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“OFFSHORING” MARKETING AND SALES: SILLINESS v. STRAIGHT TALK

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Direct recently reported the comments of a DMA representative: “Offshoring is a smart business decision in terms of economics.” Oh yeah? Where are the numbers to prove it? The numbers I read tell a very different story.

Indeed, at the DMA's own web site, Dr. Jon Anton of Purdue reported that, "Of concern for US companies considering offshore outsourcing is that 65 percent of American consumers would alter their buying behavior toward a company if they knew or had the impression the business was using an offshore call center, regardless of the level of satisfaction the customer received from the call center experience." Also, big outfits like Dell are bringing call centers back to America to avoid losing big customers who complained vociferously about offshore tech support.

Offshoring a smart decision? No way! ... and not only because of the money, bad publicity, and the detrimental export of American jobs. There is another huge reason not to do it: the loss of a company's wisdom when the experience that yields wisdom accrues elsewhere.

Quite simply, organizations that outsource forego the wisdom. The knowledge gleaned from direct interactions with prospects and customers ... kaput! The nuanced complaints and compliments and suggestions ... someone else hears them. The opportunities hidden in contacts' answers and comments ... slide right past un-attuned ears.

When the people conducting dialogue on behalf of one organization wear the badges of another, the former cannot acquire or preserve wisdom. Sure, it can capture data and fool itself into thinking it is developing a "360-degree view" (as if that were possible.) But real wisdom comes from the exchange of spoken words. If a company does not say and hear the words itself, it never gets or owns the wisdom.

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My advice to marketers: recognize that dialogue with prospects and customers *must* be a core competency. If it already is, enhance it via constant assessment, process improvement, and training. If it is not, work smart and hard in your organization to make it so.

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