controls most of the out of the box components
 - They should be able to work with Microsoft in most cases to identify the source of the problem
 - Perhaps they do this already
 - It definitely should not be a premium offering
 - A customer will have a problem during the life of the computer
 - This is guaranteed, even if it is hooking up a new printer
 - It used to be that you bought a Dell because of their service
 - Compaq, IBM, others used to build comparable systems

- Dell would provide overnight replacements on hardware
- I used to only buy Dell's for this reason
- I know many businesses still do because of the residue of this reputation
- I have seen their service erode, even in the corporate world, first hand
- Poor communication on BIOS and firmware updates
- Repeated replacement of the same failed part
- Apple's model makes sense
 - You get a short amount of limited support
 - You can pay a small-ish premium for extended support
 - The support contract is a durable good, it can be transferred with the computer
 - Apple clearly works hard on their support, even though it is not perfect
 - You get the same support during the free, limited period as the extended support
 - There are no doubt other workable models
 - They should be just as simple and clear to explain
 - Multiple tiers of service is not simple, worse it is inconsistent
 - Worse, it sends a very distressing signal
 - You are not important to use unless you pay extra
- The cost of computers is always dropping
 - We can thank Moore's law for that
 - It is not a given of the universe, however
 - It also only speaks to transistor density which only roughly tracked performance
 - Simple benchmarks have stalled with many core systems
 - Steady price point of a couple of grand has dropped through the floor
 - Partly because the increase in the marketable number, clock ticks, has stalled
 - Also thanks to game changers like the netbooks
 - I think this has flattened margins on the hardware
 - Not surprising that companies are looking to squeeze costs elsewhere
 - You get a shitty component, though, you can replace it
 - You have a bad support call, it damages the company's reputation
 - I don't care who answers a support call
 - Companies should realize that support is key to their business
 - It should be an investment, not just a cost to cut
 - It absolutely should not be something for which I should be glad to pay the privilege

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