



Outsourcing Technical Support? 11 Steps to Ensure Your Success

By Shiva Ramani, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, CSS (Cybernet-SlashSupport)

Technical support outsourcing is not new, but it is now receiving renewed interest as the industry matures. While many companies report saving millions of dollars and increasing operational excellence through outsourcing, few report that they have been less successful. Why? There are certain key factors which determine the success rate of an outsourcing assignment. This article highlights eleven of those factors.

1. Perform a Thorough Self-Analysis

Technical support function has its own unique set of challenges. Make sure to analyze all of the following:

- Present levels of your tech support activity viz. people, cost, infrastructure and processes.
- The results you have been able to achieve and its alignment with organizational goals.
- The challenges future has in store for you (newer products, End of lifecycle products, etc.)
- The benefits you expect out of outsourcing (ROI, operational excellence, CSAT levels etc.)
- Identify how the prior experiences of other vendors in your similar segment have gone.

Once you have performed a thorough investigation, if outsourcing technical support seems to be a viable and beneficial value proposition for you, make sure you communicate to key stakeholders in your organization about your intent to outsource and how it will impact/benefit them. Get a broad level organizational buy-in before proceeding with the next steps of outsourcing.

2. Look at Strategic Benefits, Not Just Business

When it comes to outsourcing, while reducing operating costs should be an important objective, it should not be the prime decision factor. Make sure that your prospective vendor understands your organizational

in this issue

- [The Single Most Underutilized Tool in eService](#)
- [Benefits of Preemptive Support](#)
- [Six Sigma Plus for Support Optimization](#)
- [Discussion Highlights from SRII Forums](#)
- [Technical Experts to Trusted Advisors](#)
- [11 Steps for Outsourcing Success](#)

philosophy, values that you stand for, the technology/domain you service and what makes your end-customers delighted. Also, be sure to check your vendor's credentials on their specific expertise in technical support assignments.

3. Identify Short & Long Term Goals

Your outsourcing success is dependent on how well you balance both long and short-term goals. While outsourcing in most cases will offer short-term ROI, its attention to the long-term focus that determines the true value of outsourcing. See how the vendor's operational capabilities can let you focus your resources on core competencies, increase your flexibility to enter new markets or create new products, improve quality, increase customer satisfaction & retention levels, etc. Power Point presentations won't do, make sure you visit the vendor's premises and speak to key stakeholders as well as do necessary reference checks to ensure that the outsourcing is not just viewed as a business, but as a partnership.

4. Identify the Right Technology Partner

Off-shoring technology product support is a challenge. Check if the vendor is able to demonstrate with facts their technical competence and execution abilities. Check if the vendor can offer troubleshooting skills across multiple technologies and can handle enterprise customers, enable customer environment simulation in lab, integrate with your product engineering team and has systems and infrastructure for technical training and skill upgrades.

5. Set Your Expectations

Make your objectives and expectations quantifiable at every level. Your Service Level Agreement should be a cornerstone of how the service provider sets and maintains their commitment to service the end customer. SLA should be driven based on a measurable set of metrics, which provides a framework for measuring performance, thereby serving as a system for continuous process improvement efforts.

6. Infrastructure Capabilities

Infrastructure, which includes physical components, power components, telecom and the overall system, should be reliable, state-of-art and offer very high availability. The vendor should have solid systems for infrastructure control, upkeep and management. Check past data on infrastructure availability percentages, and how fast the vendor was able to bounce back in cases where issues occurred that were beyond their control. Since your mission critical data is being accessed, the vendor should have security systems, policies and institutionalization, to guarantee that your intellectual property is always safe. Check the vendor's Business Continuity Plan.

7. Skill Availability & Management

Hiring the right technical analyst is often a key challenge in the off shoring effort of the vendor to ramp-up skilled manpower on-the-fly. The HR process of vendor should be tuned to attract the right competencies. There should be an organization-level focus on skill upgrades, as continued learning is the only way to remain at the front of the technology curve. Check if the vendor's employee policy is geared to retaining, through various means such as training, compensation, career progression, etc, to ensure a lower rate of employee turnover.

8. Project Management & Un-interrupted Communication

Take abundant care in defining roles, responsibilities and escalation channels at both ends for operative & business aspects of off shoring. Demand for a project management system with online data available 24/7, so that you have project visibility and control at all times. The vendor should be able to demonstrate a high level of work ethic & absolute transparency in operations. The communication channel should be two ways for identifying and addressing any issues that impact service quality.

9. Quality Commitment

The vendor should be able to demonstrate process strengths & quality with metrics on every aspect of support business. Each and every employee should be committed to not compromising on quality and have the attitude of customer first, displaying commitment, flexibility, agility and attention to detail.

10. Look at it as a Partnership, Not Just Relationship

The outsource relationship should have executive commitment from both parties. It should be treated as a partnership and not as a mere business proposition. Senior management personnel should create an atmosphere of team-work and of positive work chemistry between execution stakeholders. Constant communication is the key to a healthy relationship so ensure mutual participation in key events.

11. Review Periodically

Stay involved in the initial stages, institute regular management reviews. Analyze the performance of both teams and determine measurable objectives/next steps. Make adjustments as needed.

About Shiva Ramani.....

Shiva Ramani, 38, is an entrepreneur and has been instrumental in setting up several IT start ups under the aegis of CSS group of companies. He is the principal founder of SlashSupport and is currently its CEO.

Having earned his MS in Computer Science from the University of Louisiana, Shiva started his career as a Technical Support Executive and later become a freelance consultant in the field of 'Artificial Intelligence' and did projects for IBM, where he developed the SANE architecture.

Shiva founded SlashSupport with the goal to create an organization with technology support as its core. He believes that technology, although meant for everyone, behaves very differently for every individual. The greatest value to such customers is the availability of highly skilled and talented people who are ready to help them in tackling technical problems.

Under the leadership of Shiva, SlashSupport has emerged as a specialized advanced technology support company and the CSS group has emerged as a Global 500 Technology player that has a comprehensive offering of Development, Testing, Solutions Architecture, Infrastructure Management and Technical Support.

Shiva's focus on teamwork and creation of leadership at the middle management level, structuring work-groups leading to client intimacy and focusing on constant value addition to customers has created a culture that motivates passionate professionals to strive for '100% referenceable customers'.

Shiva currently focuses on the combined group offering, apart from mentoring and coaching senior management to add value to clients.

Comments? Suggestions? We would like to hear from you. Please email the editor at sspanews@thesspa.com.

Download PDF



[next article>>>](#)

Distributed by SSPA - 11031 Via Frontera - Suite A - San Diego CA - 92127
©2007 SSPA