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## Outsourced Customer Support Directory: Client Outsource

Client Outsource offers all the pricing advantages of offshore outsourcing along with a focus on in-depth reporting and analysis.

by **Jeff Goldman**

[September 10, 2003]

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[Client Outsource](#) was founded in 2002 by Christopher Ewen and Vinoo Mehera, who met while they were working at Dell Computer. Both had extensive experience in launching and running customer support centers: Mehera had launched Dell's center in India and had run centers in Europe and Asia, while Ewen had managed call centers in Europe and the United States.

The two left Dell with a shared interest in the growth potential of offshore outsourcing, and they made that the focus of their new company. They established a relationship with a call center in India, using the Indian call center's facilities and employees but implementing training, management, and operating practices specific to Client Outsource.

### Client Outsource

Voice: (877) 813-7475  
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The company also maintains a call center in the United States, but you wouldn't know that if you visited its web site; it focuses its efforts heavily on the center in India. According to Ewen, the Indian center is generally used for larger clients, while smaller clients work with the U.S. location—though there are a number of exceptions to that rule, and any client can consider both options.

### Offshore opportunities

Outsourcing to India, Ewen says, offers advantages not only in pricing, but also in quality of service. "A lot of people like to say that cost is not the major factor, but it is; we know that," he said. "The other factor is that the labor market there has such a massive availability of talent—and in India you have lower attrition rates, because people want to work in a call center; they see it as a career."

Ewen says this translates into great enthusiasm on the part of the company's Indian employees. "I hire for attitude and train everything else, because it's so hard to train attitude," he said. "And in India, I get a much higher quotient

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of staff that have a great attitude coming in the door. People enjoy working in a call center environment there."

If an ISP is concerned about any accents that their customers might notice when speaking to the Indian representatives, Ewen says there's an easy answer. "We get them on the phone where they can listen in to a call," he said. "Once they hear the accents, that allays a big part of that concern. We're actually fairly well known in the market for accent neutralization; it's part of the training."

And for the company's Indian employees, the training is far more extensive than it would be in the United States. "They often have a better educational background in terms of their studies in school, but they don't have a knowledge of U.S. culture," Ewen said. "So we spend time with them on how to empathize with the U.S. We show them maps of the U.S., they'll watch soap operas from the U.S., to orient them."

### Improving the ISP

Beyond the pricing advantages of outsourcing, Client Outsource's other key strength lies in its relationship with its customers. "We're less of a commodity player, and more of a business partner," Ewen said. "What we were known for in our prior careers is reengineering businesses: We took underperforming businesses and we accelerated their revenue and profitability."

That sets Client Outsource apart from low-cost competitors that focus purely on price. "A lot of the outsourcers in India don't really know the American marketplace," Ewen said. "They're really just playing the game of 'I can meet this SLA, here's how much I'm going to charge you per subscriber, we just pick up the phone, resolve the technical issue, and then we're done with it.'"

Instead, Client Outsource uses reporting and analysis to offer advice to its customers that goes beyond standard reporting. "We look for issues that you're having where you're losing customers, and what we can do to keep those customers—in terms of offering them additional services, or doing something that actually saves the company money," Ewen said.

Similarly, the company works to improve agent productivity. "We look at how we can get that agent to be able to have a higher call or contact profile per day," Ewen said. "Or how we get them to answer a lower percentage of the total number of contacts, by getting the IVR offloaded more or by doing more self help via the web."

### Making the selection

Pricing for the service is determined after an initial transition period. "Generally, unless someone has things really well documented and can say, 'Here's what it costs to take this many calls with this process,' we'll try in the beginning just to make sure that our costs are covered through an hourly or per-person rate," Ewen said. "Then we'll move into per-email, per-call, per-contact, or sometimes per-subscriber."

A prospective customer recently called Client Outsource, Ewen recalls, and asked immediately about pricing. Soon after, Ewen chose to turn down the

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opportunity. "We're priced within the market, and from a pricing point of view we might have been competitive to them, but we just know that culturally it's probably not going to be fit if the only thing that's important to them is having a low price," he said.

Once an ISP decides to outsource its support, Ewen says, there are many factors to keep in mind in selecting a vendor. "Pick companies that have great references, that have really good transition processes, great recruitment processes and quality assurance processes," he said. "All of those should be documented to the point where they go into detail about the process."

With the increasing competition in this sector, Ewen says that ISPs need to look at every aspect of a vendor's offering. "A lot of people have jumped over to India just to take that arbitrage opportunity to get the 40 to 60 percent drop in price, which certainly we do offer—but our clients also get the process improvements as well," he said. "That's what traditional outsourcing is supposed to do."

— End

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